



"I Feel Like I'm Not Alone Here": The Impact of the A.A.M.I. at the University of Louisville ©

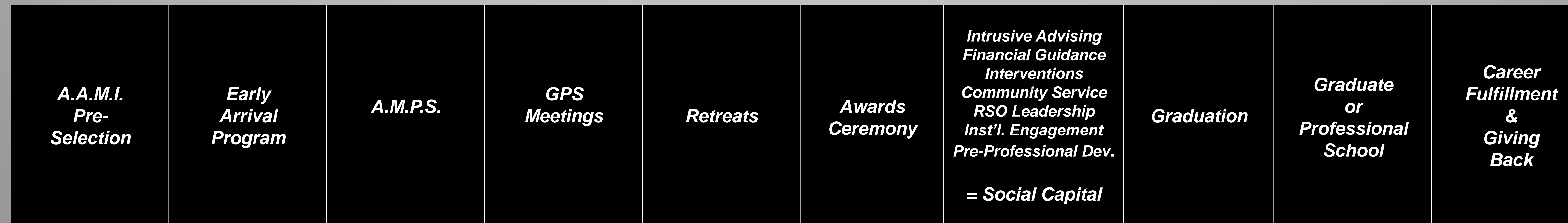
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GRID OF PERSISTENCE



SUMMARY

In a call to action towards becoming a premier metropolitan research university focused on maximizing academic persistence—the African American Male Initiative (A.A.M.I.) was launched in Fall 2011. Under the purview of the Vice Provost for Diversity & International Affairs (Dr. Mordean Taylor-Archer) with guidance from the former Cultural Center Director (Dr. Michael Anthony) the inaugural year of the A.A.M.I began with an initial cohort of 50 incoming African American male first-year students. These young men entered the Early Arrival Program to successfully transition into the University of Louisville and jumpstart their academic endeavors forming meaningful connections among success-driven, likeminded peers.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Operating with oversight from a Task Force comprised of faculty, staff and students, the A.A.M.I. fulfills four areas of focus expressed as A.M.P.S. (a force which can be measured and improved) representing Academics, Mentoring Support, Peer Connection and Student Involvement. To formulate the initial programming structure, preliminary surveys were conducted among pre-existing African American male students to ascertain perspectives on UofL's institutional climate and identify salient needs to construct modes of support. A.A.M.I. retention programs were also researched nationwide to explore how four-year institutions in other states formulated and implemented programming to improve rates of retention, persistence and graduation of African American undergraduate male students at predominantly white, public universities.

VISIONARY FOCUS

Maintain ongoing processes of evaluation by implementing suggested modifications or enhancements derived from feedback in year-end qualitative focus groups with A.A.M.I. participants

Address the need for African American males to develop meaningful connections and constructive interactions with other similarly situated males, fostering a sense of acceptance, collective racial esteem and camaraderie towards interpersonal development and shared expectations of academic success

Ensure the A.A.M.I. is relevant, effective and sufficiently resourced as a sustainable, respected institutional model – favorably impacting graduation rates of students throughout the University of Louisville, across the state of Kentucky and beyond.

GOALS

- Implement** an effective a retention program which incorporated national best practices framed with intentional programming and support mechanisms specific to needs of the black male student population at the University of Louisville
- Pinpoint** incoming underrepresented male students who are non-scholarship recipients as well as non-athletes, and thus more likely to be unsupported, invisible and disconnected from an engaging institutional experience, with a high propensity for attrition
- Gauge** the effect group outings / off-site retreats have on participants with emphasis on academic success, ethnic identity development, leadership cultivation and critical thinking
- Identify** and maximize effectiveness of a yearly qualitative assessment model by retrieving feedback from A.A.M.I. participants
- Evaluate** impacts upon levels of academic performance, mentoring interactions, institutional connection and student involvement

These aspirations are outlined with a singular purpose to **Achieve** the mission of the African American Male Initiative – **Improve** rates of graduation at the University of Louisville.

IMPACT



Findings expressed by A.A.M.I. Participants:

- "The A.A.M.I. helped me create my circle of friends"
- "Without the A.A.M.I., I wouldn't have been so connected"
- "This organization showed me that it was serious about me, so I want to be serious about it"
- "The goals they have for you, end up being the goals you have for yourself"
- "If they make it through, I can make it through too"
- "I feel like I'm not alone here"

Feedback after Retreat Participation:

- "I attended last year and found it really refreshing and helpful. Not only did it make me aware of the state of urgency that exist for our people but it made me want to do better and achieve my goals and expectations"
- "I learned that I need to be more extroverted. I also learned by talking to these men this weekend has made me have a stronger will to succeed in becoming a pediatrician. I also learned from the retreat how to finance graduate school"
- "The best part of the Retreat to me was listening to people and what they're going to school for. Dr. Kight, Dr. Williams, and Dr. Appiah instantly became my role-models after hearing them speak. They are the most powerful speakers I've ever seen"
- "African American males need to see others doing well, they need to see professional African American males like themselves"
- "I've already started asking people what is a positive stereotype for a black male"



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