



The Alliance for Equity in Higher Education
Uniting for America's Future



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.

A letter from the staff

Dear BEAMS teams,

We are excited to announce that our dissemination of your good work has begun in earnest this month with the national launch of our monograph, *Increasing Student Success at Minority-Serving Institutions: Findings from the BEAMS Project*, at the University of the District of Columbia on March 13. This event will be followed by four regional events to continue disseminating the report and the accompanying practice briefs. More information about these events is included later in this issue; we encourage you to attend one near you. As participants in BEAMS, each of your campuses will receive two copies of the BEAMS monograph and two sets of the briefs, with more available upon request. Thank you to all the institutions and consultants that contributed to these materials. We are pleased with the results and hope you are as well.

We also are happy to report that while BEAMS will not be continuing through the learning community model envisioned last year, we have received word from Lumina Foundation for Education that they are providing continued funding for the Summer Academy. To ensure your continued participation in the academy and provide a bridge between the full funding offered through BEAMS in years past and your institution's financing your team's participation in future years, we will be offering limited support for teams with little or no financial resources to attend on their own.

The 2008 Summer Academy—*Strengthening Institutions to Improve National Competitiveness*—will take place in Birmingham, Alabama, July 20–24. By choosing Birmingham, we are continuing to convene the academy at locations that honor your institutions, in this case, the many Historically Black Colleges and Universities located in Alabama and the surrounding states. We encourage your teams to participate by either continuing your BEAMS projects or planning new student success initiatives. You know first hand how important the academy can be for creating, refining, and reenergizing critical student success plans and for connecting with and learning from peer institutions. If you do need financial support to attend, please be sure to indicate that on your registration. We will follow up with you at that time. We also hope to draw upon the expertise and resources of those BEAMS institutions that are in or near Birmingham as we plan this year's activities. Do let us know if you would be interested in serving on our Local Planning Committee for the Academy.

As the BEAMS program draws to an end, we encourage you to use these last four months to take final advantage of the support structures offered through BEAMS: tapping into the expertise of consultants during site visits, visiting other BEAMS campuses, and sharing your good work at conferences. As outlined in the most recent BEAMS evaluation and in our dissemination materials, these activities continue to be valuable to the continued success of your work.

Sincerely,

Lacey Leegwater
Associate Director for Planning and Special Projects
Institute for Higher Education Policy

Inside this issue:

BEAMS Monograph and Practice Briefs Released this Month	2
Regional Dissemination Events	2
The Effect of BEAMS on Institutional Decision Making	3
Campus Highlights	
2003 Cohort—Norfolk State University	3
2004 Cohort—Inter American University of Puerto Rico –San Germán	4
2005 Cohort—Cheyney University of Pennsylvania	4
2008 Summer Academy Planning Underway	5
Upcoming Meetings and Conferences	5
BEAMS Contact Information	6

BEAMS Monograph and Practice Briefs Released this Month

This month is proving to be an extremely exciting time for the BEAMS project! Five years after the first BEAMS cohort administered NSSE and began the journey to increase student engagement through a data-informed process we are ready to share with institutions nation wide the findings of the project. On March 13, 2008 the BEAMS monograph, *Increasing Student Success at Minority-Serving Institutions: Findings from the BEAMS Project*, was released. Along with the monograph, we will distribute practice briefs on the following topics: aligning campus initiatives, assessment, broad campus buy-in, co-curricular activities, first-year programs, faculty development, senior administration buy-in, student support services, technology use for campus change, and writing across the curriculum. These documents were released at a luncheon at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). The event was attended to by various institutions in the region interested to hear how they could also implement similar initiatives on their campus. An article in *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* was written about the event, http://www.diverseeducation.com/artman/publish/printer_10830.shtml. The luncheon at UDC will be followed by regional events across the country. For more details about these events, please read the box below titled *Regional Dissemination Events*. Participants at these events will be some of the first to receive a copy of the BEAMS monograph and practice briefs that will share key strategies that can influence the way that decisions are made on campus. Look to the last edition of the *BEAMS Beat*, out in June, where project staff will share the outcomes of these events.

Through the monograph and practice briefs project staff aim to share the hard work that all BEAMS teams have undertaken as they set out to not only increase the engagement of their student population, but also influence the way decisions are made at their institution to improve student success. Through the teams' experiences and collective findings, it is the intention that their efforts will show other institutions, both MSIs and Predominantly White Institutions, how data-informed change can produce significant results for students, faculty, staff, and the institution as a whole. Special thanks goes to all the teams that took part in the BEAMS project for making these findings possible, for being so willing to share their stories, and for committing themselves to the students they serve. Without their hard work staff would be unable to share such successful results from this five-year project.

