NATIONAL HUMAN GENOME RESEARCH INSTITUTE/NIH/DHHS

SUMMARY

THIRD WORKSHOP

OF THE

MAP TRAINING COORDINATORS

19 FEBRUARY 2009

The Legacy Hotel and Meeting Centre, Rockville Maryland 20852

20 FEBRUARY 2009

5TH Floor Conference Room

5625 Fishers Lane

Rockville, MD 20852

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I. INTRODUCTION

When these meetings first began, the main purpose was to provide an informal forum to discuss ideas, issues and opportunities that would help the MAP program achieve its goal, such as recruiting the best students, providing a quality education and research experience, providing outstanding role models and mentors, successfully transitioning students to the next career phase, evaluating the individual and overall programs to ensure that the main goal was being achieved--to increase the number of underrepresented minorities (URMs) pursuing genomic science. To help the staff and the Minority Action Plan (MAP) grantees achieve this goal, this year's offerings included: (1) a presentation by Dr. Sylvia V. Terry, Associate Dean and Director of the Peer Advisor Program and the Office of the African-American Affairs, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA; (2) two topics for discussion suggested by participants; (3) a presentation by Ms. Erica Childs, a former Meyerhoff Scholar who is now a graduate student at UCLA and a new recipient of a F31 award; (4) presentations of formal evaluations by several MAP grantees; (4) a brief summary of the sub-committees activities; (5) a discussion of a beta test to collect information on MAP recipients as part of an annual report on participants and programs; and a discussion of what should be the goals for the various programs and the milestones and relevant activities that would result in programs meeting these goals. The agenda (Appendix I) and Roster (Appendix II) are attached.

II. ACTING DIRECTOR'S PRESENTATION

Dr. Alan Guttmacher, the Acting Director, National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), talked about the excitement that genetics/genomics has ignited in research, educational institutions, and the media. Just as there was an exploration of outer space era, this is now the genome era. As you will recall, exploration of outer space motivated a lot of students to pursue science; so too with the genome era. Alan described the most recent event that NHGRI sponsored Darwin @ 200 Anniversary Celebration which was celebrated at the Smithsonian Museum. The event brought approximately 400 students from the Greater Washington Metropolitan area and their chaperones to the Museum for a full day of science. The celebration included: viewing the IMAX film *Galapagos 3D* and a question and answer session with National Museum of Natural History researcher Carole Baldwin who is featured in the film; visiting the Museum's Sant Ocean Hall, Forensics Laboratory, Butterflies and Plants: Partners in Evolution Exhibit, or the upcoming Orchid Exhibit; and attending presentations by and panel discussions with historians, evolutionary scientists, geneticists, physicians and botanists from the government, academic and private sectors. Such activities are crucial to attracting young

students to science because they are the next generation of researchers and clinicians, but more importantly have the knowledge to be literate in genetics and genomics as informed citizens.

The Acting Director expressed his support of the MAP and applauded the work that the grantees and training coordinators are doing to prepare the next generation of researchers and urged them to continue this very important work.

III. PRESENTATION BY SYLVIA V. TERRY

The seeds for the Peer Advisor Program started in 1989 when a fourth year African American (AA) undergraduate student told the University Administration that it had done everything to get him to UVA, but now that he is here, no one seemed to care. The university then set itself on a path to correct this statement which suggested that this was how the university was viewed by the community. The Peer Advisor Program was initiated and is a success—95% of the AA first year students stay after the first year and 87% of the AA students graduate after six years. Nine percent of the UVA population is African American. The program has been so successful that similar programs have been started for Hispanic and Asian students. The PAP is not about isolating AA students; it is about getting AA involved in all of the university's activities and doing well academically.

Factors that contribute to the success of the program are:

- There is a commitment at the highest levels—the President, the Board of Visitors, and the Office of Admissions.
- UVA is not afraid to confront its history of being an institution that until 1953, had not graduated a student of color. Students still have to deal with racial incidents, but they are dealt with openly.
- Diversity is discussed during student orientation.
- Diversity is implemented in residence halls.
- AA alumni are role models and mentors. They participate in university activities and donate money to the university.
- The university funds an Office of African American Affairs.

