

Alliance for Equity  
in Higher Education



Uniting for America's Future



National Survey  
of Student Engagement

*BEAMS is a partnership between the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education and the National Survey of Student Engagement and is supported by Lumina Foundation for Education.*

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## A letter from the Director

Dear BEAMS colleagues:

There certainly is a lot going on midpoint between the 2005 and the 2006 Summer Academies. The progress reports from all three BEAMS cohorts, some of which are excerpted in this issue, document many accomplishments and more than a few challenges in your work with NSSE and in the implementation of your action plans. You will probably recognize some of your own experience in the stories of others. Feel free to reach out to fellow BEAMS schools for additional information on out of the ordinary strategies. You can actually plan a visit to another BEAMS campus to learn more about the work your colleagues are doing.

Thank you for being so prompt and diligent in sending the progress reports. They were very informative, and we are using them to plan the content for the 2006 Summer Academy according to your interests and needs.

I am eager to make the 2006 Summer Academy a very special one for a number of reasons. It will be the last one convened under the auspices of the current BEAMS grant, so I hope we can apply the lessons we have learned about what is most helpful and interesting to people, as well as to reflect on where BEAMS stands and where it needs to go to fulfill its original vision. It will be the first one planned from start to finish by the Institute for Higher Education Policy, and it will highlight the Institute's areas of expertise, which are closely aligned with the goals of BEAMS. That's why its title is "Cultivating Access and Success for Students of Color," a commitment we all share.

Finally, this Summer Academy will take place in my homeland of Puerto Rico. I want to make every BEAMS institution feel at home in Borikén, our original Taino name. Our history and tradition encompass the ethnic and racial groups BEAMS institutions serve--native peoples, Hispanics, and African Americans--, within an American context. I trust you'll make some time to visit our indigenous sites, delight in our AfroCaribbean music and food, and explore the colonial architecture of Old San Juan and Ponce, as well as get to know our vibrant university life.

See some of you in cold February in DC, and all of you in warm Puerto Rico next summer!

Margarita Benítez  
BEAMS Project Director

## Chronicling Project Work: What Your Progress Reports Are Telling Us

### Excerpts from 2003 Cohort Progress Reports

*To give BEAMS participants a better sense of what their colleagues are doing, we have included excerpts from the Fall progress reports of a number of the 2003 Cohort campuses. This is only a subset of the range of activities and successes of the first cohort of BEAMS institutions, but we hope these snapshots help others in the BEAMS project working on similar issues.*

**University of Texas, Permian Basin:** We are continuing to implement the plan by incorporating service learning as part of class curriculums. The University Freshman Seminar continues to be the focus of most curricular service learning projects. We also have service learning as part of an introductory course in Leadership Studies, a social science elective required by the University. Academic programs such as Sociology, Criminology, and Leadership have increased their efforts to stimulate internships within the community as part of their degree programs. Such internships are required as part of Leadership Studies. Political Science is considering such a change. A new program in Music has added participation opportunities for students in terms of music ensembles--while this may not sound dramatic, consider that two years ago we had NO music instruction on this campus. The Art Department has developed an "Empty Bowls" project to serve the needy, now in its second year. Our emphasis continues to be on building support for institutions to enhance in-class service learning opportunities. The Volunteer Center is undergoing reorganization and a change of personnel so that it becomes a more viable and useful source of service opportunities. The Student Activities personnel have developed additional programs to enhance student connections with the community.

The team has generated buy-in through word of mouth, visiting with faculty, staff, and students about the need and value of connecting in-class learning with real-life community service activities. The most visible evidence of success has been in the Music Program, whose director energetically works to develop projects that connect students to real music community service programs.

We presented at major college and department groups and continue discussions with administration about service learning opportunities. Our plan did indeed link with university administration's plans to make the University a more active and visible part of the regional community--connecting the University to the community was certainly an opportunity. We also have a new Dean of Student Life and a new Director of Student Activities, both of whom have considerable experience in working with students--their assistance and involvement have been enormously beneficial.

We continue to deal with the fact that our students are "nontraditional" in that they have families, work (often fulltime), and often do not live on campus. We are working to develop alternative routes to curricular service-learning activities. We also continue to look at University data that indicate a rapidly growing student population. This change presents challenges to us in developing curricular activities that meet the needs of very different and diverse student populations.

