

Technology Driven Multi Systemic Support Interventions (T.D.M.S.S.I.)

I. PROJECT PURPOSE

Today, a postsecondary education has come to assume an increasingly important role in American society. There is evidence of the economic, social, political and personal benefits of a higher education. (See generally, *“Challenging Times, Clear Choices: An Action Agenda for College Access and Success,”* The College Board, 2003.) Postsecondary education is also viewed as a promising approach to reducing poverty, especially among underrepresented minorities according to Julianne Malveaux in, *“Challenging Times.”* It is “estimated that among black men born between 1965-69, 30 percent of those without college education and nearly 60 percent of high school dropouts, were in prison by 1999.” Western, Bruce and Becky. 2003. *“Inequality in Lifetime Risks of Imprisonment.”* In *Inequality*, Bruce Western concludes, “risks of incarceration are highly stratified by education.” By 1999, more than 40 percent of black male high school dropouts, aged 22-30 were in prison.” In general, nearly one fourth of black young men are under the control of the criminal justice system at a time when their majority peers are learning constructive life skills and advancing their education or starting careers. The black male incarceration phenomenon has a direct and debilitating impact on the males and their communities.

In the communities of the young men most at-risk of incarceration, single-family households are the norm, school violence predominates. While adolescents as a group grapple with complex issues associated with adolescence and the transformation into young adulthood, the “at-risk” young men must confront these and other challenges associated with the culture and climate in low-income areas of high distress. One cumulative effect is that fewer black males achieve to high levels during their adolescent years and scant young African American men are being prepared to thrive and assume leadership in our society. One serious consequence is pandemic illiteracy, violence and drugs, retarding the economic, social and political development of the impacted communities.

To reduce the likelihood that the project cohort will drop-out and become trapped in the criminal justice system, we propose to utilize digital technologies that support coordination and delivery of the following:

- Information technology services
- Instruction
- Training
- Mentoring services

The T.D.M.S.S.I. program offerings will be made available to young men between the ages of 14-18, in grades 9-12, or enrolled in an alternative program that provides preparation for the high school equivalency diploma. Implemented over three years, the pilot program will be designed to keep the young men in the pilot cohort enrolled and contributing in a positive manner to their schools, their families, and their communities.

The T.D.M.S.S.I. project will use the latest technology to deliver broadband Internet access and real time virtual conferencing to address the needs of at-risk youth and affected families.

This demonstration project will connect the at-risk student to T.D.M.S.S.I applications supported by NAFEO – HBCUs and the other collaborative team members.

Most traditional alternative correction programs embrace drug counseling, education services, life skills, home care programs, behavior counseling and work readiness, while measuring judicial encounters/offenses and any changes in the rate of crime committed by youth. This Project embraces these components, and introduces technology as the equity agent, thereby providing considerably more. The cornerstone of this innovative approach is the integration of new technologies to create an innovative system that allows real time multi user access to Internet-based applications (undergirded by a sophisticated comprehensive database) that deliver a broad array of individualized development plans, school reports, grades, court disposition and counseling/advisement records, contact information for service providers and program personnel, and other data. Clients and program providers (churches, schools, colleges, community organizations, professional service donors, partnering agencies and project personnel) will have access to applications that support online access to services, program materials, program activities, and online management of resources needed to facilitate their services and roles in the program. For at-risk student participants such applications and services include an intensive program of training, education, mentoring and personal interactions in a virtual environment via laptop personal computer. This greatly differentiates this Project.

VIII. Innovation

The major categories of technology commonly used today are asynchronous and synchronous learning, teletraining and CD-ROM based instruction. Each affords different advantages and each has peculiar limitations. By integrating all three categories of instructional technologies with newer technologies of web-based, video streaming and net meetings within carefully designed information technology applications over a robust broadband network, the pilot can deliver the most complete form of training and education to at risk young males.

The HBCUs in the pilot will be the source for delivery of the “Last Mile” connectivity to the at-risk male juveniles in the program. The “Last Mile” technology used will be broadband systems allowing the HBCUs to serve as the Internet Service Provider for the participant. This technology will be installed with its Point of Presence (POP) at the HBCU connected to the campus backbone and used to provide fixed point-to-multipoint connectivity (from 56kb to 10MB) between the campus based POP and the homes, learning communities and churches within scope of T.D.M.S.S.I.

The capability to provide virtual face-to face meetings between male youth participants and one or more mentors and/or program facilitators from the partnering organizations, will be realized using the following:

- A broadband network
- Laptop computers for the male youth participants
- Curricula-based software applications; and

- Software applications based upon systems to support web casting and videoconferencing technologies at the desktop.