Participating institutions in the BEAMS project will each receive two copies of the monograph and the practice briefs. They will be sent to the BEAMS team leader and the institution's president. Please be on the look out for this information so that you can read about the successes of the BEAMS project and see the detailed strategies your fellow colleagues undertook to implement their action plans and achieve their goals. If your institution's BEAMS contact or president has recently changed, please contact Melissa Del Rios, BEAMS program manager, at mdelrios@ihp.org, to ensure that your institution receives its copies.

Regional Dissemination Events

In order to disseminate the BEAMS findings and reach a national audience, BEAMS staff, participants, and consultants will be traveling across the country to host various regional events at select BEAMS institutions. Each event will highlight the BEAMS project's key findings, best practices, and lessons learned, and features a panel of experts who are eager to share their knowledge of proven engagement initiatives to help all institutions succeed.

We hope that you can join us in the event closest to your institution. Formal invitations will be sent through an e-mail from the Institute for Higher Education Policy. However, if you know in advance that you will be able to attend please RSVP to Melissa Del Rios, BEAMS program manager.

The events will be held in:

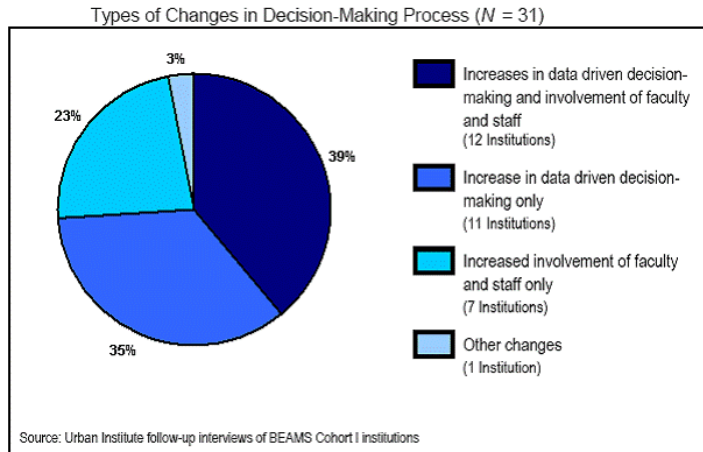
- **Carson, CA**, in conjunction with **California State University—Dominguez Hills** on Tuesday, March 25, 2008 from noon to 2 p.m.
- **Atlanta, GA**, hosted by **Spelman College** on Friday, March 28, 2008 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Humacao, PR**, on the campus of the **University of Puerto Rico—Humacao** on Tuesday, April 1, 2008 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **San Antonio, TX**, as part of the **University of Incarnate Word's** symposium on student success Friday, April 4, 2008 at 9:45 a.m.

The Effect of BEAMS on Institutional Decision Making



The Urban Institute (UI), external evaluator of the BEAMS project, has been conducting interviews with the 2003 and 2004 cohorts to determine the impact of BEAMS on various campus practices. The most recent evaluation of the 2003 cohort expands on the preliminary effect originally measured, and focuses on the longer-term effects of the program on institutional decision-making processes and procedures.

Overall, most institutions (94 percent) have reported that since their involvement in the BEAMS project they have observed a change in the way their institutions made decisions regarding increases in the use of data and greater involvement from campus constituencies. The figure below shows the types of changes institutions have observed.



Increased Use of Data and How it is Used: Reporting institutions have noticed changes to how data is used to influence policy and programs on campus. Data is used as a tool to identify problems and determine appropriate solutions for them.

Greater Participation of Various Campus Constituencies: There is greater involvement across faculty, staff, and students in discussion and decision-making processes.

Other Effects of Participation in BEAMS Include: Increased focus on student needs, stronger collaboration among campus constituencies, shared learning across institutions, and greater faculty involvement in improving student experiences.

Participation in the BEAMS project has also helped influence institutional change. Thirty-nine percent of institutions identified BEAMS as a catalyst for change, while 48 percent stated that BEAMS was partially responsible for process changes. Through the structure and processes available to campuses, coupled with other campus supports, BEAMS has served as a major driver influencing institutional change.

BEAMS Campus Highlights

This is the fourth installation of snapshots of your BEAMS colleagues' work. As the BEAMS project comes to an end this June we encourage you to take the opportunity to share your progress and success in the June edition of the BEAMS Beat. If you are interested in sharing your team's progress, please send a short summary to Melissa Del Rios at mdelrios@ihep.org.