**Oakwood College:** The Oakwood College project is a revised general education program. The Action Plan that we developed centered on strategies designed to improve student-faculty interaction and impact the design of the new general education curriculum so that strong student-faculty interaction will continue.

We have begun implementation of our plan, but it is not yet complete, since revision of the general education curriculum is a long, tedious process. Several steps have been taken to improve interaction on campus at various levels including: (1) Inviting the Vice President for Student Services to become a member of the General Education Committee; (2) A presentation by a guest consultant in October 2004 to share with the faculty the role of Learning Communities and their impact on the General Education (GE) Curriculum; (3) A campus-wide Town Hall Meeting in November 2004 to discuss issues related to redesign of the GE curriculum; (4) Analysis of the Town Hall data and report to campus in January 2005; (5) General Education Committee continued to meet monthly and utilized data from the Town hall meeting; (6) The philosophy, goals, and objectives for the revised general education curriculum have been approved by the faculty; and (7) our BEAMS consultant provided a faculty and staff development workshop on learning communities. The first major step involving students was arranging and conducting a Town Hall meeting. This was done during a general assembly with a large percentage of the campus family present. We divided the assembly hall into 17 sections/discussion groups, each led by a student, a faculty member, and a staff member. Interaction was very good and resulted in a number of useful suggestions. Results were widely distributed on campus and informative for the General Education Committee.

Our greatest challenge has been time. We can see our progress, but each step has taken longer than anticipated. Because we are making such a major change, we are unable to move faster than the stakeholders allow. However, this has resulted in good support so far, and we anticipate a positive outcome. We don't expect to really begin to see outcomes until we begin to develop the courses for the new general education program. Then we will know if the Town Hall meetings, focus groups, and faculty-staff development activities have made an impact. Long-term success will be measured after general education program implementation. Evidence of short-term success includes the positive results of collaborating with Student Services, the excellent interaction and positive feedback from our BEAMS consultant's workshop, and the success of the Town Hall and the interest it generated.

**California State University Dominguez Hills:** The comprehensive Action Plan developed at the 2004 Summer Academy has been almost completely implemented for Year Two of the five year plan. Some of our accomplishments include:

- **First Year Experience (FYE)** - A FYE Coordinating Council was organized upon our return from the Summer Academy and has been meeting on a regular basis since then. The Council consists of those individuals teaching University 101 courses and the co-leader of the BEAMS Team. The BEAMS Team also considers issues concerned with the FYE and is a source of support to the Coordinating Council
- **Expand New Student Orientation** - The New Student Orientation (NSO) program at CSUDH was substantially revised to accommodate engagement strategies although the BEAMS Team has not yet petitioned the campus to make it mandatory. The evaluation instrument use at NSO was also significantly modified to collect student feedback concerning their experience at this event. A persistence analysis involving those students attending NSO will be conducted at the conclusion of the 2005-06 Academic Year.
- **University 101 Course** - Even though the number of University 101 courses was greatly expanded during this Academic Year, it was not made mandatory due to fiscal constraints and, more importantly, the inability of the team to move the new policy into the various elements of academic infrastructure at CSUDH. It was determined that the only way to accomplish the expansion was to ask academic administrators to volunteer their time as instructors. Among the administrators assuming this role were the Provost and Vice Provost. In fact, twice as many student as in prior year enrolled to teach in this crucial class (enrollment grew from approximately 150 students to over 300). Plans to fully implement the mandatory University 101 course are contingent on identifying resources. The online version of the University 101 course has also been placed on hold as a consequence of resource issues.

The Provost and Vice Provost have been active members of the BEAMS Team since the group's inception. The Provost has actively promoted BEAMS and engagement related activities and has made the issue of CSUDH as a "learner centered institution" the centerpiece of his tenure. This phrase appears in the division's mission statement, in the draft Academic Master Plan, and in all position announcements posted for tenure track faculty. The President has announced at several gatherings that the

### California State University, Los Angeles

There has been a fortuitous turn of events relative to the CSULA action plan that has stalled implementation of it in the short run but will lead to greater support for its implementation in the longer run. The CSU Board of Trustees has mandated that each of the 23 campuses develop a plan to implement 22 initiatives that they adopted to enhance student retention, success and graduation. The work of the team on the BEAMS action plan was slowed by work that needed to be done on the BOTs 22 initiatives. The 22 initiatives, however, in many respects incorporate the major goals of the BEAMS action plan. Because the BEAMS goals are being incorporated in the plan to address the BOTs initiatives they are sure to have greater support from the highest levels of the system, campus, and faculty.