The success of AA students at UVA is due primarily to the Peer Advisor Program. The peer advisors are mostly upper class AA undergraduates who must maintain a B average or better, be involved in campus activities that transcend race/ethnicity, must go through a rigorous training program, are dedicated to assisting all students, are linked to the administration, are aware of and are capable of implementing the Peer Advisor Program goals. The program is very structured and has four tiers:

1. Tier One--Procedures and Process. Peer advisors are provided with information about the importance of ensuring that new and transfer students feel connected through the university by interacting with students immediately after they receive acceptance letters, being available on move in day, tutoring students, making them aware of the resources available to them, etc.
2. Tier Two—Programs. Activities that enrich students' experiences such as, welcoming receptions, fostering networking, implementing weekly study sessions, etc.
3. Tier Three—Technology. Students are connected by various media, such as Peer Advisors home pages, newsletters, seminars on how to thrive, survival guides for pre-med students, etc.
4. Tier Four---Program Director. The Program Director facilitates the work of about sixty Peer Advisors who each mentor about five or six students. Each year there are 340-360

The Peer Advisor Program has been recognized nationwide by many professional organizations.

IV. TRAINING COORDINATORS' TOPICS OF INTEREST.

- Recruitment Issues-how to get competitive students interested in our programs? How to get a large number of applications? (Lisa Peterson and Cherilynn R. Shadding, Moderators)
  Some of the strategies discussed were:

  - Contact program directors who are supported to increase the number of URMs in science, such as NIGMS' Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement (RISE) http://www.nigms.nih.gov/Minority/MBRS/RISEDescription.htm and Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) http://www.nigms.nih.gov/Minority/MARC .
  - Attend poster sessions and talk with students and faculty members at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) http://www.abrcms.org/index.html, the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Latinos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) http://www.sacnas.org/, the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) http://www.aises.org/ and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC).
  - Target recruitment to top schools that graduate minority students; majority institutions should be included on the list.
  - It is important to build and maintain relationships with faculty and key program leaders. This may require multiple visits, contacting leaders in the university or getting former graduates of the institution to make the contact and introduce the MAP coordinator.
  - Ask your current participants how they heard about your program.
  - Institute for Broadening Participation (http://www.pathwaystoscience.org/) is a portal website supporting pathways to the STEM fields. Emphasis is placed on connecting traditionally URMs with STEM programs and resources, including funding and mentoring opportunities.
  - Facilitate the application process—the University of Wisconsin has one centralized application for all of its summer programs. This makes it easier for students to apply for any program.
  - Ask faculty members to mention your program when they give scientific presentations to their peers in other institutions. This can be facilitated by providing them with one slide of your program that can be added at the end of their presentation.
  - Contact recent PhDs from your institution who have now moved on to other universities/colleges
  - Use your alumni to spread the word about the program.
  - Ensure that you website has the appropriate key words so that when a student goggles for programs, your website comes up high on the list. Essential keywords include: diversity, summer programs. Consider having student blogs on your website where participants can talk about their research experiences.
  - Visit minority sororities and fraternities and seek their support; use them to recruit potential participants. Also seek out honors programs at schools.

- Specific strategies to promote transitions for trainees among/between our programs and mechanisms to facilitate the transition (Lee Bistoi and Anita Blanco, Moderators). Some of the strategies discussed include:
    - Encourage students to think early about the next phase of their career and facilitate the transition by providing contacts and resources.
    - Ensure that MAP faculty are on the admissions committees of graduate schools. Some universities will allow the departments to select their own graduate students.
    - Facilitate the transition of students from one MAP to another MAP, where appropriate.
    - Let members of the admission committee know that you have funds to support URM graduate students.
    - Ensure that MAP training includes activities that promote entrance into graduate school, such as preparedness for research, able to survive high level courses in math and science, equipped with outstanding interviewing skills, solid preparation for GREs, etc.

