

## 2006 Summer Academy Project Descriptions

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Included are descriptions of project work for all teams attending the Summer Academy. The array of teams attending this year's Academy is quite impressive, representing a range of institutional type, mission, and size; student demographics; and geographical service areas. The Academy provides a number of networking opportunities for cross-fertilization of ideas across teams and projects. We encourage you to seek out teams doing similar work or those whose work might inform your own.

The first set of teams attending this year's Academy are Autonomous Summer Academy (ASA) teams, institutional teams unaffiliated with national projects convening at the Academy to work on the campus change initiatives of their choice.

Other teams attending this year's Academy are participants in one of two national projects. The first, the Building Engagement and Attainment for Minority Students (BEAMS) Project, is a five-year initiative sponsored by the Lumina Foundation for Education to foster the ways in which four-year Historically Black, Hispanic-serving, and Tribal colleges and universities using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) can strengthen data-based decision making and increase student engagement and learning. These teams make up the third cohort of BEAMS campuses attending this year's Summer Academy as part of their commitment to BEAMS. In addition, a number of BEAMS campuses from previous cohorts are coming back to the Summer Academy to continue to enhance their BEAMS work and to serve as resources for the third cohort.

The second project, also supported by the Lumina Foundation, is the National Articulation and Transfer Network. The Network seeks to increase access and success for minority students in higher education by increasing the numbers of transfer students who graduate with baccalaureate degrees. NATN institutional representatives look forward to networking with other Academy teams, working collectively on plans for the future of NATN, and delineating their institutional contributions to the Network.

All participants have much to learn from each other, so take advantage of your time in Puerto Rico to hear more about each other's work.

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## **Autonomous Summer Academy (ASA) Teams**

### **Carlos Albizu University**

The Carlos Albizu University team will develop a strategy plan to serve the Hispanic market in the US.

### **The University of Michigan**

The University of Michigan's Summer Academy team will develop comprehensive and long term institutional strategies for addressing the university's long standing gaps in student of color graduation rates - these gaps are as high as 20 points between white and Asian American students and other students of color groups. The team is comprised of key faculty, staff, and administrators who can work collectively over the next few years to not only develop a retention plan but more importantly, develop ways for strategic implementation of the plan. The key institutional goal would be to significantly reduce the graduation gap that exists and to ultimately reach graduation parity. The U-M team is particularly interested in developing proactive, early warning strategies that can successfully identify students who are at risk of dropping out, utilizing qualitative and quantitative data to gain greater knowledge of retention issues, and addressing institutional barriers that might hinder students' ability to have successful experiences and graduate in a timely manner. The strategies that University of Michigan will develop require a comprehensive institutional approach and have to be long term in recognition that these issues will not be resolved overnight. This will be Michigan's first effort in more than 15 years to address retention issues utilizing collaborative and comprehensive approaches.

### **University of Puerto Rico in Cayey**

As a result of our "Self-study Report" and the subsequent visits by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities (MSACU) and the Puerto Rican Council on Higher Education (CES), the University of Puerto Rico in Cayey identified the implementation of our Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP) as one of the campus's top priorities. One of the levels of the IAP involves establishing effective mechanisms for assessment in the areas of student learning and program outcomes. In addition, the Dean of Academic Affairs has set as a goal that all programs should have developed their graduate profiles by 2006 in order to enable the development and effective implementation of their academic assessment plan. Although the Academic Dean's Office has offered workshops and seminars on the topic, and has managed to jump/start the academic programs, we still need to find other ways of involving all institutional components (academic, administrative, and student) of the university community in this task and get them to work on it so that we can comply with the deadline we set for ourselves. The project that we would like to work on is the development of a plan, and the most effective strategies, to reach that goal.

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## **2005 BEAMS Cohort**

### **Albany State University**

Increasing the retention rate among second through fourth year students represents a major focus for Albany State University. Since 2000 the University has ranked among the top institutions within the state University System of Georgia in maintaining its first year retention rate, ranking either third or fourth, directly below the research universities within USG. Since 2004, we have begun to witness a declining shift in our first year retention rate, dropping from 82% to 75% within a two-year period. Utilizing NSSE data, freshman students indicate an overall satisfaction in most areas of student engagement. However, when compared with seniors, there were indicators that suggest that fourth year students were less engaged than they were as freshman. Our team wishes to investigate to what extent certain factors can be directly linked to retention efforts at the university and discern how to best measure the impact of the factors. The critical issue of retention impacts our institution's mission and viability efforts.