The BEAMS action plan was presented to the Provost's Senior Staff and the Deans Council. Both groups recognized the importance of the goals included in the plan and expressed support. Elements of the action plan were incorporated in a report on academic advising that was enthusiastically received by the President, the Vice Presidents, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate, and numerous faculty who have had an opportunity to read it. A number of the action items will be the focus of a workshop at the all university fall faculty retreat.

### Fayetteville State University

We implemented our action plan from the 2004 Summer Academy. Our project was designed to use e-learning strategies to promote student engagement. Our project was based on our concern about the use of e-learning reported on the 2003 NSSE. We focused on specific items from the NSSE that we hope will show improvements in the next administration of the NSSE. These items included: 1) the amount of time spent outside of class preparing for class; 2) the use of email and listservs; 3) applying concepts from one class to another; 4) working harder than you thought you could; 5) working with classmates outside of class; 6) discussion of reading outside of class.

Each of the five faculty members on our team has implemented e-learning strategies into his classes. Our assessments have been mixed. In general, in one member's classes, the learning strategies strengthened student engagement. Other members of the BEAMS team were less satisfied with the outcomes. The features we incorporated last year have become enduring components of our classes. Our experiences have shown that e-learning tools must be embedded in a larger group of tasks and assignments that promote engagement in a variety of ways. The best way to use e-learning strategies is a vehicle for promoting interaction among students, through email, discussion forums, and group projects that involve the use of e-learning tools.

work of the BEAMS Team is an integral component of campus activities and is one of the most important priorities of his administration.

The most obvious outcome thus far is the growth and development of some of our tenured/tenure track faculty with respect to their training in collaborative learning pedagogies. In addition, for the second year running, the campus has conducted a faculty success seminar in which first-semester, first-year faculty received course release time to attend a monthly, three hour seminar highlighting pedagogy concerned with engagement. Also, for the second year, the campus had conducted its outside speaker series featuring national leaders in the pedagogies of engagement including Karl Smith, Craig Nelson, Tom Angelo, Barbara Millis, Vince Tinto, and others (four per year).

**Spelman College:** Our action plan to improve critical thinking and writing skills has been implemented in part, but unevenly across the campus. We have had several campus conversations about writing in the disciplines, launched an e-portfolio initiative for first year students, and have plans for collaborations between the Writing Center and various academic departments on use of e-portfolios in the major. We have also developed a proposal that we are now revising to create a Teaching and Learning Center that will support elements of the Action Plan. The Writing Center would like to do more in regard to emphasizing a sequenced approach to writing skills development, with multiple drafts completed over the course of the semester.

We believe that we have accomplished buy-in from the administration by having administrators serve on the BEAMS workgroup and keeping them well informed of our progress and needs. Faculty have been very supportive of the efforts to use writing as a tool and measure of critical thinking for students; however, faculty still wrestle with how they might implement writing assignments effectively. Several departments have endorsed changes in the type of writing students will be asked to do in the major courses. In addition, some have plans for using the e-portfolio in the major.

One challenge has been in getting more faculty to indicate that they will promote the types of writing that we advocate--sequenced writing assignments from 5 to 7 pages in length over the course of the semester. We have addressed this issue by providing rubrics to guide grading of writing assignments. Another challenge has been keeping BEAMS activities going along with competing priorities. Merging some BEAMS initiatives with other projects has been helpful in this regard. Overall, though, we have been successful at putting critical thinking and writing in the forefront of discussions about student achievement. Participation in Writing Across the Curriculum workshops has increased, suggesting that more faculty are invested in using writing to stimulate and evaluate their students' critical thinking skills.

### The 2004 Cohort: Buy-in Strategies

Because soliciting buy-in from key campus constituents is critical to building a solid foundation for plan implementation, we have highlighted a range of strategies used by the 2004 Cohort over the past semester to gain support and visibility for their work. These and other strategies to be shared at the 2004 Cohort mid-year meeting will be used to hone the best practices for generating buy-in developed by the 2003 cohort this past spring.