V. PERSPECTIVES OF A FORMER MEYERHOFF SCHOLAR/NOW A GRADUATE STUDENT AT UCLA (Erica Childs)

Ms. Erica Childs received her undergraduate degree from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and while there participated in the Meyerhoff Scholar Program. She graduated with a bachelors of science degree in mathematics and is now a graduate student in biostatistics at UCLA. Erica described some of the features of the program which include a summer program before the beginning of the freshman year which included an academic boot camp, visiting research facilities in the area, team building exercises, etc. During the first two undergraduate years, the students would meet every two weeks to discuss grades, they were expected to participate in study groups, they discussed time management and plans for the summer which required either participating in a research project outside UMBC or being an adviser to incoming freshmen. Students were encouraged to ask questions and not feel inadequate because they needed help. The goal of the program was to excel in their academic programs. At UCLA, Erica found that she was well prepared academically for graduate school. UCLA provides additional career enhancing activities, such as workshops on writing research articles and grant proposals. Erica conducted her summer research in the laboratory of Joan Bailey-Wilson who works in NHGRI. She submitted a F31 (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-07-106.html) application to the NIH to support the final years of her graduate research which was recently funded. Her next career move is to pursue a postdoctoral position starting around 2010. Her ultimate goal is to conduct research in a government laboratory.

Some of Erica's advice to the coordinators is that in selecting projects, it is important to give students "real work" (meaning becoming part of a research project) so that they can learn to be independent. When asked about the utility of some of the technology used by her generation, such as Facebook, she indicated that this is one way that you can keep in touch with your peers; it allows you to follow their personal and professional lives without using e-mail.

VI. PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Baylor College of Medicine (Debra Murray). This evaluation reported on the post baccalaureate (PB) (technicians and recent graduates) and undergraduate (UG) programs which began in 2003. The evaluator was Dr. Héctor H. Rivera, Assistant Professor, School of Education and Human Development, Southern Methodist University (http://smu.edu/education/teachereducation/faculty/riverahector.asp). The purpose of the

objective was to determine whether the goals of the program had been met by increasing the number of URMs in genomics. Forty six students participated in the survey.

- Demographics: 78% African Americans; 17% Hispanics; 4% others. 67% females; 33% males.
- Average GPA: Undergrads was 3.3; PB technicians was 2.85; PB UG was 3.41.
- GRE: 1080; some 1300; some poorer. The training coordinator has access to the GRE scores because she pays for the exam.

  It was noted during the discussion that most students, regardless of color, have low verbal GRE scores and that there are many explanations for the reason. It was emphasized that students need to be literate in the "language of science" if they wish to become successful scientists.
- Quality of the program: 87% rated the program good to excellent; 84% rated the advice given by mentors good to excellent. It was suggested that a better way to solicit information about advice from mentors was to ask: did anyone advise or encourage you; who gave you advice; and what advice did they give?

To date, five are in medical school, two received degrees in pharmacy; six received doctoral degrees; seven received masters' degrees and three are still in doctoral programs.

As a result of the evaluation the following program changes will be made: (1) reduce or eliminate the number of technicians participating in the program; (2) fund more post baccalaureate students; (3) make it mandatory for students to take the GRE earlier in their program; and (4) encourage a second summer research experience for promising students.

University of Southern California (Steve Finkel). USC has two undergraduate programs (summer for non-USC students and year round for USC students) and a graduate program. Only the two undergraduate programs were evaluated. Regarding the graduate students; there have been only four or five. The first graduate of the program is now a postdoctoral fellow at Rice University in Houston, TX. The main features of the year round program are ensuring that students have individual mentored experience, giving students the opportunity to present their research and attending monthly meetings to receive or be trained in research methodology, research ethics, career development, interviewing skills, funding opportunities, etc. Students are expected to be fully integrated into the labs and the mentors and mentees are monitored. The summer program (BIGS) emphasizes mostly course work: introduction to computational biology and methods in bioinformatics, seminars in molecular biology, weekly seminars in which students read and discuss the paper that will be presented so that they are knowledgeable about the research and can ask questions, participate in tutorials and career enhancing activities, such as honing their interviewing skills. They also participate in team building exercises, such as field trips. At the end of the eight week summer experience, students have the equivalent of six units of high level courses for which they receive credit. Students are compensated with a $4000 stipend, plus housing, travel, and tuition.