### **Barry University**

Based on the Barry University 2004 and 2005 NSSE results, it appears that student engagement in the areas of meeting academic challenges, interacting with faculty, mentoring, and involvement in out-of class educational experiences are below the norm of peer institutions. In view of these findings, the primary goal of the Barry University BEAMS Action Plan will be to enhance first-generation students' retention and campus engagement through improvement of critical thinking and writing skills that foster academic success. The means for accomplishing this will be establishment of 1) a faculty professional development program designed to improve professors' instructional efficacy in this area and 2) an intentional and ongoing faculty-student mentoring program aimed at promoting a successful transition that will lead to enhanced educational outcomes and optimal levels of campus engagement.

### **Bennett College for Women**

The project for Bennett College will focus on improving customer service for students. It is believed that proper avenues for voicing complaints regarding customer service interactions between students and university services will provide ample response and resolution. Students are empowered when there are avenues for communication that exist within the student ranks. We anticipate using a student operated helpdesk for students to voice concerns regarding services. When we observed the data from NSSE, we noticed that only 25% of students surveyed viewed the quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices as helpful, considerate, and flexible. These three indicators are what customers want from suppliers; therefore, we hope to provide friendlier, flexible services to our students.

### **California State University Monterey Bay**

It is well understood in the arenas of higher education that students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges when they engage in complementary learning experiences in and out of the classroom. These 'co-curricular' activities typically augment the academic program and provide an opportunity for students to gain valuable lessons about themselves and others and integrate this knowledge into their academic career. Of the five NSSE Benchmarks, CSUMB's BEAMS team will focus on the "Enriching Educational Experience" benchmark, with a specific focus on CSUMB's level of emphasis on providing freshman students the support they need to participate in co-curricular activities. We aim to raise our performance at CSUMB in this area of student engagement and satisfaction, increase our retention of freshman to sophomores, and increase

NSSE scores in relation to similar liberal arts colleges. Our action plan will focus on gaining a better university understanding of how students interpret "participation in co-curricular activities" and work to strengthen campus efforts and student involvement in this area. The specific outcome of our action plan will be to more effectively engage students in co-curricular activities, thereby increasing our performance to a level equal to or greater than that of other liberal arts colleges in this benchmark.

#### **Cheyney University**

Learning communities are one of the strategies the Cheyney University BEAMS team has identified as a means of intervention to improve the student's experience in the identified areas. Learning community leaders will include faculty, professional staff, and alumni who will work with specific groups of students during the academic year to "extend the classroom walls" and enhance the learning experience through various types of activities. Faculty, through their association with students in the learning communities, will become more attuned to student concerns about level of academic challenge, and they will, subsequently, be able to modify their classroom environment to accommodate student needs. An enriching educational environment will be developed through learning experiences that integrate classroom experiences with out-of-class experiences focused on the skills that are essential for student success. A more supportive campus environment will be established through the learning communities, as the leaders support students' navigation through the campus community and begin to utilize campus resources.

#### **Coppin State University**

Coppin State University endeavors to construct a mixed method study focused on retention and persistence issues of first time students. In this study, we hope to match quantitative and qualitative data sets to understand the retention and persistence patterns at our institution and develop appropriate interventions/strategies for improving outcomes. CSU will provide campus data to assist in the assessment of retention efforts.

#### **Delaware State University**

The Beams Team, in consultation with the Delaware State University Faculty, will produce a manual of strategies for instructors to use in order to engage more students in the learning process, especially through technology, active learning, and research projects. This manual will be distributed to faculty prior to the 2006 fall semester and given to adjuncts at the Adjunct Retreat. Faculty adopting any of these strategies will be surveyed at the beginning and end of the fall semester 2006. A student manual will also be developed and distributed to all students, faculty, and staff. Students will benefit from the strategies in the student manual whether or not any of their instructors are applying new instructor strategies.

