

STUDENT SUCCESS BEST PRACTICE: SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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STUDENT SUCCESS CATEGORY --

- ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- STUDENT SERVICES
- WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- COLLEGE BUSINESS PRACTICE
- TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION
- OTHER:

TITLE: "MAKE IT HAPPEN - A TARGETED RECRUITMENT & RETENTION INITIATIVE"

PROCESS

For several decades now, national data indicate that African-American males enroll in institutions of higher education and complete at rates significantly below both majority students and African-American female students. This disparity is reflected among VCCS institutions and here at SsVCC. This is of particular concern at Southside since African-Americans make up approximately 40% of both our service area and student populations. Currently, African-American female enrollment at SsVCC outpaces African-American male enrollment by a ratio of two to one. In response, MAKE IT HAPPEN was created in 1998 on SsVCC's Christanna Campus by now President Al Roberts to promote African-American male enrollment. The program has evolved over the last 18 years to meet the changing needs of program participants and the College; and to operate within limited institutional funds. Current team members who contribute to the development and implementation of program strategy include Dr. Tara Carter, VP for Academic and Student Affairs; Bernadette Battle, Director of Counseling; and Dr. John Hicks, Counselor and MAKE IT HAPPEN Program Director.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

MAKE IT HAPPEN in its current construct engages participants through the four main stages of their interaction with the college as described in the Loss/Momentum Framework. Program structure and activities support students from interest, application and enrollment to program completion, transfer, and/or employment.

It all starts with our annual MAKE IT HAPPEN Regional Conference for High School Students and Counselors. The conference brings together African-American male students from feeder high schools for a day of information, inspiration, and entertainment designed to promote and encourage post-secondary education. Recent conferences have featured author and film maker Janks Morton, whose highly acclaimed 2007 feature-length documentary "What Black Men Think" has garnered national media attention.

Once enrolled on campus, program participants receive on-going academic support including tutoring and academic skills training along with highly intentional advising and case management services. Also included are activities designed to promote meaningful contact, engagement and relationships with college faculty and staff.

In addition to academic support, we believe that personal and leadership development are essential ingredients to student success. Monthly group sessions focus on family and peer relations, along with topics related to physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The monthly sessions also provide a safe place to explore and discuss issues unique to the African-American male experience. Participants also attend an annual goal planning retreat where they are able to develop both short- and long-term goals and strategies. Participants are encouraged to seek and assume leadership positions in other campus clubs and organizations, and have been given the opportunity to attend other leadership development activities including the VCCS Student Leadership Conference.

Finally, the program stresses the importance of giving back. Project participants are required to participate in community service projects. Recent projects have included a Nickelodeon Community Day that provided wholesome outdoor fun for neighborhood youth, and a campus-wide domestic violence workshop accompanied by solicitations for support of a local shelter for abused women. Some participants also serve as Student Ambassadors; and all participants help to plan and implement the conference for high school students.

ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

To date, data relative to participant GPA and completion rates indicate that the program has had a positive impact on program participant success. MAKE IT HAPPEN students' GPAs average just under 2.5, compared to 2.3 for all other African-American students. This is based on data from first-time, plan-placed students entering Fall 2013, Fall 2014, and Fall 2015. A more exciting indicator of success comes when we look at program completion rates. We compared the completion rates for all 75 MAKE IT HAPPEN participants enrolled since Fall 2011 to the 5-year completion rates for all African-American students and for majority students. Program participants outpaced all African-American student completion rates 45% to 26%, and compare favorably to the 52% completion rate of majority students.

Anecdotally, we think most would agree that the MAKE IT HAPPEN program participants have become a visible and well-respected learning group within the Southside Virginia Community College community. College administrators, faculty, and staff value the program and support program activities.

Moving forward, we intend to develop and implement a more robust evaluation plan to determine effectiveness of the program as measured by GPA, retention, and persistence toward goal; to measure the direct impact of the of the conference for high school students on subsequent college enrollment; and to measure longitudinal impact of the program by following up on students who complete/exit the program.

PLAN FOR SCALE & SUSTAINABILITY

Plans are currently in place to direct additional institutional funds to replicate the MAKE IT HAPPEN program on our Daniel Campus. We are continually looking for grant opportunities to expand the initiative to include more students from this target population and to see if this successful model can be used to serve other under-represented or under-achieving populations.

COLLEGE DESCRIPTION

SsVCC offers programs leading toward associate degrees, certificates, career studies certificates, and workforce credentials. Its 4,200 square mile service region, the largest community college jurisdiction within the Commonwealth, comprises the City of Emporia and ten counties in rural, south-central Virginia. SsVCC serves a large population of students who are often underrepresented in other institutions of higher learning. These include low-income students, students from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds, out-of-work adults, and students who are the first in their families to attend college. Our Fall 2015 Student Profile report indicates a student headcount of 4,439 with 2,650 FTES. The typical SsVCC student is 23 years old (mean), part-time (66%), female (64%), and white (61%).

CONTACT INFORMATION

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