Seventy one students participated in the program at the time of the survey. Contact information was available on 65 students. Forty six students (71%) participated in the survey. The responses were anonymous and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The first 20 students who responded received gift certificates ($10). Thirty nine percent of males and 61% of females participated in the survey. More of the summer institute students were likely to attend graduate school where as more of the year round undergraduate students were more likely to attend medical school. Some of the comments about the program were: this program provided an opportunity not available anywhere else; developed a close relationship with mentors; hands on research experience invaluable. Eighty percent of the students rated the program highly. One-third of the students are still undergraduates; one-third are in graduate school (doctoral or masters programs) and about one-third in medical school. Of the thirty-six students who have graduated from college: 44% are currently in graduate programs (MS or PhD.); 25 % are enrolled

in medical school or training to be physicians assistants; 17% working in biotech companies; and 14% are teaching.

As a result of the evaluation, summer students indicated that they wanted to do some research (this was tried at the beginning of the program and was dropped because some students did not have a satisfying experience).

As a result of the evaluation, summer students indicated that they wanted to do some research (this was tried at the beginning of the program and was dropped because some students did not have a satisfying experience).

University of California, Davis (Merna Villarejo). The purpose of the Biology Undergraduate Scholars Program (BUSP) at UCD is to increase the number of minorities graduating in biology and continuing on to careers in biology-related fields. The program was started in 1988 and is very similar in approach to the Meyerhoff Scholars Program, except that BUSP does not provide scholarships. The evaluation focused on the efficacy of intervention. The question to be answered was: Does participation in an enrichment program prepare and encourage students to pursue biology. The evaluation tools were statistical analyses, alumni surveys and interviews. The program activities include: (1) academic enrichment in the first two years; mentorship; and a research experience. Early measures of success were: (1) persistence in basic science classes; (2) improved grades in calculus and chemistry; and (3) increase participation rates in undergraduate research. Whereas the program was initially focused on URMs, the program was subsequently expanded to include other disadvantaged students who have been primarily South East Asian refugees.

Six Year Graduation Rates (1995-1999) 6,878 Students; one third of URMS are in BUSP			
	BUSP	Non-BUSP	White/Asian
Do Students Graduate	82%	70%	82%
Do Students Graduate in Biology	48%	25%	40%
Do Students go to Graduate school with a 3.0 GPA or >	25%	10%	22%

Some of the factors that predict increased graduation rates are: high school GPA and participation in UG research. Verbal and math SAT scores had only a small effect. Low income students had a lower graduation rates; females were more likely to have higher GPAs. Statistical research shows a strong association between UG research and staying in biology, but cannot prove a causal relationship.

Factors that can predict graduation (multivariate logistic regression)

	Do students graduate?	Graduate with a degree in Biology	Graduate in Biology with a 3.0+
Female	++		+
Asian	+		
HS GPA	++	++	+++
Math SAT		+	+
Verbal SAT			+
Undergrad research	+++	+++	+++
Hispanic	-		-
Low income	--		

The type of intervention that helped students stay in science included: supplemental instructions; UG research experience and mentorship. Factors that contributed to a positive research experience included: good mentors; being part of a laboratory group; and responsibility for a research project.

Of the students who have completed the survey: 34% are medical doctors; 12% are Ph.Ds; 10% are in allied health; 7% allied health doctorates (pharmacy); 4% undecided; 5% doctorates in non-science fields; and 21% undecided. Some of the reasons given for not pursuing a Ph.D. included problems with: balancing work and family; inability to find stable employment; and other careers providing greater financial rewards. Reasons for pursuing a medical degree were: more prestige in the community and desire to directly serve community Those choosing allied health said that these careers provided job security and were family friendly. The reason for pursuing a doctoral degree in science was substantial interest in science.

Activities that could improve the program included: better mentoring; longer time in the program, and having one's own project.