#### **Eastern New Mexico University**

NSSE data reveals that several projects (including learning communities and advising initiatives) have created strong student engagement with our freshmen. Recognizing that more of our seniors are transfer students, non-traditionally aged, and responsible for care of dependents, ENMU needs to find strategies that connect students from the sophomore to the senior year to their learning process as successfully as we are connecting freshmen. And we need to ensure that those freshmen connections are enhanced and sustained. More specifically, we are focusing on strategies for seniors that will fit their educational and career goals as we enhance their engagement with learning throughout their education program, culminating in meaningful capstone courses, senior projects, and senior shows. Such projects are part of some degree programs but these culminating, integrating experiences, supported by career and advising interactions with faculty/staff throughout their programs, seem to be missing from the reported experience of our seniors.

### **Edward Waters College**

Established in 1866 to educate the descendants of African Americans newly emancipated from slavery, Edward Waters College continues to live up to its mission by maintaining open enrollment for students who aspire to earn a baccalaureate degree in the arts and sciences and other career-based professional fields. In more recent years, EWC faculty expressed concern that the College's open enrollment policy was contributing to a significant number of first year students whose academic skills were not strong enough for students to succeed in the General Education Program core curriculum courses. By using data from the 2004 NSSE Survey, College faculty and administrators are assessing the need for adjustments in the General Education Program. It is anticipated that General Education Program reform will more closely align student learning outcomes, academic assessment, and academic program implementation. In reviewing the 2004 NSSE results, it was determined that students' perception of core competencies in reading, writing, and critical thinking fell far below the College's selected peer group and NSSE norms. These core competencies are a key component of the General Education Program. In conjunction with faculty development of delivery methods for teaching at-risk students, several approaches are being developed and will be built into the College's accreditation program which is the main focus of the institution's quality enhancement plan.

### **Florida A&M University**

The mean response of FAMU's freshmen to the NSSE Item focused on the provision of needed academic support (10b) was significantly lower than the freshmen from its comparison groups. Therefore, FAMU is planning to establish a university-wide Academic Support Center to build and enhance knowledge, skills, and competencies in the basic areas of learning: reading, writing, and arithmetic. The Center will be programmatic in thrust and research-driven in intent. Its mission will have a three-pronged focus: (1) The development and maintenance of an academic profile on each student for diagnostic purposes; (2) the design, implementation, and testing of teaching and learning strategies for building fundamental knowledge and skills; (3) the assessment and evaluation of student performance to provide feedback for the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning strategies.

### **Harris-Stowe State University**

Like many peer institutions, every incoming class at Harris-Stowe State University has a high representation of first-generation students. Data from HSSU's Fall 2004 CIRP Freshman Survey indicates that many students fare poorly in their first semester of college work, often because they are overcommitted to off-campus employment and have limited understanding of how much time college study demands. While the University cannot resolve the financial pressures that demand students work while going to school, HSSU can help students to make the best possible use of the time they have available for academic pursuits. Accordingly, HSSU plans an overhaul of new student orientation to help students make better choices about course loads and life balance. In the past, orientation has been a voluntary half-day program introducing university facilities and offices. Starting with the Fall 2006 orientation, however, the program will run for several days and will include interactive periods of instruction on time management, study skills, making and working study plans, stress and conflict management, use of technology, and other topics that are expected to help students improve proficiency and increase academic success, with an impact on retention and graduation. Tracks for day and evening students, for freshmen and transfer students, and for parents are under development.

### **Institute of American Indian Arts**

The Learning Support Center, from which our BEAMS Team has been selected, has been charged with creating and operating a general education curriculum for IAIA. The IAIA BEAMS project will be to revise goals, outcomes, and pedagogy for these courses to form a cohesive program. The project will address developmental courses as well as general education courses. One of the challenges to be resolved is determining how to serve first semester students regardless of the various levels of college preparedness and motivation. Another concern is determining the best approach for engaging students in developing a vision for academic and creative success. The final challenge is to recreate a college success course, Native Foundations for College Success, which focuses on training students to take charge of their own education.

### **Inter American University-Ponce Campus**

The Inter American University of Puerto Rico-Ponce Campus (IAU-Ponce) is planning to work on ways to improve the reading and writing skills using the basic skills labs. This idea needs development and may be combined with other academic strategies, like reinforcing the use of e-mail to communicate with instructors. This focus is based on lower than expected scores on NSSE indicators focused on reading and writing skills.

