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African-American Male Initiatives: Collaborating for Success

Zoe M. Johnson

This article provides guidance for those looking to establish an African-American Male Initiative (AAMI) on their campus. The hallmark of a strong AAMI is collaboration. This article explores contextual factors that influence the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of African-American males in higher education. It includes the development and growth of the University of Georgia's African-American Male Experience. Reflections and recommendations are provided along with an in-depth review of collaborative challenges and questions to ask in launching an AAMI collaboration on any campus.

Increasing the rate of postsecondary degree attainment in the United States is an ongoing goal pursued vigorously by national leaders, educators, scholars, think tanks, and foundations alike (Harper & Harris, 2012). In pursuit of that aim, dissecting enrollment, retention, and graduation rates serve an important role in understanding the larger context of how different groups of students are faring in the American higher education environment. This data has produced a grim picture of African American males in the collegiate setting. African-American male collegians are often characterized as “one of the most underrepresented, stereotyped, disengaged, and lowest performing students on college and university campuses” (Harper & Harris, 2012, p. 2). Researchers and the popular press have called attention to high rates of attrition, achievement gaps, academic unpreparedness, and low levels of engagement in an effort to make the intricacies of the problem clear (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012; Pope, 2009). In response, educational institutions alongside community stakeholders have sought to eliminate disparities using varying strategies.

In the last several years, initiatives focusing on the persistence, retention, and success of African-American males in education have emerged around the nation (Wood, 2011). Across institutional types, administrators and educators have increasingly focused attention and efforts on this population of students. The American Association of Community Colleges chronicles all such programs in their Minority Male Student Success Database (2014). While a similar database has not emerged for 4-year institutions, even a cursory internet search reveals scores of programs. In 2012, the Center for the Student of Race and Equity in Education, the Pathways to College Network, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy produced a report entitled, *Men of Color* that offers a snapshot of current initiatives aimed to address the condition of college

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success for Black undergraduate men (Harper & Harris, 2012).

In 2002, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia launched an African-American Male Initiative (AAMI) aimed at increasing the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of African-American males at system schools (University System of Georgia, 2012). The initiative makes grant funds ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000 available to system schools creating or sustaining a campus AAMI. Over the last twelve years, the program has grown around the state of Georgia from three to twenty-five participating institutions, and noteworthy outcomes have ensued. As a whole, the enrollment of Black male students in the system has increased by 80%. In 2009, the Lumina Foundation for Education joined the effort expanding the reach and subsequent impact of the system-wide effort.

In early 2014 President Barack Obama launched an initiative designed to build ladders of opportunity for boys and young men of color. My Brother's Keeper aims to identify and promote community, philanthropic, and private sector partnerships that are successful in connecting men of color to the mentoring, support, and skill development needed to be competitive in the job sector and collegiate setting (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2014). This initiative seeks to bolster existing efforts and improve the educational and employment outcomes for men of color.

It is no surprise that collaboration is at the core of both the University System of Georgia's AAMI and My Brother's Keeper presidential initiative. Seminal literature in student affairs has long touted the value and impact of collaboration done well. The future success of higher education is wholly dependent on collaborations not solely limited to within the academy (i.e. academic affairs and student affairs), but collaborations that include other sectors as well (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], 2002). *Powerful Partnerships:*

A Shared Responsibility for Learning taught us that acting in concert toward common goals allows us to best use accumulated understanding (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], American College Personnel Association [ACPA], & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 1998). This article is the story of how one collaboration did just that and how this program can be replicated on other campuses. The Georgia African-American Male Experience (GAMME) at the University of Georgia took root and blossomed around the shared goal of African-American male recruitment, engagement, and success.

Literature Review

A review of the literature highlights an educational experience for African-American males fraught with difficulty. Before even entering the collegiate landscape, the barriers are plentiful (Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009). The brief literature review to follow will further explore the historical and present day challenges facing African-American men in accessing and persisting in post-secondary education.

A Leaky Faucet: African American Males in the Educational Pipeline

To begin to understand the African American male collegiate experience, one must first examine the pathway to college. Systemic barriers hindering advancement to the post-secondary environment are commonplace in literature examining the K-12 experience of African-American males (Palmer et al., 2009). In primary and secondary schools, teachers and counselors are more likely to impose negative expectations on Black males than upon their White counterparts. As such, African American males are disciplined in greater frequency and severity than White students (Palmer et al., 2009). Overwhelmingly concentrated in special education, African-American males are underrepresented in gifted education and Advanced Placement courses.