University of Washington GenOM Project (Lisa Peterson). This discussion was about the tools that can be used to keep in contact and to conduct program evaluations. The focus was on internet technology. The programs discussed were:

- Twitter (http://twitter.com/) is a free service for friends, family, and co–workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing? The response is limited to 140 characters and a response is not expected.
- MySpace (NIH blocks this site) is a social networking website with an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music, and videos for teenagers and adults internationally. MySpace collects IP addresses and aggregates user data. In addition to narratives, members can post highly personalized information, such as photos, birth dates, hobbies, lifestyles, etc. Members do control access to their MySpace page.
- LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com/) has over 35 million professionals who use this application to exchange information, ideas and opportunities. It is a way to stay informed about and connected to people in your scientific field. It is also used by those looking for jobs as well as companies looking for individuals with specific expertise.
- Face book (NIH blocks this site) has approximately 175 million active users). The site reveals all information and messages sent by subscribers to mutually connected Friends. This site uses member data to advertise/target your interests. The policy on who owns the data is unresolved.
- Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com/) is a freely accessible Web search engine that indexes the full text of scholarly literature of many disciplines. It includes most peer-reviewed and on-line journals. This is one way to retrieve the publication record of participants and alumni.

Some of the sites mentioned above are protected by privacy regulators such as TRUSTe (http://www.truste.org/about/index.php) or US-EU Safe Harbor Privacy Framework (http://www.export.gov/safeHarbor/).

The question was how useful is this in tracking students and is it ethical to use these sites for tracking purposes. No rigorous study has been conducted, but anecdotal information turned up the following: LinkedIn has been used to evaluate courses at the U. Wisconsin and has been used to find past participants in some programs.

VII. EVALUATION DISCUSSION (All participants)

As a “dry run,” the training coordinators were asked to complete the spreadsheet which collected information about the students. Concern was expressed about some of the questions, such as: (1) some students might object to listing the schools that they were not accepted to or the fellowships they applied for and did not receive; (2) some students may not want to attend some schools because of social choice; (3) race should be added to list; (4) collecting sensitive information should be considered when the number of participants is very small and belong to one racial/ethnic group; (4) schools differ as to whether IRB approval is required to collect information; (5) program directors should consider developing “Impact Statements” to describe their progress. An explanation of impact statements can be found at this website: http://web.utk.edu/~aee/impactstatements.htm.

There seems to have been some confusion about the form. NHGRI’s intention is to collect information annually so that at some point, data can be consolidated to assess progress in future years. Because most programs are small, the value of each program collecting similar data should make consolidation and analyses easier than if each group collected its own data, which may/may not include all the items necessary for a complete evaluation. NHGRI is in the process of reviewing applications for a data analysis and coordination center and it is the expectation that this group will be able to take the lead in this effort.

ACTION ITEM: The subcommittees were tasked with reviewing the collection form and provide comments about what should/should not be included and why. All participants were asked to join one or more subcommittees to complete this review. This task should be completed within the next three months.

VIII. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Graduate/Postdoctoral Subcommittee (Louise Pape, Moderator).**

  Louise Pape reported on activities of the Grad/Post grad subcommittees. During the last teleconference (Jan. 9, 2009), the subcommittees discussed and decided on the topic they would like to work on: a best practices document. A small committee was formed to initially create a list of ideas and a structure / outline of a Best Practices Document – defining parameters for successful postdoc or grad student programs, documenting best practices, etc.; noting resources to help people make the transition from one stage of development to the next including section on what to do when things don’t work out with a mentor.

  Several topics that had been suggested before the teleconference as potential topics to focus on included: the idea of defining "success" as it is elusive and contentious (Seth); defining parameters for successful postdoc or graduate training program (documenting best practices; formalizing our knowledge on what works/what doesn't); creating a document on this for advisors & students / postdocs (in and outside of MAP programs); potentiating further training of URM trainees in other MAP programs (ensuring minority trainees have academic and research experience for becoming leaders in the field); compiling list of resources (at our institutes or others); potential impact of budget cuts on future opportunities for our trainees; potential change in perceptions and attitudes of and about URMs within the academy and their communities after the election of Obama (Seth); and resources to help people make the transition from one stage of development to the next (Gayle).

  Screenshots were shown of the “Funding Opportunities for Minorities in Genomic Science” webpage and one of the pages linked from this site – the “NHGRI MAP Portal – Individual Graduate Funding Opportunities” webpage. The Grad and Post grad subcommittees had worked on and finished the web pages containing information on

funding opportunities for graduate, postdoctoral and faculty minorities in genomic science. See
http://www.genome.gov/26525576

Training coordinators were urged to place a link to this on their respective websites, and to send any updates to Bettie Graham for posting.