### **Johnson C. Smith University**

Student Engagement through Active Learning: Results of the Johnson C. Smith University 2004-2005 NSSE Survey indicated that in comparison to the national average, our freshmen are engaged to a lesser degree in the amount of course reading, the emphasis on analytic thinking, and the type of activities that take place outside of the classroom. We propose to enhance the current active learning and engagement of faculty and students by reforming and assessing the curriculum and pedagogy. Elements of this reform will include enhanced co-curricular activities outside of the classroom that are tied directly to classes in which students are enrolled and learning across the curriculum activities that are grounded in active learning theory. Intensive faculty development will be at the core of the transformation. Linking current learning to the future is another means of enhancing student engagement. We propose to accomplish this through enhanced utilization of service learning, internships, creating professional and career activities, and providing early exposure to the University's degree programs. E-portfolios will serve as a vehicle for organizing, planning, and reflecting upon the above activities.

### **Lane College**

The purpose of Lane's proposed project for the Summer Academy is to implement a comprehensive assessment program in an effort to improve student learning. In addition to improving student learning, it is our hope that this plan can be implemented and used as the foundation for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

### **Lincoln University**

Lincoln University's summer project is to create an academic enrichment program, whereby you must be at least a sophomore to participate. This will include community service learning, volunteer work, and working in teams. The goal will be to target all students beginning at the sophomore level, who will be exposed to the proposed intervention. We will also develop a faculty-student relationship program through mentoring. This will include intervention with the Office of Career Services to encourage early exposure to internships, co-op, study abroad opportunities, jobs, and other career preparation throughout the academic tour of these students. Students will be oriented to academic and student support services that are available on campus.

### **Livingstone College**

The purpose of this proposed project for the Summer Academy is based on the 2005 NSSE Benchmark data for Livingstone College. This project will focus on the level of academic challenge, i.e. class preparation, textbook utilization techniques, written reports, critical thinking, instructor expectations, knowledge of campus resources, learning strategies, and techniques. By the end of the 2006 academic year, we plan to develop a comprehensive project to encompass a strong Freshman Orientation Program which will include student assessment, faculty advising and mentoring, and peer leadership training. A Freshman Year Experience curriculum will be developed to improve student learning outcomes and retention. These enriching educational experiences will assist the college in improving retention and graduation rates. We will evaluate the effectiveness of this project through evaluations and assessments from the entire college community, utilizing the NSSE, student evaluation of faculty, and the pretest and posttest of the Learning and Study Skills Inventory (LASSI).

### **Miles College**

The Miles College BEAMS Team plans to strategically redefine its liberal admissions policy to ensure that persons admitted have an innate desire to pursue a college education and design first year student experiences (co-curricular and residential life) that will lead to meaningful collegiate achievements. We are considering work from recruiting approaches, acceptance criteria, meaningful developmental support (academic and social), admissions standards, orientations to college and residential life, and a first year evaluation standard (for use by advisors) that orients the campus environment toward scholarly, professional, and community service endeavors.

### **Mississippi Valley State University**

Mississippi Valley State University is located in the Mississippi Delta, an economically depressed area. A considerable percentage of our students are first-generation college students and non-traditional students who are looking to improve their quality of life. Increasingly, a number of our students are non-residential. Recognizing these factors, the University proposes to develop pilot learning communities that target residential and non-residential students. Learning communities have proven to be effective in achieving student success when students are in environments where there is commonality of purpose and a shared vision. Approximately 30 students will be identified to participate in each learning community. The overall goal of establishing these communities will be to impact student engagement, and ultimately, retention, by enhancing the student's educational experience. During the Summer Academy, the University team intends to develop a plan to implement the learning communities project for Fall 2006.

### **Morris College**

Our ongoing project involves implementing a program of activities to facilitate greater faculty-student interaction relative to freshman students. Data from our 2003 NSSE survey indicated that freshmen rated this area lowest among the five benchmark areas measuring levels of student engagement. Besides increased engagement, expected benefits of this activity also include improved academic performance and increased retention of freshmen. In particular, the Morris team will focus on first-year programs, returning student engagement, and assessment at this year's Academy.

