Making the Connection: African American Student Retention and Spirituality

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Program Outline
- Overview
  - Learning Outcomes
- Current Issues
- Theoretical Foundation/Research:
  - Fowler’s (1981) theory of spiritual development
  - Cross’ (1995) Theory of Nigrescence
  - Astin’s (1984) Theory of Student Involvement
  - Glennen’s (1985) Theory of Intrusive/Proactive Advising
- Retention and Advising Strategies
  - Student Stories
- Questions and Answer

Overview

This program examines the role of spirituality as a factor for preparing one minority population, African American students as they transition into college and persist toward graduation.

Current Issues
- Some students excel and others struggle...
- The nation continues to grapple with budget constraints. In the midst of these challenges, institutions strive to help students succeed and have a positive educational experience.
- Graduation rates for minority students are consistently low implying the need to increase minority student retention on college campuses; factors such as policy and support systems influence student success.
- Advisors have the opportunity to assist students with their holistic development which ultimately aids in student success.
Spirituality

A National Study of Spirituality in Higher Education: Students’ Search for Meaning and Purpose

- Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer A. Lindholm

Assisting students’ spiritual growth will help create a new generation who are more caring, more globally aware, and more committed to social justice than previous generations, while also enabling students to respond to the many stresses and tensions of our rapidly changing technological society with a greater sense of equanimity.

- Five spiritual qualities - equanimity, spiritual quest, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, ecumenical worldview

- Meditation and self-reflection are among the most powerful tools for enhancing students’ spiritual development.

- Connection with their “inner selves” facilitates growth in their academic and leadership skills, contributes to their intellectual self-confidence and psychological well-being, and enhances their satisfaction with college.

- http://spirituality.ucla.edu/findings/

Theoretical Support

- Fowler’s (1981) theory of spiritual development
- Cross’(1995 ) Theory of Nigrescence
- Astin’s (1984) Theory of Student Involvement
- Glennen’s (1985) Theory of Intrusive/Proactive Advising

Theory of Intrusive/Proactive Advising

- Proactive Advising involves:
  - deliberate intervention to enhance student motivation
  - using strategies to show interest and involvement with students
  - intensive advising designed to increase the probability of student success
  - working to educate students on all options
  - approaching students before situations develop.

(See more at: http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Proactive-(Intrusive)-Advising!.aspx#sthash.8Pi9OUOM.dpuf)
Student Stories

▶ How do students describe success?
▶ How might spirituality influence African American student retention?

Student Stories-summary

▶ How do students describe success?
  ▶ Graduating, successful career, positive relationships, financial stability, meeting goals
▶ How might spirituality influence African American student retention?
  ▶ Support, Strength, Guidance, Direction, Encouragement
  ▶ Influential relationships – reasons for attending college, experiences at college, and future expectations

Retention Strategies cont.

▶ Student support and college preparation programs
▶ Peer Mentoring programs
▶ Holistic, social and cultural aspects of programs are important for relationship building and friends

 Advising Strategies

▶ Develop holistic goals
▶ Provide availability of spiritual and cultural specific campus resources
▶ Campus and family support
▶ Increase self-confidence/self-efficacy
  ▶ belief in one’s ability to be successful
▶ Assist with clarification of life objectives
▶ Be supportive, engaging faculty and staff
▶ Use Intrusive/Proactive advising
References/Resources


- Museus, S.D., Palmer, R.T., Davis, R.J., & Maramba, D.C. (2011). Special Issue: Racial and Ethnic Minority Students’ Success in STEM Education. ASHE Higher Education Report, 36(6), 1-140