- **Alcorn State University:** Sponsored a service learning seminar during the Fall 2005 Faculty and Staff Conference to begin orienting stakeholders to key pedagogical components of the BEAMS action plan
- **Chicago State University:** Shared work at key campus events such as the University Institute Day and facilitated the integration of planned BEAMS activities with their administrative retreat action items and the university's strategic plan, adding visibility and centrality to their work

### University of Puerto Rico, Humacao

Since the 2004 Summer Academy our institutional BEAMS group conducted additional planning meetings in order to implement the proposed plan. As a result of those meetings, the institutional group evaluated once again the plan's activities and expected results. During the above-mentioned process many concerns arose regarding the ambitious nature of the plan as well as the lack of integration and coherence between the activities proposed the three groups representing academics, student services and administrative affairs. Therefore, the need for a new action plan that would address the identified weaknesses was discussed. The committee proposed the creation of a working group that would promote the integration of academic, administrative, and student services. This new approach allowed the integration of the institutional leadership including office and program directors responsible to directly serving student needs and determining how best to promote student engagement. The new project plan was called CISEE, Committee for the Integration of Student Engagement Efforts.

The CISEE agenda encountered many opportunities to integrate the efforts of group of offices and officers responsible of providing direct services to students. Major campus events such as the "New Student Welcome Activity and Registration" provided the opportunity to impact and improve services, as well as the implementation of our action plan.

- **California State University, Northridge:** Enlisted senior administrators to make initial contacts with deans on their behalf
- **Florida International University:** Conducting meetings with faculty and staff groups to introduce them to the team's planned Virtual Student Center site. The meetings will include discussions of promotions, site enhancements, and mechanisms for encouraging and building faculty use of the sites and tools
- **Florida Memorial University:** Created a broader campus Retention Committee to oversee BEAMS implementation to generate cross-campus support of and visibility for planned work
- **Heritage University:** Charged team members to informally share BEAMS work with their respective sub-communities on campus
- **Jarvis Christian College:** Presented the plan to the President's Executive Council for approval and support and encouraged faculty and staff to volunteer to serve on a committee for retention as part of a BEAMS presentation at the campus's Fall Institute
- **Morehouse College:** Linked project with another campus initiative to be piloted in fall 2006
- **University of New Mexico:** Used consultant site visit to draw in new stakeholders and share their BEAMS work with a wider campus audience
- **St. Mary's University:** Recruited senior administrators to share information about BEAMS at key campus events and faculty/staff meetings
- **University of the Incarnate Word:** Created three task forces, at the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs' request, to address BEAMS-related items and tapped faculty and administrative representatives from the various schools and offices on campus

We noted the above strategies to highlight some specific ways in which campuses are spreading their BEAMS message. We also noticed a number of trends for generating buy-in. One such trend has been for teams to make presentations to a broad range of campus stakeholders as was the case at University of Houston Downtown, the University of the District of Columbia, and Wiley College. In addition, a number of campuses such as Bowie State University and Claflin University have expanded their original Summer Academy teams to include campus stakeholders critical to their plan implementation. Others, such as Elizabeth City State University, New York City College of Technology, St. Peter's College, and University of Puerto Rico Utuado, are leveraging buy-in from key campus committees and administrators to expand their campaigns to wider campus audiences. All of these strategies are important to gaining support for BEAMS work over time and integrating BEAMS activities into the core of campus work.

### The 2005 Cohort Looks Ahead to Next Year's Summer Academy

Campuses in the 2005 cohorts are beginning in earnest to analyze their NSSE data and narrow their focus for the 2006 Summer Academy. A number of campuses, including Oglala Lakota College and North Carolina Central University, noted sharing data with their broader campus community. In fact, Tennessee State University, Edward Waters College, and the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, are using a broad consensus approach to determine a project focus by discussing their NSSE findings with various stakeholder groups and honing in on the top issues raised across the groups. Others, like Eastern New Mexico University and Texas A&M University-Kingsville, are linking their project focus and the findings from NSSE to key campus goals or initiatives such as strategic plans and accreditation, an approach that is strongly encouraged by project staff and that has been highly effective for past BEAMS cohorts. Others are using a similar approach by leveraging current campus committee's such as Inter American University Ponce's Institutional Assessment Committee or the support of key institutional administrators to link their work to long-standing commitments. In fact, the commitment of New Jersey City University's president to BEAMS has been a key catalyst for their team's senior level leadership, broad-based participation, and early visibility.

