

CAPCSD April 2007

## **SUCCESSFUL RETENTION OF DIVERSE STUDENTS**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

Participants: Nancy Martino, Clinic Director, Xavier University, New Orleans  
Cliff Highnam, Program Director, University of Northern Iowa  
Joe Melcher, Program Director, Xavier University

### **BRIEF HISTORY OF XAVIER'S PROGRAM**

Undergraduate Program (Pre-professional); Historically Black, Catholic  
# of majors has varied from 22-50

Few students enter with Speech Pathology as major

Many students change majors to Speech Pathology after first year

90% of students on financial aid

Financing graduate school very difficult

Program faces the challenge of recruiting majors and also helping graduates enter  
Master's programs

### **PREVIOUS GRANT PROGRAMS FOR RECRUITING STUDENTS**

1989 a 4+2 joint five year grant with University of Southwestern Louisiana (now  
University of Louisiana, Lafayette) and Grambling University

Xavier and Grambling, undergraduate only; historically Black and USL, state school with  
predominantly White student body

Focus was on multiculturalism; attracting Xavier and Grambling students to USL; and  
awarding graduate fellowships to those students accepted at USL

Annual conference hosted at one of the three participating institutions; gave students  
experience in making poster presentations; networking; learning about each campus  
Funded by U.S. Dept. of Ed.

Outcome: several Xavier students accepted and completed M.A. at USL

1995 ASHA Multicultural Grant to attract new students to Xavier University of Louisiana  
Six week program that meet on Saturday's; 19 participants from local high schools

Used theme based program – Prevention of Hearing Loss and Voice Disorders  
Students required to develop poster session to be presented in home room  
Outcome: only one student enrolled at Xavier University of Louisiana

**PROBLEM:** How can we help our students get funding for graduate school and also attract more students to our undergraduate program?  
Previous contact with graduate programs indicated they were pleased with our students  
Graduate programs needed funding in order to attract our students  
Xavier students needed funded to complete B.A.  
Xavier program needed an incentive to help attract majors

**SOLUTION:** Joint grant with UNI that would identify Xavier students in Junior year; accept them conditionally for graduate school; grant from U.S. Dept. Special Education would then pay Senior year tuition at X.U. and tuition for graduate school at UNI

**RESULTS:** Thirteen students accepted and completed program at UNI over four year period.

## DETAILS OF GRANT

### APPLICATION PROCESS

We wanted students to take it seriously; we wanted it to be competitive... they had to:

- a. complete application,
- b. discuss commitment to working with children from underrepresented groups.
- c. discuss the most important thing about working with individuals from underrepresented groups that you've learned thus far in your observations, courses and practica experiences.
- d. give a personal statement and discuss your professional goals.
- e. Letters of recommendation

### Interviews

- A representative from Northern Iowa participated in interviews
- Traci Berry, African American on the project
- Dressed professionally; formal interview
- Tell us about yourself; why you would like this opportunity
- 3 faculty members gave ratings and discussed all students

### UNI Visits

- Northern Iowa funded students to visit.
- Sent three at a time
- Met faculty; discussed possible course schedule
- Toured dept and university

- Met with other Xavier students
- did fun stuff

## CHALLENGES

- Coordinating 3 faculty & interviews
- Coordinating visits New Orleans and Cedar Falls
- Timing: B/c we wanted to give the undergrads a tuition stipend, they had to commit their first semester of their senior year; Some changed their minds
- Practicum site agreements
  - a. Xavier traditionally does not go to public schools or hospitals
  - b. Time intensive getting agreements signed
- To satisfy the three site rule and because students wanted hospital experience, we had to figure a way to get them to do hospitals.
 

Some stayed in Iowa; Some requested to do internships in home towns

Solutions: we gave them choices; for home towns, they find hospital; SLP signed agreement, I spoke with slp and got copies of C's & license

## CHALLENGES FROM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

### Culture shock

small town/ rural --big city/urban  
 AA/white  
 For some, the weather

Many did not want to work in schools for 6 years

Many only took 1-2 years funding instead of 3

For faculty here, not knowing there were problems until they got big

Solution: better contact, more open, Traci, Patrice, Joe phoned and emailed often

### Intercultural Communication class

XU students HAD to take it; others didn't; Good thing: they really got along with instructor (Jim Day)

## BENEFITS/OUTCOMES

1. A fantastic project, learning experience for all
2. 13 entered and 13 finished
3. 13 are working in urban schools: Houston, Atlanta, Richmond, Los Angeles, Chicago, Phoenix, New Orleans
4. Most students said they would do it again
5. Each year, these students work with approximately 800-900 students ... good for the school children to see color

6. Has a very good effect on our organization ...minority representation

## THINGS TO DO DIFFERENTLY

More and better communication

- a. everybody needs to be on the same page, including students, faculty, staff & administration
- b. Administration needs to be supportive
- c. Workshops by AA (Elise Davis-McFarland came to UNI)

## SETTING UP A STRUCTURE

### Faculty buy-in

The importance of a minority presence needs to be discussed by and with the faculty. If they want to build this presence, they'll want to discuss their commitment. A faculty workshop on minority issues is a good investment in trying to encourage a faculty buy-in.