- **Undergraduate Subcommittee (Debra Murray, Moderator)**

  Lisa Peterson has been added as an additional co-chair to this subcommittee. The subcommittee's major accomplishment after a year long discussion was determining our collective targets for the undergraduate summer research programs (40%) and postbac and year long programs (70%). The subcommittee created a summer research programs document for the NHGRI website that lists all of our programs. They had a successful genomics lecture session at the 2008 SACNAS in Salt Lake City, Utah. The session was well attended by the students and faculty (standing room only). The subcommittee also hosted a reception that evening. This year, the subcommittee will work with Lee Bitsoi who provides a genomics session at AISES, and hopefully expand upon his work there. The members will create a Recruiting Best Practices document this year, and update the SRP document for the web portal. The subcommittee welcomes participation of other NHGRI funded members in regular phone calls.

- **K-14 Subcommittee (Carla Easter and Vicky Schneider, Moderators)**

  The K12 Subcommittee continues to have monthly teleconferences. Over the last several months, discussions have centered on potential areas of focus, including professional development for K12 educators and development of a survey for students looking for research opportunities. In the fall, the Center for Talented Youth partnered with the NHGRI to sponsor the Family Academic Program at the Natcher Conference Center on the campus of NIH. There were 200 student and parent participants who listened to presentations on forensic, biotechnology, research opportunities at the NIH, and what it's like to be a trainee at the NIH. Another program has been scheduled for May of 2009. The subcommittee continues to provide feedback for the various NHGRI programs such as the career resource and to participate in dissemination of educational resources.

APPENDIX I

2009 TRAINING COORDINATORS WORKSHOP
19 February 2009 at
The Legacy Hotel and Meeting Centre
1775 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

20 February 2009 at
5625 Fishers Lane (5th Floor Conference Room)
Rockville, MD 20892

19 February

THE LEGACY HOTEL AND MEETING CENTRE

Rockville, Maryland

6:00 p.m.	Meet/Greet/Networking
7:00	Welcome and Introductions
7:15	"Peer Advising: The Link between Admission and Retention" Dr. Sylvia Terry (Abstract attached)
8:45	Training Coordinator Generated Topics
	Recruitment Issues-how to get competitive students interested in our programs? How to get a large number of applications? (Lisa Peterson and Cherilynn R. Shadding)
	Specific strategies to promote transitions for trainees among/between our programs and mechanisms to facilitate the transition (Lee Bitsoi and Anita Blanco)
9:45:	Remarks: Alan Guttmacher, Acting Director, NHGRI
10:00	Adjourn

(continued next page)

20 February

5th Floor Conference Room; 5625 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD

7:30 a.m.	Network and Continental Breakfast
8:30	Factors Contributing to My Success as a Graduate Student Erica Childs (Former Meyerhoff Scholar and Graduate Student at UCLA)
9:30	Evaluation of Research Training Programs (30' each for presentation and discussion)
	Debra Murray: HGSC Minority Diversity Initiative Evaluation (Undergraduate and Post-baccalaureate)
	Steve Finkel: A 5-Year Review of Two Undergraduate MAP Programs at the University of Southern California (Undergraduate)
	Merna Villarejo: A Mixed Methods Approach to Analyzing the Efficacy of Educational Enrichment Activities (or, in English: Are we making a difference?) (Undergraduate)
	Lisa Peterson: Using Internet Communities to Track Student Progress and Conduct Program Evaluation (Undergraduate)
12:00	Discussion of NSF Data and Goals of Established Program to Enhance Participation of URM in Science
12:30	Working Lunch
	Discussion Sub Committee Reports Postdoctoral Fellows Graduate Students Undergraduate K-12
2:00	Discussion of MAP Data Collection Form and Data
	Postdoctoral Fellows Graduate Students Undergraduate/Post Bac High School
3:30	Open Discussion

4:00 Adjourn

ABSTRACT

Dr. Sylvia Terry

Peer Advising: The Link between Admission and Retention

Now that I am here, where is everybody?"