These factors have a strong impact on the presence, or lack thereof, of African American men in the collegiate setting (Davis, 1994).

African-American Males in College

African-American men have a long history of breaking down barriers in pursuit of educational attainment. Prior to the 1954, *Oliver L. Brown et.al. v. the Board of Education of Topeka (KS) et. al.* (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2006) decision, the vast majority of African-Americans could only attend historically Black colleges and universities (Newman, Mmeje, & Allen 2012). Since that time, African-American students have gained access to predominantly White institutions primarily by way of coercive legal mandate. While the doors to the ivory tower legally opened following the landmark case, equality of opportunities has been a more difficult barrier to overcome.

Across all historically marginalized racial, ethnic identities, more progress has been made by women earning postsecondary degrees than men (Palmer et al., 2009). This gender difference is especially pronounced among African-Americans. No statistics is more telling of that reality than those related to enrollment of African-American males in post-secondary education. An equitable distribution would mean the proportion of individuals from any social identity in higher education mirrors the ratio of that group in the general population. Such a parallel suggests that opportunities and access are relatively equitable giving everyone the chance to achieve a college degree should they so desire. In 2004, African-American males represented 7.9% of the 18–24 year olds in U.S. population (Harper, 2008). At flagship institutions across the nation, the average enrollment of African-American male undergraduates was 2.8% (Harper, 2008). The number increases slightly to 4.3% African-American male undergraduates at all institutions of higher education.

The Invisible Man

In a post-*Oliver L. Brown et al. v. the Board of Education of Topeka (KS) et al.* (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2006) America, scholars from a variety of disciplines have written reports, studies, and books about African-American males in college. The extent of this body of research over the past several decades can be characterized by the following outcomes or identified challenges: financial pressures; experiences of racism; academic difficulty; maladjustment; and collegiate dissatisfaction (Dancy, 2012). Practitioners have responded to these findings by placing substantial emphasis on the recruitment, retention, and graduation of African-American students (Valbrun, 2010).

Recommendations for practice are often linked to campus climate, academic support, co-curricular opportunities, and cultural sensitivity of faculty and staff; all of which are important (Hilton, Wood, & Lewis, 2012). However, often overlooked is the important combination that institutional intentionality and social support play in student achievement. The voices of African-American college men are often misunderstood or ignored (Davis, 1994). The world, and by extension the campus community, is often eager to place them in the limiting boxes of stereotypes that marginalize their presence and have the potential to make the educational environment hostile. This is particularly true when their experiences and interests vary from the limited constructed view that others have for them (Davis, 1994). Viewed by some as benign neglect and others as systemic oppression, being invisible has implications on the collegiate experience for African-American males (Horne, 2007). Educational attainment for African American males is closely aligned with “feelings of support and congruence with institutional norms” (Dancy, 2012, p. 18). African-American men at predominantly White institutions (PWIs)

in particular may find themselves at odds with the institutional cultural, norms, or ways of being. Informal campus codes of behavior may be difficult to decipher without a trusted guide, making attempts to fit in a challenge. Simultaneously wrestling with high family or community expectations and the low academic or campus expectations can result in feeling like an outsider in both worlds (Davis, 1994). Social isolation is an impediment to academic achievement for African-American male college students at PWIs (Hilton et al., 2012). However, understanding and crafting experiences that acknowledge the individual and social nature of learning can create powerful learning environments.

It Takes a Village

Partners around the academy play an important role in creating a web of support for vulnerable populations (Bourassa & Kruger, 2002). College by its very nature can be stressful, and all students are susceptible to the negative implications of that stress on academics and health (Negga, Applewhite, & Livingston, 2007). Research shows that perceived social support serves as a buffering agent against stress (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012; Xueting, Hong, Bin, & Taisheng, 2013). In order to positively impact the experience of African-American male students, campus communities must be clear in conveying (in word and deed) that these students feel valued, loved, and respected. Social support and active engagement in school help make learning, development, and persistence to degree completion possible (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Pro-academic identities that support achievement are shaped in part by connections to supportive others such as school administrators, faculty, and peers (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

African-American Male Initiative Exemplars

The College Board Advocacy and Policy Center identifies two exemplary programs in the areas of persistence and retention as significantly impacting the educational experience of young men of color (The College Board, 2014). The Todd A. Bell National Resource Center of the African American Male at The Ohio State University and Multicultural Student Retention Services at Kennesaw State University are noted exemplars in this area of work.

The Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male at The Ohio State University (OSU) opened in September 2005 (The Ohio State University, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Bell National Resource on the African American Male, 2014). In the years since being established the Center, is well on its way to achieving the vision to become the premier resource on issues pertaining to the African-American Males across the lifespan. Positioned at the heart of the OSU campus, the Bell Center endeavors to improve the retention and graduation rates of Black males. The Center conducts robust research and evaluations to inform social policy and uses evidenced based programs that can be replicated at other institutions. Perhaps most known for their signature African American Male Retreat, other program offerings include an early arrival program, Todd Bell Lecture Series, Leadership Institute, recognition ceremony, and mentoring. OSU continues to see increases in the graduation rates of African-American males since the Center opened its doors (The Ohio State University, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Bell National Resource on the African American Male, 2014).

The fastest growing school in the University System of Georgia, Kennesaw State University (KSU), is located 20 miles north of Atlanta (Kennesaw State University, 2014). The campus serves more than 24,600 undergraduate and graduate students and has a national reputation that continues to strengthen. Housed within Multicultural Student Retention Services, the KSU African American Male Initiative exists as a partnership with faculty, staff and students

aiming to increase enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of KSU students. Mentoring, leadership development, and the celebration of achievement are the cornerstones of the KSU AAMI, the key feature of which is a summer bridge program. Bridge programs are designed to acclimate pre-collegiate and freshmen students to college life and expectations. KSU reports that the AAMI has made a significant positive impact on the academic and social success of Black male students on their campus (Kennesaw State University, 2014).

Creating an African American Male Initiative

With strong collaborations, institutions of all sizes and types can create a successful AAMI. Considering contextual factors, building a team, using campus data, and pursuing varied sources of funding will help you start with the end in mind. The section to follow seeks to bridge the theoretical and practical in exploring the process of creating an African American Male Initiative on any campus.

Contextual Factors that Build Momentum

Timing and context are important often dictating the success of collaborations. Consider the institutional contextual factors at play and the ways in which that can enhance or thwart the momentum of creating a campus AAMI. Is your campus merging with another campus? Are new leaders or key partners eagerly looking to embrace an innovative new initiative? Are constricting budgets challenging your institution to identify ways to coalesce and streamline efforts? These and other contextual factors may provide the energy needed to advance the development of an AAMI.

On my campus, there was the perfect storm of a national attention to the needs of Black men highlighted through My Brother's Keeper backed by President Barack Obama; a grant funding opportunity; a new University president with a keen interest in the experience of

underrepresented students; a previously dormant Black Male Leadership Society on campus that was poised to revitalize; and an Associate Provost with both the interest, relationships, and positional authority to convene an interdisciplinary group of campus and community partners. The resulting collaboration and the corresponding impact was magical.

Building the Team

Greater Expectations extends a powerful call to action about the interdisciplinary imperative in forming collaborative teams (AAC&U, 2002). As you identify partners for this endeavor, expand your thinking to include both the usual and not so usual suspects. Often we make assumptions about what colleagues in seemingly unrelated disciplines or functional areas may be willing to invest in a joint venture. Yes, people are busy and guarded about taking on additional responsibilities. However, casting a wide net and involving potential partners in the early stages of building your campus AAMI can ensure that everyone's interests are reflected in the final product.

For my campus AAMI team, collaborators included the Office of Institutional Diversity, Multicultural Services and Programs, Undergraduate Admissions, the Office of the Vice-President for Student Affairs, Greek Life, faculty members from the College of Education, student leaders from the Black Male Leadership Society, Peach State Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, and a community civic leader. The educational backgrounds and disciplines of the professionals involved were extremely diverse including but not limited to Education, Engineering, Social Work, College Student Affairs Administration, African-American Studies, and English. Eventually applying the moniker Georgia African American Male Experience (GAAME) to the initiative, the group set out to create cohesive experiences and support mechanisms that would serve to increase the enrollment of African American males at

UGA, while maintaining already high retention and graduation rates through enhanced student engagement.