### **New Jersey City University**

Academic Resource Center (ARC)—A Learner Centered Community Support Service Model: NJCU is an urban, commuter university comprised of ethnically diverse, first-generation college students. Due to a variety of socio-economic factors, students find it difficult to engage in extracurricular activities. In addition, students must negotiate a decentralized system of academic and other support services to receive assistance. This project will focus on the development of an

Academic Resource Center (ARC) by utilizing the Center for Teaching and Learning (Academic Affairs) and the Center for Community Service and Volunteerism (Student Affairs). This union of resources and partnerships of faculty, staff, and students will provide a more centralized and innovative system of support services, facilitate and sustain a quality educational environment, promote student-faculty engagement, emphasize civic responsibility, and strengthen community. Features of the new program will include the following:

- Cross-divisional collaboration
- Integration of technology within/outside of class
- Partnering with West Campus Development, incorporating student employment opportunities
- Faculty development of excellence in teaching and learning, addressing student diversity and cultivating applied learning communities
- Increased faculty/staff research and professional development opportunities
- Enhanced practical and cultural student experiences
- Opportunities for all students to acquire learning skills: on-line and peer tutoring, writing center, study groups, study skills, and instruction/enrichment.

#### **North Carolina Central University**

We will develop the roles and responsibilities of our Comprehensive Academic Success Enhancement Center (CASE Center), the purpose of which is to facilitate academic, personal, and professional growth and development and student success. We have identified fourteen components of the CASE Center, and the Academy will allow us to focus on what each of those components will need to do to meet the goals of the Center. We will develop strategies for the freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior experiences and develop plans for the Summer Bridge program which is proposed to give students who are admitted with academic deficiencies an opportunity to mitigate those deficiencies before they begin their first semester of course work.

#### **Oglala Lakota College**

Our team will focus on improving student engagement and learning through the review of faculty teaching and the identification of best practices leading to proposed improvement of faculty teaching skills and strategies. The team will develop a plan for faculty to enhance their pedagogical skills, allowing faculty more time with students in addition to classroom teaching. We will plan, develop, and propose ongoing training programs for all faculty. Faculty impact extends beyond academics, thus, having the potential to energize and empower students through instruction and dynamic tutoring, advising, and social interaction. We are restructuring our foundational educational services for entering students. This can contribute to students' motivation and academic performance, making students more active in their academic and personal development. It is documented in the literature that instruction which uses effective pedagogy and assessment with integration of academic and student services can improve student retention and success rates. This needs to be supported by the institutional mission and resources. We plan to work on these developments to enhance student retention and success by fostering faculty, staff, and students to share responsibility for promoting academic services for success, personal growth, and Lakota (Sioux) cultural awareness.

#### **Our Lady of the Lake University**

Our Lady of the Lake University's (OLLU) project will focus on the recently developed Safety Net program being prepared for roll out in August of this year. Safety Net is an on-line early alert system that allows faculty and staff to notify the Retention Office of concerns about a student at anytime during the academic year. Critical variables that categorize the major issues students face have been identified. Successful implementation of this project could directly impact our

retention rate and thus increase the number of minority students persisting to graduation. NSSE data will be added to existing institutional data to finalize aspects of the Safety Net program including a) effective approaches for early identification of students who are facing challenges that may hinder academic success; b) provision of early academic and continuous, proactive interventions for individual students and student groups; c) formatting reports that will assist in identifying key at-risk populations and key at-risk factors; d) integration of Safety Net with other retention tools currently in place; and e) provide exemplary in-service training to faculty and staff on using safety net.

### **Philander Smith College**

The Philander Smith Summer Academy team will address the issue of time spent in preparation for class while at the same time increasing the use of technology for academic study and increasing the use of technology by professors in the classroom.

### **Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico**

PUPR proposes the integration of three learning frameworks into current faculty practices to improve our student-faculty interactions. These are a) emotional intelligence, b) 4MAT in the classroom, and c) problem-based learning. Emotional intelligence emphasizes self awareness, self management, social awareness, interrelationship management, self education, and self motivation. Both students and faculty members should be educated about this subject. The 4MAT teaching and learning method is a cycle, where two variables are taken into consideration: how we perceive and how we process what is perceived. The scientific basis for this methodology comes from the research performed by Robert Kolb early in the decade of 1980. Problem-based learning is any learning environment in which the problem drives the learning. That is, before students learn some knowledge they are given a problem. The problem is posed so that the students discover that they need to learn some new knowledge before they can solve the problem. The PUPR team will focus on a faculty development program that incorporates each of these teaching strategies.