This question is not uncommon. When arriving on a college campus for the first time, a freshman may feel isolated, lonely and as if no one cares. This is especially true for the African-American student who may be attending a predominantly white institution. Tradition, a seeming lack of sensitivity and concern may be off-putting as the student attempts to negotiate his college environment. Without support, he may simply choose to leave.

At the University of Virginia there are several initiatives contributing to its having among the highest African-American graduation rates nationwide, approximately 86%. This is especially significant in light of the institution's past history of slavery and segregation. Perhaps one of its most important retention efforts is its Office of African-American Affairs' Peer Advisor Program. Drawing upon the principles of retention, its work is to help provide an environment which is welcoming and supportive of new students. There is no denying that what happens during the first few hours, days, months, and year determines whether a freshman chooses to remain on the campus or to depart.

"Peer Advising: The Link between Admission and Retention" will discuss this support through explaining the program's philosophy and structure (an outgrowth and extension of the admissions process), its practice and procedures (Peer Advisor outreach, programming, the director's role, "the Raising the Bar" study initiative, and technology), the program's effectiveness (for first-year students and for the Peer Advisors) , and program maintenance (selecting Peer Advisors and keeping Peer Advisors motivated).

Given its expansiveness, its attention to entering students, and the hard work of the various constituents; it is not surprising that students have chosen to stay and to graduate. As one UVA alumna

succinctly put it, “It was the Office of Admissions that attracted me to the University of Virginia. It was the Peer Advisor Program that kept me here.”

APPENDIX II

National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI)
National Institutes of Health

Department of Health and Human Services

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5625 FISHERS LANE
Rockville, MD, 20852

PARTICIPANT LIST

INVITED PARTICIPANTS

Sylvia V. Terry
Associate Dean
Office of African American Affairs
University of Virginia
P.O. Box 400132
Charlottesville VA 22904-4132
(434) 924-0513
svt@virginia.edu

Erica Childs
Former Meyerhoff Scholar
Graduate Student
Department of Biostatistics
University of California Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA 90095
(267)625-9499
elock1@ucla.edu

RESEARCH TRAINING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Vanessa Northington Gamble
Medical Humanities
Gelman Library, Suite 709G
The George Washington University
2130 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20052
(202) 994-0978
vngamble@gwu.edu

Merna Villarejo
University of California, Davis
2530 Whittier Drive
Davis, CA 95618
(530) 756-2342
mrvillarejo@ucdavis.edu

Kim J. Nickerson
University of Maryland, College Park
Tydings Hall, Room 2141
College Park, MD 20742
(301) 405-7599
knickerson@bsos.umd.edu

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE IN GENOMIC SCIENCE

Karen Burns White
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
44 Binney Street
Boston, MA 0202115
(617) 632-3244
Kren_burnswhite@dfci.harvard.edu

Mayra Mollinedo
Harvard Medical School
George M. Church Lab
NRB Room 238, 77 Ave Louis Pasteur
Boston, MA 02115
(617) 432-5742
http://arep.med.harvard.edu

Steven Finkel
University of Southern California
Molecular & Computational Biology
Beckman Institute, MC 139-74
Pasadena, CA 91125
(626) 395-2863
rhawk@caltech.edu

Lisa Peterson
University of Washington
UW Gen OM Project
Box 352180
Seattle, WA 98195-2180
(206) 685-2593
lisapete@u.washington.edu

Nancy Kerk
Yale Center for Genomics and Proteomics
Yale University
Kline Biology Tower
New, Haven, CT 06521-7003
(203) 432-8060
nancy.kerk@yale.edu.