In the early stages of any collaboration, dare to dream about the possibilities that could result. The GAAME team was driven by the grant process we knew we wanted to engage with. In this way, there was an existing template by way of the elements that would be required for the grant application. For institutions establishing an AAMI independent of grant funds, the possibilities may be even more esoteric making the dreaming stage all the more critical. Uninhibited dreaming becomes an important early stage as it allows partners to both build excitement and start the collaborative endeavor with the end in mind.

Listen to the Data Within

In planning an AAMI on your campus, see what story your institutional data is telling you. GAAME early meetings focused on reviewing scores of institutional data to establish benchmarks and understand in context, a unique story revealed by our institution related to the experience of African-American males. It quickly became apparent that counter to national data and prevailing literature, UGA did not have a retention or graduation issue at all. To the contrary, once Black males matriculated to the University, chances were high that they would persist to graduation. Enrollment, on the other hand, was a different story altogether. Enrollment numbers were low, extremely low. Clearly, recruitment emerged as the primary challenge for our AAMI. What does your campus data reveal?

The Grant Process

If your campus chooses to pursue grant funding to support the work of your AAMI, familiarity with the requirements and expectations of the funding authority will help you structure a successful program. It's never too early to start planning for a grant application

process. Grants can be complex from application through stewardship. When pursued as part of a collaboration, early planning becomes even more imperative. For the GAAME team, the Board of Regents AAMI request for proposals to vie for funds came several months after initial explorations with the group began. By that time, data had been collected about campus needs and a clear plan had been identified for how a \$10,000 initial year award could be utilized. It is recommended that the grant writing process be centralized with one person responsible for creating the first draft and maintaining subsequent iterations of the document as informed by collaborators. It is of benefit if the responsible party also has assessment duties connected to their institutional role. Once created, the draft can be shared with campus partners for review and edits prior to final submission. This proved efficient for the GAMME team by streamlining the process while still allowing for all to be involved and share ownership. In order for this strategy to succeed there must be sufficient lead-time built into the process to allow all partners adequate time for discussion, feedback, and integration prior to the final product.

The Georgia African-American Male Experience

Consistent with the needs identified in our data story, the GAAME program design included a two-pronged approach with a student recruitment element and student engagement strategy. Co-program directors were identified with responsibility for the recruitment weekend and on-campus student engagement focus respectively. The recruitment strategy was modeled after an existing overnight visitation program that had garnered considerable success on campus yielding (admissions term for having admitted students matriculate) a high percentage of admitted students of color. Modified to target Black males with the added focus of leadership and campus involvement opportunities, the inaugural GAAME recruitment weekend occurred during April 18-19, 2014. The program placed great emphasis on potential student interaction

with senior University leadership including the President, Vice-President for Student Affairs, and Associate Provost for Institutional Diversity. In addition, current student leaders; recent and prominent alumni; civic and community leaders that included the Sherriff, distinguished faculty, along with key university staff members, were included in hopes that the admitted students would see this outpouring of support evidenced by physical presence and commit to the University of Georgia. The fall 2014 matriculation numbers will tell of the true success, but early markers are nothing short of impressive. The goal was that 30 students would come to campus for a visit. The GAMME team was delighted to have 32 prospective students RSVP for the weekend.

By all accounts, the visitation weekend was a tremendous success. Such success was made possible due to the long and at times arduous period of capacity building that preceded it. In this collaborative process, the GAAME team embraced the adage, "If you build it, they will come." Much of the building took the form of investing in the African-American male students that were already part of our campus community. Students were part of the collaboration from the onset and helped to inform the process in significant ways. We looked to them as our resident experts to inform us as to what attracted them to UGA. What kept them at the University, what were the challenges they experienced in this environment, and what were the opportunities to enhance the collegiate experience for themselves and the Black males to come. In asking these questions, we had to be prepared to hear the answer. Students do not always give our efforts rave reviews, but investing in them continues to be a worthy enterprise. Students want and need to know that people in their university community care for them and are willing to receive and respond to criticism in a way that demonstrates an ongoing commitment to student success (Johnson, 2014).