### **Sojourner-Douglass College**

Sojourner-Douglass College seeks to use NSSE results along with other surveys and existing institutional data for strategic planning and assessment of key performance indicators for student learning outcomes, student-faculty interaction, student life, technology use, and student satisfaction throughout the student's matriculation. Careful review of the most recent NSSE results indicated that programmatic attention should be directed to a range of areas involving first year students in order to enhance student experiences, therefore facilitating greater retention and consequent progression to the senior level. However, the limited size of the sample may have skewed the results and could lead to programmatic issues that are inappropriate or inconsequential to the student's retention and matriculation. We believe that efforts should be directed towards ensuring that the design and development of assessment instruments focus on the Academic and Student Services in order to provide data that will accurately guide programmatic plans that will facilitate the student's needs and address the retention challenges that the College experiences. The BEAMS team will utilize the Summer Academy as an opportunity to design methodologies for better use of these data in order to enhance student outcomes and student success.

### **Southern University and A & M College**

Based on a thorough review of NSSE results and other institutional data, the Southern University and A&M College team's Academy project will focus on a comprehensive study of student reading and writing performance throughout the University. The results of the proposed study will be used to develop a campus initiative for the improvement of student leaning in these areas.

The BEAMS team, in accordance with the University's strategic goals, has determined the future success and viability of our students in the global market will require the highest levels of skill in reading and writing. These skills relate to performance proficiency across the curriculum. The twelve standards articulated by the National Council of Teachers of English will be one of many resources to inform this process. The initial planning of the campus initiative and the design of the pilot study will be completed during the 2006 academic year. Elements of the pilot study will include a cohort, an in-depth plan of continuous assessment, and a timeline for completion during the 2007 academic year. At the end of this period, the assessment results will be analyzed and the use of results incorporated in pedagogical and curricular changes as appropriate.

### **Tennessee State University**

The TSU BEAMS Project, called Learn, Lead, and Serve (LLS), will be to institutionalize service learning and civic engagement across all units of the institution, engaging students from all academic disciplines in community-based learning. The newly created Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement will lead the effort using the Campus Compact Indicators of Engagement at Minority Institutions. A first step will be to conduct an internal audit using Andrew Furco's Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education (2002) to develop a system of assessing, documenting, and supporting service and civic engagement activities. Faculty professional development in service-learning best practices is essential, as is orientation and training to prepare students to be successful in community-based settings. In order to ensure sustainability of this project, it is critical to demonstrate to the administration and faculty that service-learning can improve learning, motivation, and retention. TSU's low graduation rates support the need for a major initiative to increase retention and graduation rates, and there is ample evidence that engagement in service learning and community service have the potential to improve engagement, learning, persistence, and success.

### **University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff**

As an open enrollment institution, approximately 70% of the students who enroll are under-prepared for postsecondary work and often demonstrate a lack of life skills critical to their reaching desired goals. The UAPB project—faculty development to increase collaborative classroom pedagogy and the scholarship of teaching and learning—will focus on creating a campus culture where students and faculty value learning and engagement and are actively pursuing that goal through both curricular and co-curricular activities. Some specific project objectives that are germane to achieving this culture are:

- improving scholarship and learning through the use of innovative, active, and collaborative pedagogies, including research and service learning;
- improving students' writing and critical thinking skills; and
- increasing faculty-student interaction (outside of class).

The project will enhance engagement through a faculty and staff development component designed to help faculty understand today's college students and seek to implement strategies that motivate and engage them in the learning process. The project will incorporate plans for implementing initiatives, such as learning communities, that will encourage faculty-student interaction and engagement in academic endeavors outside the classroom setting. The project also will incorporate activities to enhance nonacademic areas, such as campus climate and residence hall programming, which appear to challenge student engagement in academic work.