Seth Ruffins
California Institute of Technology
Division of Biology
Beckman Institute, MC 139-74
Pasadena, CA 91125
(626) 398-2026
sruffins@caltech.edu

Vicky Schneider
John Hopkins University
McAuley Hall, Suite 400
5801 Smith Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21211
(410) 735-6219
vschneider@jhu.edu

LARGE SCALE SEQUENCING

Debra Murray
Baylor College of Medicine
One Baylor Plaza
Houston, Texas 77030
(713) 798-8083
ddm@bcm.edu

Eboney Smith
Broad Institute
7 Cambridge Center
Cambridge, MA 02142
(617) 324-1237
esmith@broad.mit.edu

Cherilynn R. Shadding
Washington University School of Medicine
4444 Forest Park Ave
St. Louis, MO 63108
(314) 286-1897
cshaddin@genome.wustl.edu

Lucia Vielma
Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard
7 Cambridge Center
Cambridge, MA 02142
(617) 324-5271
lvielma@broad.mit.edu

TRAINING GRANTS

Anita Blanco
Stanford University
300 Pasteur Dr, M350
Stanford, CA 94305-5120
(650) 736-7435
Anita.blanco@stanford.edu

Susan E. Churchill
Harvard – MIT
77 Avenue Louis Pasteur
Boston, MA 02115
(617) 525-4465
schurchill@partners.org

Susan Burke
University of Michigan
1420 Washington Heights
M4240 SPH II
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2029
(734) 647-3944
saburke@umich.edu

Nam Narain
School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania
Anatomy-Chemistry Building, Room 417
3620 Hamilton Walk
Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 573-2234
narain@mail.med.upenn.edu

Louise Pape
University of Wisconsin-Madison
3445 Biotechnology Center
425 Henry Mall
Madison WI 53706
(608) 265-7935
lpape@wisc.edu

Susan M. Powell
Princeton University
Lewis-Sigler Institute for Integrative Genomics
142 Carl Icahn Labs
Princeton, NJ 08544
(698) 258-1895
smpowell@princeton.edu

Jeanette Papp
University of California, Los Angeles
UCLA Human Genetics
695 Charles E. Young Drive South
5357C Gonda Center
Los Angeles, CA 90095-7088
(310) 825-6204
jcpapp@mednet.ucla.edu

DATABASES

Lee Bitsoi
Department of Molecular & Cellular Biology
Harvard University
16 Divinity Avenue, Room 4093
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 496-7185
bitsoi@fas.harvard.edu

Susan McClatchy
Mouse Genome Informatics
The Jackson Laboratory
600 Main Street
Bar Harbor, ME 0460
(207) 288-6431
smc@informatics.jax.org

Zia Isola
Ctr for Biomolecular Science & Engineering
UC Santa Cruz
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064
(831) 459-1702
isola@soe.ucsc.edu

NIH STAFF

Glory M. Baldwin (Technical Assistance)
National Human Genome Research Institute
National Institutes of Health
5635 Fishers Lane, Suite 4076/MSC 9305
Bethesda, MD 20892
(301) 435-5662
baldwing@mail.nih.gov

Christine Cutillo (Analytical Assistance)
National Human Genome Research Institute
National Institutes of Health
5635 Fishers Lane, suite 4076/MSC 9305
Bethesda, MD 20892-9305
(301) 594-7116
cutilloc@mail.nih.gov

Carla L. Easter
National Human Genome Research Institute
National Institutes of Health
Bldg 31, Room B1B55, MSC 2070
31 Center Drive
Bethesda MD 20892-2070
(301) 594-1364
esterc@mail.nih.gov

Michelle Hamlet
National Human Genome Research Institute
National Institutes of Health
Building 12A, Room 1039, 12 South Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892-56130
(301) 451-3645
hamletm@mail.nih.gov

Bettie J. Graham
National human Genome Research Institute
National Institutes of Health
5635 Fishers Lane, Suite 4076
Bethesda, MD 20892-9305
(301) 496-7531
Bettie_graham@nih.gov

Clifton Poodry
National Institute of General Medical Sciences
National Institutes of Health
MSC 6200
45 Center Dr
Bethesda, MD 20892
(301) 594-3900
Clifton.poodry@nih.gov

Alan E. Guttmacher
National Human Genome Research Institute
National Institutes of Health
31 Center Drive, Room 4B09
(301) 594-7185
guttmach@mail.nih.gov

Hinda Zlotnik
National Institute of General Medical Sciences
National Institutes of Health
MSC 6200
45 Center Dr
Bethesda, MD 20892
(301) 594-3900
Hinda.Zlotnik@nih.gov