### Pre-enrollment visits and tours

Extremely important for giving minority students an idea of what they are getting into – even more so than for majority students who can safely make certain assumptions based on their prior experiences. A good visit includes people as well as places and spaces. Meeting with a potential adviser could be good during this visit. Advisers, however, may not need to be a special designee for minority students.

### Importance of groups

Several minority students who matriculate as a group can work to advantage for recruitment and retention.

- Students are more comfortable in the presence of their cohorts
- They'll share more of their culture with others when with cohorts

### Providing a “go-to” guy.

The presence of a resource person on campus who they can communicate with and will listen to them and represent their concerns is very important. He/she does not need to be in the academic department

- Needs to be someone they can trust and confide in.
- Needs to be someone they believe will recognize prejudice when they see it
- Needs to be somebody who has the ear of the department faculty and head
- This person's race is not a critical criterion

### The importance of a good orientation.

Make certain minority students are well oriented to the department. New students are often concerned about making mistakes that draw negative attention to themselves. Multiply those fears several fold for minority students because they often sense they are

drawing attention by simply walking in the door. Good, thoughtful orientations can reduce these fears. But remind them that all beginning students make mistakes.

### The bigger campus picture:

Introduce all students to clubs on campus where they can mingle with students from similar backgrounds. This is especially true for students who are not majority students. Multicultural clubs are often dominated by international students, however, – and may not be what your minority students are looking for.

## SOCIAL ELEMENTS

### Plan at least one mixer

Mixers during first week of class are very important

- Learning names

- Sharing backgrounds – telling stories

- Interacting and having fun

Best mixers are held during school day – between classes or at noon. There's a better chance that everyone shows up and time issues are easier to control.

### What's in a name?

Make an early effort to learn students' names and try to avoid mixing up names whenever possible. Majority students may find perverse pleasure in professors mixing up names of students. Our experience is that minority students are less entertained by this.

### Student-planned functions:

Make certain student functions are well publicized and that all students know they are welcome to come to them – do not trust the grapevine. Make certain all students use the university e-mail system in addition to any other systems they bring to campus. Walk them through the user-name/passwords ordeal to the extent they need it.

Encourage all students, including minority students, to go to these functions and encourage them to come when you'd expect most students to show up. There are often cultural disparities in that regard.

### Departmental Spaces:

Areas designated for students should be promoted as belonging to everyone.

### Visiting faculty homes:

Faculty may have students over to their houses: This can be an excellent way to become acquainted with students on another plain and encourage socialization between groups of students. It is a common practice in HBCUs – less so in large, primarily white universities. The primary considerations here may be coming to know students individually and encouraging group interactions across racial and social boundaries.

## ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS:

### **Make public unwritten classroom rules:**

Assumptions regarding classroom and clinic etiquette need to be stated up front. Don't just put it in a manual or bury it in a syllabus – talk about it in class. These rules are often assumed – unwritten.

How late is late-to-class? When is an assignment late enough to be marked down? What happens when students miss class? What materials are to be used when answering test questions? What is expected for classroom participation? What is clinic and classroom cell-phone etiquette?

### **Praise publicly, criticize privately:**

In small groups, it's often convenient to correct a student's particular clinical procedure, etc. in view of the other students, particularly in briefings after therapy or after assessment procedures. We may reason that everyone learns from such constructive feedback. Pointing out student errors in public can be viewed as over-the-line by some students. Minority students may figure prominently in this group.

### **Perception of remedial instruction:**

Graduate students working as assistants are often assigned to tutor undergraduate students who are struggling with certain concepts or skills. Always ask students (any students) how private they prefer these sessions to be.

### **The classroom mix:**

Try to encourage racial and cultural mixing in class. Friends will often sit together. Minorities are no exception. Working groups in class should be assigned by the instructor rather than left to student preferences. We usually number off and form groups by numbers. Students who sit together will not find themselves in the same groups.

Look for opportunities in classes for minority students to share personal knowledge of their culture and languages – but don't put them on the spot to do it. Check out their willingness to share cultural and personal information prior to when class begins. Be careful not to make assumptions about their race, culture or socio-economic class based upon race. Also, don't assume they are experts on their own culture or their own language or dialect. They may be no more an expert on their own culture or dialect than anyone else in class is on theirs.

### **Writing:**

When there are significant writing problems, take advantage of the same campus resources other students have used. Sometimes the frustration that both student and professor generate about writing issues are dealt with better by someone who teaches writing every day. It may be wise for content faculty to save ourselves for judging content.

## COMMENTS/QUESTIONS