### **University of Maryland Eastern Shore**

The University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES), an historically black 1890 land-grant institution, is the only research and doctoral degree-granting institution of the University System of Maryland (USM) on the eastern shore of Maryland. As it promotes the philosophical core of the land-grant tradition, which is to make educational opportunities available to all, especially the underrepresented in higher education, one of the top priorities of UMES is to increase the retention of entering students so that they persist through graduation. The creation of planned learning communities will foster a sense of belonging in first-time UMES students and increase the positive interactions with the various University divisions (Academic, Administrative and Student Affairs, and Information Technology). Using residential and commuting students as the foundation for planning, students will be enrolled in three courses that nearly all first-time students are required to complete—English, math and freshman experience. Ongoing programming in the residence halls and Commuter Students' Association by faculty, staff, and upper level students will enhance the likelihood of creating and fostering a supportive campus environment in which students can develop and mature into even more productive citizens as well as graduates of the UMES.

### **University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez**

After analyzing the NSSE results, the BEAMS University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez committee believes that the "Student-Faculty Interaction" benchmark is an important area to improve in our university. Upon reviewing the benchmark mean comparisons for Student-Faculty Interaction, we found our results to be the lowest when compared with Master's institutions, selected peers, and the NSSE 2005 sample. As such, we have selected this benchmark as our proposed Summer Academy Project because it will not only contribute to students' success, but also help increase our faculty's commitment to our students. We will explore several interventions to increase student-faculty interaction, including modifications to existing programs (e.g., student organizations) and development of new ones (e.g., mentoring programs). Faculty can and should be encouraged to actively participate in the activities developed by the over 130 different student associations on our campus. Other institutions have used formal mentoring programs to increase student connections to the institution, which represent a preventative rather than reactive approach to the difficulties that students encounter in the adjustment to university life. We will also need to take a closer look at the UNIV 3005 course and its outcomes.

### **Woodbury University**

Woodbury University will seek to build the capacity to enhance educational experiences, develop social responsibility, and expand transdisciplinary collaboration. Interested stakeholders in the areas of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs will develop a plan to infuse existing curricular and co-curricular programs with multiple opportunities, venues, and applications that engage students on different levels and in different styles. We will begin by collecting information and data about existing curricular and co-curricular programs such as internships, student organizations, study abroad courses, and field trips, among others. We will build on this experience to develop new ideas and models for bringing learning outside of the classroom through the creation of a learning community. Interested faculty, staff, and student leaders will gather as a learning community to reform and rethink existing courses and programs to include cross-disciplinary and interactive experiences from the global to the local, all involving activities that transcend institutional divisions and the boundaries of the classroom. We will also consider the development of a centralized resource for information, discussion, and training related to enhanced educational experiences outside the confines of the university campus in order to disseminate and institutionalize the work of the learning community.

### **York College, CUNY**

Literature on student development supports the premise that student-faculty interaction and students' active learning are major components of effective educational practices (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of college impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement (Pascarella & Terenzini, How College Affects Students, 2005, p. 602). Based on the results of the student responses of York 2005 NSSE survey, we have learned that the York College (CUNY) should have better strategies to encourage students to devote time and energy to their educational activities by providing more faculty development that enhances active student participation, encouraging faculty and student interaction inside/outside the classroom, and using technology to facilitate teaching and learning.

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## **Returning BEAMS Teams**

### **Alcorn State University**

The Alcorn State Summer Academy project will include the following:

1. Developing strategies that will enable the student engagement program to become more viable via a planning committee consisting of students, faculty, staff, and administrators. This committee will be instrumental in helping to implement out-of-classroom activities that will enhance the complete living and learning experience of the student.
2. Incorporating into the curriculum a transcript of non-academic credit for community service participation. This will begin at the start of the freshman year and continue until graduation.
3. Developing strategies that will enable student engagement to create a workable partnership between the university and local agencies/businesses for students to shadow those who are already working in their areas of interest. This effort will expand the service learning opportunities for students and at the same time encourage volunteerism. Further, it allows the student to have an idea as to what a particular career path will be like.

### **Bowie State University**

The Bowie State team will focus on improving strategies developed upon return from the 2005 Summer Academy and networking with other universities about successful strategies used to engage commuter and transitory populations.

### **Morehouse College**

The Morehouse team will focus on developing and implementing a comprehensive community service and service-learning program, integrating all aspects of the student experience including the classroom, residence halls, co-curricular activities, and community life.