The GAMME team utilized the Black Male Leadership Society (BMLS)—a student organization under the auspices of Multicultural Services and Programs within the Division of Student Affairs—to mobilize the leadership and campus engagement element of the plan. Utilizing a peer engagement model, the purpose of the BMLS is to establish and foster a sense of unity, strength, and love among Black males. The group supports the academic, social, intellectual, and spiritual growth of Black male undergraduate and graduate students as well as alumni at UGA by maintaining a community of men who will continuously support and encourage one another. BMLS fosters positive relationships for Black men with others; develops and highlights the leadership of Black men in their communities and engages with and affects the lives of others beyond the boundaries of campus. For the GAAME team, it was clear that the presence and work of BMLS on campus was an essential ingredient in creating a strong sense of community for students once matriculated.

Reflections & Recommendations

King and Kitchener's (1994) Reflective Judgment Model provides an excellent framework for reviewing AAMI and other collaborations in a systematic way that conceptualizes complex thinking as a means to resolve ill-structured problems. Ill structured problems are complex, and the outcome may not be clear. Thus, solutions must be similarly complex and multifaceted. In using this model, knowledge is built on the bases of information from a variety of sources. Selected action is based on evaluations of evidence across contexts and the opinions of trusted others (King & Kitchener, 1994).

The hallmark of a strong AAMI is collaboration. Simply put, shared ownership produces enhanced effectiveness, larger scale impact, and quite possibly long term systemic change that, hopefully, makes the need for any identity particular program obsolete one day. For the

GAAME team, having interdisciplinary diversity on the team meant stronger solutions for the complex challenge we were seeking to address. Interpretations of solutions were based on vantage point, lived experience and anecdotal evidence. There is a selective tension that is commonplace in any collaborative effort. For the GAAME team, this manifested in within group dynamics thrusting some into the realm of reputable authority due to their years of experience, access to certain information or position. The perspectives of those members of the team carried great weight. This reality need not be inherently wrong. To the contrary, it can help to advance the work of the group in meaningful ways. However, if it results in silencing team members or other counterproductive disruptions, it must be addressed.

It is important to make room for complexity in collaboration. Allowing room for dynamically evolving approaches makes it possible to be well poised to withstand the challenges that are inevitable and certain to occur. One such challenge for the GAAME team was that the grant renewal request for proposals came prior to the close of the initial grant cycle. This resulted in stewardship, year-end report writing, and a proposal for next fund cycle happening at overlapping times. The team was asking for three times as much funding to support the continuation and expansion of the work established in the inaugural year, without yet knowing the outcome of said efforts. The timeline also proved challenging as it severely shortened the window of time available for proposal draft development. The bulk of this strain fell to the designated grant writer but had implications for shared authorship particularly on how the co-directors and other team members were able to contribute to the proposal. The swift schedule simply did not allow for the level of team engagement that had characterized the process at the onset. Grant cycles can be unpredictable at worst or change over time at best. If your AAMI is dependent on external funds, it is helpful always to be thinking one year ahead. As difficult as it

was to pull the proposal together in such a brief window of time, the GAAME team was able to identify the focus of the second year effort on research, writing, and publishing based on earlier group conversations that identified those goals. At the time this article was written, the UGA GAAME team had just been notified that the proposal was accepted for an additional year of funding.

Collaborative Challenges in Building an AAMI

Having an understanding of common challenges in collaboration will, hopefully, help to normalize those challenges. In the collaborative process, persistence is key. Many great ideas spawn from great partnerships that ultimately go nowhere because people give up too soon. If we want our Black male students to persist to graduation, we must have the fortitude to persist in our collaborative efforts. Common challenges include:

- **Varying levels of partner engagement.** At different times, members of your team may be more or less directly engaged. Do not mistake their participation or lack thereof with not being committed or invested in the collaboration. While their lack of involvement or commitment could certainly be one reason and should be addressed accordingly if it is, levels of engagement are more often a function of other responsibilities of their role. Choosing collaborators that are already doing some facet of work with African-American males will ensure interest and alignment in a way that will help to minimize the likelihood of this challenge occurring.
- **Competing priorities.** Closely related to levels of engagement, the challenge of competing priorities is distinctly highlighted because they often look differently for faculty, staff, community partners, and students.