2003 Cohort—Norfolk State University

The NSU BEAMS project focused on the NSSE Benchmark "Enriching Educational Experiences" (E3). First-Year Experience, academic advising, and service learning were the project's specific target areas. In the last several years, through its participation in NSSE/BCSSE/FSSE, BEAMS, and Summer Academy events, the NSU BEAMS team has developed a cadre of faculty members, administrators, and student leaders who substantively understand the changing paradigm of higher education (from teaching to learning), who are engaged in intentional innovations (e.g., restructuring of the First-year Experience), and who are committed to using assessment diagnostic and formative evidence in planning and decision making to improve the quality of student learning. As a result of implementation of the BEAMS project, the 2003 and 2007 comparative NSSE data demonstrate that NSU students, especially first-year students, significantly increased engagement on all indicators of the E3 NSSE benchmark.

BEAMS project accomplishments also have provided a strong foundation for developing NSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a core accreditation requirement of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The title of NSU's proposed QEP is *R.E.A.S.O.N.: Creating Coherent Pathways to Develop Critical Thinking Skills in Students*. Having implemented strong educationally enriching programs, NSU has intentionally designed Pathway 2 of the QEP to align E3 programs with academic curriculum in the general education core. Based on campus-wide discussions held in 2005—07, critical thinking emerged as an orthogonal component linking E3 programs and academic curriculum. Indeed, all activities included in the NSSE Educationally Enriching Experiences Benchmark require application of critical thinking skills or aim to develop these skills. Thus, building on the BEAMS project successes, the proposed QEP is expanding the scope of E3 activities to include general education curricula and pedagogies. At the same time, NUS is narrowing its focus on developing and assessing critical thinking skills in students.

*Campus highlights (continued)***2004 Cohort—Inter American University of Puerto Rico at San Germán**

IAUPR—San Germán's long range strategic goals have always been to "offer strong education programs at all levels." This goal has been supported by continuous curricular, technological and pedagogical innovations, and improvements." The campus constantly seeks to improve the quality of service for its students and for the "community" it serves. The institution has not forgotten its commitment of "service to the community" and achieving higher rates of student successes, which reflect on retention.

The school's BEAMS project is an extension of this commitment and has the following vision and mission as its guiding light:

VISION—To be the Puerto Rican model of the effective integration of teaching and services, thereby fostering a community of learners conducted to success for all stakeholders.

MISSION—To implement a *Campus Learning Center (CLC)*, where the best practices amongst all the constituents of the campus community of learners will combine to achieve higher success rates for all students.

PROJECT GOALS—To create the CLC Model, where ideas, projects, mentoring, and advising will be done; bringing together students, faculty and administrative personnel to learn, teach, and serve. These goals specifically identify the best educational and service practices from all stakeholders so that they can be implemented at the CLC, so others can learn. They also develop technology based instructional support to supplement identified community needs.

The CLC was inaugurated in fall 2007 and has become the focal point of all community members. It is housed in a two-story building, with the administrative offices on the top level, and a training laboratory and a computer laboratory for 20 individuals, housed on the first floor. The CLC has also developed a resource component for mentors and campus visitors. The hope is to have an additional satellite center for information access for the community at the CLC. The resources will assist mentors and mentees in their development, and in the establishment of their relationships.

The key component for the IAUPR—San Germán Tiger BEAMS team, was securing administrative buy-in from the very beginning of the process. They included as a key member of the team the campus chancellor, which allowed them to cultivate the idea of the CLC. At the same time the chancellor was able to move its message up to the presidential level.

The fait-accomplí was obtaining funds from the Department of Education through Title V for the final development and implementation of the CLC. This grant will allow them and their sister campus, Inter American at Aguadilla, to put in place, over the next four years, the major components of the CLC, mentoring and advising.

2005 Cohort—Cheyney University

Cheyney University's 2006 Summer Academy experience provided the inspiration and tools for the development of a \$500,000 grant funded by the state of Pennsylvania to help the institution launch a comprehensive retention initiative. The Cheyney University retention initiative places primary emphasis on a holistic student development experience for first-year students that will challenge them to develop competencies leading to academic success, active citizenship, and social responsibility.

The first phase of the initiative was the implementation of a 2007 Summer Bridge program that was designed to prepare first-year students for the academic and social challenges of college life. Students were fully engaged in academic and social experiences with student peers, upper-class student mentors, faculty, and the expanded university community. Participants gained a sense of confidence and motivation to develop academic and leadership skills in preparation for the total college experience in the fall semester. The second phase of the retention plan involved the formation of learning communities during the fall semester that provided out-of-class activities and learning experiences designed to develop a deepened sense of community and belonging. The final phase of the program, which has yet to be implemented, involves the development of a service learning experience for students that will promote a sense of citizenship and social responsibility in a multi-cultural society.

The Cheyney University community has embraced the retention initiative. Faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni have volunteered to engage in cooperative experiences with the students to enhance their college experience. This collaborative effort supports Cheyney University's motto that "retention is everyone's business."