### **Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico**

The Pontifical Summer Academy Project is based on our follow up of the Critical Thinking Project. We are implementing the second phase of the delineated strategic plan. The faculty committee has been composed, and our goal is to impact as many students as possible with the inclusion of critical thinking processes in the Spanish, English, and math courses.

### **Spelman College**

The Spelman College BEAMS project centers around improving the critical thinking skills of our students. Our strategy for addressing this issue is to increase the number of mid-length papers (5-7 pages) that students write. We have linked our BEAMS project to a reinvigorated Writing Across the Curriculum program in the College, as well as to the development of an electronic portfolio that students will begin in their first year. During the 2006 Summer Academy, we intend to explore multiple strategies for assessing critical thinking skills in the first year and beyond. We hope to develop recommendations for assessing student learning outcomes in the core curriculum, as well as to make assessment recommendations to academic departments that may adopt the electronic portfolio as evidence of achievement in the major.

### **St. Thomas University**

St. Thomas University has identified "centers of excellence" among various academic programs, and we have begun to work with the area of the sciences, honors students, and leadership studies as areas to enhance out-of-class student engagement as a means of improving student success. Our summer pilot for the 2006 Summer Academy specifically targets at-risk nursing students attempting to enhance their reading and mathematical skills while also improving their knowledge of how to be successful in higher education. Our goal is to fully implement a comprehensive retention model for our campus.

### **University of Puerto Rico - Utuado**

This Project proposes the development and implementation of co-curricular and extracurricular educational activities designed to improve student retention and increase graduation rates. Committees will be formed, by academic department, to attend to student needs and to plan activities directed at promoting student participation and integration in university life. The academic departments will select students to form committees that serve to inform as well as to receive students' reactions, concerns, recommendations, and comments. Bonds between faculty and students will be strengthened.

### **University of Puerto Rico Humacao**

The first years of this century are of utmost importance for the university community in terms of its commitment towards student's integral development. As such, the University of Puerto Rico at Humacao (UPRH) aspires to improve teachings skills, maintain student retention, and provide and improve all the activities available that will enable students to reach their professional goals. The UPRH Summer Academy project focuses on:

1. Providing students with the mechanisms to promote student participation in educational enrichment activities;
2. Strengthening faculty teaching skills through faculty development activities to promote student learning; and
3. Strengthening and expanding the strategies of the Committee for the Integration of Services for the Students Engagement (CISSE).

Our goal is to make UPRH a better institution of higher education that can provide our students with the best service possible.

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## NATN Representatives

Representatives from institutions associated with the National Articulation and Transfer Network have convened at the Summer Academy in order to review NATN accomplishments and initiatives, consider an ambitious set of goals promoted by the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education, and lay out plans to fulfill NATN's promise.

NATN will continue to uphold its core mission of increased access and success for minority students in higher education, with a focus on increasing the numbers of transfer students who graduate with baccalaureate degrees.

Initiatives undertaken by NATN include the following:

- Through a grant provided by the Lumina Foundation, NATN embarked on a three-year project designed to influence articulation practices at the institutional, program and course levels, and to identify and design innovative models to help improve articulation pathways and limit loss of credit for transfer students. A three-tiered articulation framework was developed to address each of these levels, with innovative models designed to ease credit transfer.
- A Ford Foundation grant made possible a career-focused transfer model using a criterion-referenced framework applied to specific pre-professional and career-oriented programs.
- *CollegeSteps* is an on-line tool designed to provide information and support for students and counselors interested in transfer.

NATN goals proposed by the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education include:

1. To influence policy decisions and guidelines on articulation and transfer that facilitate student success and degree completion across institutions of higher education at the state, regional, and national levels;
2. To identify and develop new and innovative models for articulation and transfer that contribute to student transfer and graduation success and that can be shared and adopted by NATN institutions;
3. To increase NATN's involvement with minority-serving institutions; and
4. To develop *CollegeSteps* into a nationally recognized and self-supporting information tool for students, counselors, and institutions of higher education.

Through their work at the Academy, NATN representatives will craft action plans for their campus and region that will contribute to the attainment of the larger NATN goals. Also, they will take advantage of the extensive networking opportunities the Academy offers to connect with minority-serving institutions.