- For *faculty* members at research institutions, the promotion and tenure process does not reward involvements in campus collaborations such as this one. Additionally, faculty contracts are often nine-month appointments that would make them difficult to access during the summer. Understanding faculty life and culture at the onset will help your AAMI team leverage the necessary support faculty can render while helping to manage expectations. When possible, seek to engage faculty members with a research interest in the success of underrepresented students. Including a research agenda as part of your initiative is recommended. This will serve your initiative, institution, and keep you connected to the community of scholarship surrounding Black male collegians.
- *Staff* members on your AAMI team will likely do most of the heavy lifting. It is helpful if the role they play on your team is in alignment with their job functions at your institution. This helps them to keep the AAMI centrally focused as part of their job responsibilities and allocate time accordingly without it feeling like an add on.
- *Community partners* can be the most challenging on your AAMI team in that their connection to the institution is the least firm of the group. It is helpful to have community partners that are alumni of your institution and retain current ties. Additionally, early and recurrent conversations about expectations and both sides are recommended.
- *Students* are the heart and soul of why the collaboration exists. They offer astute perspectives that if you invite and hear, will undoubtedly contribute to the success of your AAMI. It goes without saying but, first and foremost, students are

students. Their involvement in your campus AAMI collaboration is secondary to the worthy pursuit of degree attainment. Their availability is often limited due to class schedules and other commitments. They are easily frustrated with the bureaucracy we come to know as second nature, and particularly for African-American male students, they are pulled in a million different directions to represent themselves and others campus-wide.

- **Role definition** is crucial in getting your AAMI off the ground and keeping it moving forward. As important as all team members are, there must be a champion for the cause. The champion of the collaboration may or may not be the most senior person on your AAMI team. It is important that all team members know precisely what is expected of them. The success of your AAMI depends on it.
- **Shared ownership** is the other side of the role definition coin. Individual accountability is necessary but must be balanced with collective responsibility. Conflict is inherent in community and certainly in group processes, so do not shy away from it. It will make for a well vetted end product.
- **Bureaucracy in praxis.** Institutions of all sizes and types are complex, at times unwieldy, and have their fair share of red tape. Establish and stick to a time table that allows you to do things in advance as much as possible and expect the unexpected. Campus crisis, budget policies, vacation schedules, along with any and all manner of mild to severe calamities not remotely related to your AAMI can impact it. Pad your timeline, so that delayed does not translate to derailed.
- **The role of identity in advising student organizations** cannot be understated. Hopefully, your AAMI will involve a student organization. As much as possible have

your processes mirror your product. AAMIs are about Black male success. Your program will work closely with the Black male students on your campus. While African-American male students need to see and feel that faculty and staff from all identities are interested in and committed to their success, non-Black, non-male advisors to AAMI connected student organizations or programs should be mindful of the role of identity in this work.

- **Deadlines** are inherently part of collaborative work. Internally established ones will help keep you on track. Externally established ones can impact how your AAMI team collaborates. Insufficient time before a deadline leaves the work of many in the hands of few. Try to avoid that being the case by, again, planning in advance and building in enough time for full and equal participation of your entire collaborative team.

You Can Do It, This Will Help

Every campus has an existing infrastructure that can be leveraged to build a successful AAMI. That may come in the form of the Multicultural or Diversity Offices, student organizations, faculty members with research interests in issues impacting African-American males, community and civic leaders, and/or influential alumni interested in investing in your students. Furthermore, chances are your institution has an existing diversity plan, strategic plan, institutional priorities, or learning and development outcomes that speak to some aspect of diversity, inclusion, social justice, or support of underrepresented groups that you can use to bolster your efforts in securing large scale institutional support.

When you are ready to mobilize your campus and community partners in collaborating for an AAMI, ask yourself the following key questions:

1. Is there top down support?

2. What offices/student groups are involved in the recruitment, retention, and success of Black males on my campus? Who else should be included on our campus AAMI implementation team?
3. How can we involve students in the process early on?
4. What story does the data tell with regard to recruitment, retention, and enrollment of Black males on our campus?
5. Does the support exist to sustain what we are proposing? (i.e. budget, staff, leadership)
6. How will we assess the effectiveness and make adjustments to our program based on lessons learned?

The answers to these questions will help to reveal where you should start. For some institutions, that will mean engaging in the important work of building capacity on your campus. UGA GAAME team is an example of this; some campuses will be off to a sprint in no time due to the contextual perfect storm that makes swift and sustained momentum possible.

Conclusion

As student affairs practitioners, our wheelhouse of impact is the collegiate setting. The unique individual and social nature of learning can create powerful learning environments (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998). Every campus can be one of those powerful environments where students and collaborations alike flourish.

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