Our Lady of the Lake University, Woodbury University, and many other campuses in the third cohort are drawing on previous experience in data-informed decision making to guide their BEAMS work. In fact, California State University, Monterey Bay offers the following note about its work with NSSE in the past that might be helpful for other campuses using NSSE for the first time:

"CSUMB has used data from past NSSE's to both inform the campus and establish new programs and initiatives that responded to student responses. For the most part, these initiatives were successful, and told us that students appreciate response and action. We also learned that we need strong and effective communication to ensure that students are aware of the changes taking place as a result of the data."

Campuses with little or no experience with NSSE or data-informed campus change are consulting with NSSE staff to analyze their data and become familiar with the range of tools offered by NSSE to guide their use of the data over time so that all teams are prepared for their BEAMS work moving forward. For campuses that have not yet set up a call with a NSSE staff person, you will want to do this as soon as possible.

Project staff encourage all 2005 cohort campuses to solidify your campus working groups and a regular meeting schedule and to finalize your data analysis so that you are prepared to determine your Summer Academy focus early in the new year.

## Learning from the 2003 Cohort: Part II

This article continues the best practices identified by the 2003 Cohort at their mid-year meeting last February. Through the 2004 Cohort Mid-year meeting in February, these ideas will be added to and honed for future project work.

### Building Faculty Support and Commitment

1. **Identify and connect to faculty interests:** Identify faculty concerns and goals and connect the BEAMS project in meaningful ways to their interests. Convey how BEAMS can help them achieve their goals.
2. **Tap faculty research agendas:** Share NSSE results to appeal to inquiring minds. Suggest developing shared research agendas using NSSE data or by building on BEAMS work.
3. **Provide faculty incentives:** Incentives can be powerful tools for rewarding participation and/or freeing faculty time for such participation. Such incentives include release time, peer teaching support, campus awards, etc.
4. **Develop and draw on relationships:** To gain buy-in, begin first with individuals and departments that have been receptive to change in the past. Foster new relationships by identifying others on campus doing similar work.
5. **Utilize Campus Events:** Get BEAMS on faculty workshop, retreat, and new faculty orientation agendas. Volunteer to conduct the workshop.
6. **Honor existing faculty/university structures:** Gain support from faculty senates or other faculty structures to ensure the broadest support and collaboration. Ostracizing these groups early on may impede or even nullify your work in the future.
7. **Read the faculty and institutional culture:** You know your faculty and administration better than most, so you will want to develop buy-in strategies that factor in your campuses cultural norms and preferences. For example, if faculty are use to a consensus approach for deciding on new campus initiatives, you will want to involve them in your work from the beginning.
8. **Use Students to Gain Faculty Support:** Students are often more effective in recruiting faculty, because the faculty's role is seen as more directly tied with learning outcomes that it might be if participation were an administrative requirement.

### Building Student Buy-In and Participation

#### Mid-Year Meeting Scheduled For 2004 Cohort

Now that the 2004 Cohort has had a full semester to begin implementing action plans crafted during the 2005 Summer Academy, they will have the opportunity to share their progress at the 2006 Mid-year Meeting. A member from each of the thirty-four schools will travel to Washington, DC to take part in the three day meeting, which will be held on February 13-15, 2006.

During the meeting team members will have the opportunity to report progress toward action plan implementation, learn about other national projects and organizations that might influence current work, and participate in sessions targeted to help teams overcome common obstacles. Sessions during the mid-year meeting will focus on progress toward plan implementation with a discussion on what has and has not worked at the institutions to date. Some areas that will be explored in more depth are building faculty buy-in, securing support from administration, and including students in the work that is being done. In addition, there will also be sessions held on federal funding opportunities and planning for long-term sustainability of the institutions' work. Team members will also have the opportunity to connect with others from their cohort.

Campuses in the 2004 cohort that have not yet identified a representative for the meeting should do so immediately. Please email Melissa Del Rios, BEAMS program associate, at [mdelrios@ihep.org](mailto:mdelrios@ihep.org) with your information as soon as possible.