2008 Summer Academy Planning Underway

The Institute for Higher Education Policy's (IHEP) 2008 Summer Academy will take place in Birmingham, Ala., July 20–24, 2008. This year's theme is *Strengthening Institutions to Improve National Competitiveness*. The theme of this Summer Academy is motivated by the changing demographics of the U.S. population and the increasingly flat world in which higher education exists. America must renew its commitment to successfully recruit, retain, and graduate under served populations in higher education, by focusing on critical issues such as student transfer, STEM education, and student success. Educating the emerging majority populations is critical to the nation's economic and social growth and global competitiveness. Daily activities are designed around the following themes: creating cultures of evidence, integrating best practices for student learning, and sustaining campus change.



As BEAMS comes to an end prior to the Summer Academy the conference's project-based focus will no longer be available, however the event still provides institutions the opportunity to set aside time to work on campus initiatives, either new or established work from your BEAMS action plan. There will also be opportunities to network with colleagues from institutions across the country. Consultants and higher education experts will be available to help you with your planning work as in past Academies.

Early-bird registration for the conference is \$849 per participant. Through a grant from Lumina Foundation for Education, IHEP will be able to provide limited financial assistance to select institutions that were part of the BEAMS project and can demonstrate financial need. Registration is now open. For more information on the 2008 Summer Academy visit: <http://www.ihep.org/events/event-detail.cfm?id=6>.

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

We continue to encourage campuses to independently submit BEAMS-related proposals to national and regional conferences. Disseminating your work highlights campus successes, provides a platform to mentor and collaborate with other institutions, and emphasizes the broader importance of the BEAMS project. If you have submitted or are considering submitting a BEAMS-related proposal at an upcoming conference, contact Melissa Del Rios, BEAMS program manager at mdelrios@ihep.org to apply for a travel grant to support session presentation. Requests can only be received through May 30, 2008 for conferences held before June 30, 2008.

Conference Accepting Proposals

The 4th Annual Symposium on Service Learning & Civic Engagement, to be held at Western Carolina University, is accepting proposals until March 21, 2008. The symposium will provide a forum for a scholarly discussion of issues, perspectives, and best practices in service learning. It also facilitates the exchange of information and ideas on innovative and creative civic engagement strategies, and programs. Proposals should focus on student learning emerging from service-learning or civic engagement research or practice. The symposium will be held on Thursday, June 12, 2008. For more information, please visit www.wcu.edu/studentd/service_learning/symposium/index.html.

There are several other 2008 conferences that are no longer accepting proposals, but you may be interested in participating:

- The Association of American Colleges and Universities is hosting "Discovering, Integrating and Applying Knowledge: Effective Educational Practices for Today's Students and Tomorrow's Innovation," a conference on connecting high impact educational practices to issues such as learning communities and problem-based learning. The conference will be held in Austin, Texas from April 10–12. Other conference goals include creating systems of support, building seamless learning environments, and assembling compelling data. For more information, please visit: www.aacu.org/meetings/effective_educational_practices/index.cfm.
- This year's NC State Undergraduate Assessment Symposium is titled "Breaking Barriers: Building a Culture of Assessment." Taking place from April 25–27, the symposium aims to provide a forum for higher education professionals to exchange ideas, discover new practices, and form partnerships to enhance the full undergraduate educational experience through assessment. Attendees will receive tools and ideas that can be implemented both in community colleges as well as four-year institutions. For further information, please visit: www.ncsu.edu/assessment/symposium/.
- The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators will be hosting their International Assessment & Retention Conference in Scottsdale, Ari. from June 11–15. The conference will focus on assessment as a strategy to improve learning and persistence as a tool to improve transparency as well as assessment of management and leadership. If you are interested in attending, please visit: www.assessconf.net.

The BEAMS Beat

March 2008

About BEAMS

BEAMS is a five-year initiative fostering the ways in which Historically Black, Hispanic-serving, and Tribal colleges and universities using the 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 the 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

BEAMS Contact Information:

Institute for Higher Education Policy
1320 19th Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
Fax (202) 861-9307

Lacey H. Leegwater
Associate Director of Planning and Special Projects
(202) 861-8223 x220
lleegwater@ihep.org

Melissa Del Rios
Program Manager
(202) 861-8223 x221
mdelrios@ihep.org

National Survey of Student Engagement
Center for Postsecondary Research, Indiana University Bloomington
1900 East Tenth Street, Eigenmann Hall Suite 419
Bloomington, IN 47406
Fax: (812) 856-5150

Jillian Kinzie
Associate Director, Center for Postsecondary Research
and NSSE Institute
(812) 856-1430
jikinzie@indiana.edu

For more information about BEAMS, visit the IHEP's Website, www.ihep.org.