1. **Campus engagement strategies lead to more student engagement:** By implementing many of the engagement strategies suggested through BEAMS work and the National Survey of Student Engagement, campuses create environments in which students are more likely to engage in campus work beyond the classroom. Some examples include:
  - Learning Communities—Students who work with faculty in learning communities are more likely to feel comfortable working with faculty and staff on campus committees.
  - Peer Mentoring programs—Students receiving peer mentoring often become peer mentors themselves.
2. **Caring faculty and staff central to fostering student engagement:** Students recognize and respond to care by faculty and staff. Students are more likely to invest their time in engagement activities if they feel that their faculty and staff have invested time in their success.
3. **Student modeling prompts additional participation:** Other students involved in campus activities or campus governance work offer models for students not yet involved in such activities. Campuses should showcase such students when possible in order to interest other students in similar engagement.
4. **Students should be recognized and/or rewarded for participation:** Campuses might consider stipends, trips/professional development activities, community service transcripts, and other incentives for students to participate in or be rewarded for participation in student engagement activities.

## 2006 Summer Academy Planning in Process

This year's Summer Academy, "Cultivating Access and Success for Students of Color" will be held at the Westin Rio Mar in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico from July 17-21, 2006. The Summer Academy, which was established by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), is now in its second year of leadership by the Institute for Higher Education Policy. With the shift in leadership, the Academy, as in past years, will continue to emphasize data-informed decision making, but at the same time will focus on how the data can increase the access and success of the emerging majority. This year's Academy is designed around the themes of minority student engagement, data-informed decision-making, and sustainability.



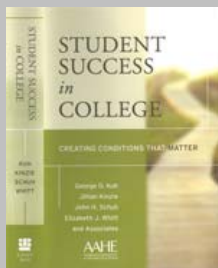
The thirty-six campuses in the 2005 cohort have already begun preparation for next Summer. The campuses received their NSSE data in August, have begun to interpret their data with their office of institutional research and staff from NSSE, and many have already begun to meet with their teams. In January, teams will receive registration packets that will require them to draft a project description that will be the foundation of the action plan crafted at the Summer Academy. They will also identify the team members that will be attending the meeting.

BEAMS staff wants to strongly encourage the 2003 and 2004 BEAMS Cohorts to also join us in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico for a second Summer Academy. The Summer Academy is a great opportunity for past BEAMS teams to connect with other groups that are working on change initiatives for the country's emerging majority populations. The Academy may also be a great venue for teams to share their experience and disseminate some of the recent progress that has been made. To recognize the good work being done in BEAMS and to help reduce the financial burden of sending a team back to the Summer Academy, the Institute for Higher Education Policy is offering a \$100 per person discount on the registration of \$775 (for a total of \$500 per team) to BEAMS institutions interested in returning for a second year. In addition, a 10% discount is being offered for payments received prior to March 30th. An invitation and a Summer Academy brochure has already been sent to your BEAMS contact outlining these details. We hope to see many of you in Puerto Rico!

Online registration will be available in January at <http://www.ihep.org>. BEAMS staff will send a reminder email to all. Institutions in the 2005 cohort can also expect more specific information at that time from BEAMS staff.

### Additional Copies of *Student Success in College* now available for New BEAMS Contacts

NSSE has now secured additional copies of its *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter.* As you will recall, BEAMS campuses received two copies of this publication in the spring, one for the President's office and one for the team contact. If you are a new team contact and do not have a copy of this publication, contact Jillian Kinzie at [jikinzie@indiana.edu](mailto:jikinzie@indiana.edu) to obtain a new copy for your team. Quantities are limited, so NSSE will distribute these copies on a first-come, first-served basis.



## NSSE Staff Available To All Cohorts for Data-Related Questions

Do you have questions about your NSSE data? NSSE staff members are available to set up a conference call for those directly tied to the BEAMS project (i.e., the BEAMS contact and the NSSE primary contact) to discuss ways to use NSSE data. Items to discuss may include:

- Understanding the Institutional and Benchmark Reports;
- Identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses based on NSSE data;
- Using NSSE raw data to run additional analyses; and
- Determining what data are actionable.

We hope BEAMS schools will take us up on the offer for a conference call. To arrange a call, please contact Susan Johnson, [sudjohns@indiana.edu](mailto:sudjohns@indiana.edu), or call: 1-866-435-6773 (toll-free).

## Urban Institute: Spring Interviews and Needed Data Release Forms



Campuses in the 2003 and 2004 cohorts of BEAMS are participating in the first stage of BEAMS evaluation lead by the Urban Institute. Representatives from the Urban Institute have interviewed contacts in both cohorts at the past two Summer Academies and are now beginning additional evaluation activities. If your campus is part of either of these two cohorts, please note the upcoming activities and needs below.

**Spring Phone Interviews with the 2003 Cohort:** Early in 2006 project contacts for the 2003 cohort will be hearing from staff at the Urban Institute. They will be contacting the BEAMS team leaders to schedule telephone interviews to discuss project implementation and progress. Remember, they are not evaluating individual projects, but rather the BEAMS initiative as a whole.

**NSSE Data Release Forms:** All campuses in the first two cohorts of NSSE are asked to release their NSSE data to the Urban Institute. For those campuses in the first two cohorts who have not yet submitted data release forms authorizing NSSE to give you first and second BEAMS-related NSSE datasets to the Urban Institute for the BEAMS evaluation, we ask that you do so immediately. The release form should be submitted directly to NSSE so that they know to pass along the data to our colleagues at the Urban Institute. If you need another copy of the data release form, please contact Melissa Del Rios, BEAMS program associate at [mdelrios@ihep.org](mailto:mdelrios@ihep.org).

## Dissemination and Information Sharing

Now that some campuses in our first BEAMS cohort are beginning to see short-term outcomes from plan implementation, it is important for this good work to be shared with all the higher education community. The projects that have been implemented at BEAMS institutions provide documentation of how data-driven change has the potential to enhance student success at minority-serving institutions across the country. The information that is gathered through these campuses should be disseminated on a national level to contribute to conversations on issues facing the higher education community, issues BEAMS campuses now have first hand experience at identifying and confronting to enhance the success of their students.

To facilitate the sharing of the work that is being done the BEAMS project has a limited number of \$500 travel grants to support the dissemination of project learning through national conferences and other prominent venues. Teams may consider presenting on topics that include institutional capacity to collect and use data and the role of MSIs in meeting minority student access and success needs, amongst many others. Some meetings that may be of interest for your team as a venue to present your BEAMS work, and who are still accepting proposals, are listed below. Over these next few years we will continue to identify possibilities for your institutions and incorporate those listings in future WebCenter and *BEAMS Beat* announcements.

### AAC&U Diversity & Learning:

Oct. 19-21, 2006  
Philadelphia, PA  
"Network for Academic Renewal Conference"

### HACU's 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

Oct. 28-31, 2006  
San Antonio, TX  
"Twenty Years of Championing Hispanic Higher Education"

If your team is interested in presenting at these, or any other meetings you are aware of, please contact Melissa Del Rios, BEAMS program associate, at [mdelrios@ihep.org](mailto:mdelrios@ihep.org), who will provide you with the travel grant guidelines.

### Campus-To –Campus Visits

Please remember that there are funds for campus-to-campus visits, where team members from one campus have the opportunity to visit other schools in the BEAMS project to observe the structures and practices implemented there, participate in a campus-based meeting or conference, or exchange drafts of plans for feedback. If your team is interested in visiting a fellow BEAMS campus or would like guidance as to an institution that your team would benefit from visiting, contact Melissa Del Rios at [mdelrios@ihep.org](mailto:mdelrios@ihep.org) for further information.

# The BEAMS Beat

December 2005

## About BEAMS

BEAMS is a 5-year initiative fostering the ways in which Historically Black, Hispanic-serving, and Tribal colleges and universities using National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) can develop data-based decision making and increase student engagement and learning.

BEAMS serves over 100 four-year colleges and universities from the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education. Each institution commits to analyzing the scope and character of their students' engagement in learning and to implementing well-designed action plans for improvement of engagement, learning, persistence, and success. The project offers five primary ways for campuses to move toward these institutional goals.

- Data on the student experience from the National Survey of Student Engagement
- Design of action plans at the Summer Academy for initiatives to enhance student engagement and learning
- Collegial support for implementing action plans
- Web-based support throughout Project participation
- Opportunities to report nationally on campus initiatives and successes

Campuses administer NSSE at least twice during the project. Consortia of BEAMS campuses generate action plans based on NSSE data at the 2004, 2005, and 2006 Summer Academies. They interact and disseminate their learning throughout the project.

# BEAMS

## Building Engagement and Attainment for Minority Students

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