Each student will be given a laptop personal computer. The computers have a minimum specification of 256 MB RAM, 40GB hard drive, video and sound cards, and network connection. The software package will include Windows XP Professional, XP Office Professional, Element K, Microsoft Net Meeting and Internet Explorer. Other open source software applications will be supplied that will provide capability to stream media systems. NAFEO will assume the leadership for ensuring that all HBCUs maximize the use of these digital networks and information systems in collaboration, enabling analysis of composite data from a central repository for all demonstration sites.

T.D.M.S.S.I. will be available through a web-portal. This portal will provide a world of information at each participant's fingertips. Each participant will be given passport information to connect him to his individual plan of development. The portal will become the major communication vehicle for participant classes, announcements, daily and weekly tasks, counseling sessions, games, job searches, and the like. Not only will participants learn and interact through the virtual classes, tutorial sessions and seminars, but they will also participate in progress reporting sessions and be given feedback about their experiences. They will interact with counselors, teachers, parents and others in the support network. Students will be able to access certain electronic games through the portal during restricted times. Other games will be accessible at any time. Still others will be made accessible based upon academic progression.

With assistance from collaborative team members and by using technology, teachers in the targeted partner high schools will have more time to teach and focus on the learning environment. Members of the cohort will be able to access assignments from their laptop with Internet access at school, at home, a library, or other places in the community. Lesson plans will be accessible online. These project aspects will afford ongoing continuity of instruction, behavior modification, and counseling. Cohort members will be able to learn at their own pace, without embarrassment when needing more time on task.

Community Involvement

We propose to build a project around collaborative relationships between member HBCUs, local high schools, faith- and community-based organizations. The T.D.M.S.S.I. project will operate on a single premise: community counts. Building strong symbiotic relationships among the targeted entities will help to achieve the goal of reducing the number of targeted young men in jail.

NAFEO members are currently working in their service communities to deliver technology-driven and -based, collaborative services to youth in large-scale projects. For some examples, see Section VII, Profiles of Participating Institutions, below.

Participating communities will be within a five-mile radius of the project HBCU campus.

The targeted HBCUs are located in low-income, high need communities, in which residents are less mobile, often “place bound.” The HBCUs are in many ways the epicenters for the educational, economic, health, recreational, and cultural services for their communities.

The project service communities share the characteristics of other low-income, high need service areas. They tend to have smaller tax bases, which may translate into less funding for public schools, recreation, social and cultural activity. The communities have disproportionate numbers of single-headed households, and higher crime rates. See, *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, December 1998, *Disproportionate Minority Confinement Lessons in Five States*.

Too many in the communities who develop the skills and talents to strengthen their communities flee to escape the crime-ridden, violent neighborhoods, the low-performing schools, and paucity of municipal services. A result is the lack of a diversified talent pool to provide leadership in the community, and a dearth of nurturing role models. Role models generally provide mentoring for youth while assisting in the youth’s formative years with guidance and appropriate decision-making skills. In high needs service areas, there are large numbers of fatherless families with children adversely affected economically and emotionally. There is little or no access to the Internet (access in this context means both availability and navigability), lack of family expendable incomes for purchase of personal computers and the telecommunications to support those connections.

VII. Profile of Participating Institutions

A. Hampton University

Hampton University has embraced the principles of “education for life” and “learning by doing” since its opening in 1868. Hampton University began its commitment to serve a multicultural population in 1878 when a formal education program for Native Americans was established. The current student body at Hampton University continues to underscore the commitment to multifarious education. The international student body represents 22 different countries and five continents.

Hampton University has a strong history of academic excellence and commitment to high standards. The University is comprised of seven schools which include: Business, Engineering, Journalism, Liberal Arts and Education, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Science; a Graduate College, a College of Continuing Education and an Equestrian Program. The University offers 38 bachelor’s degree programs, 14 master’s degree programs, and four doctoral and professional degrees. The Liberal Arts and Education houses experts in youth violence, victimization, and personality disorders. Information technology has proven to be an essential element in understanding and working these youth. In 2004, Hampton University was recognized by Princeton Review and Forbes.com as one of America’s Most Connected Universities, ranking 6th in the nation. The campus has the capability for teleconferencing, broadband access to the Internet, web portal services, 1400 course and two degree programs online.

Hampton University has been awarded grants from the National Science Foundation, the Nation Institute of Health, the National Institute of Mental Health, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and a multiplicity of public agencies and private foundations. Most recently, Hampton University received a \$101 million AIM Grant and is the only Historically Black College or University to launch a rocket into outer space.

Hampton University and the Hampton City Schools launched the Connection between University and Public Schools (C-UPS) Project to provide continuing education for high school students on long-term suspension or expulsion and students returning from placements in the City's Juvenile Justice system. The program is operated on the campus of HU and administered by Hampton City Schools. In the Life Skills and Mentorship component of the program, select HU students serve as mentors to provide technology-training in the use of standard office technology and MS Office 2000 applications leading to certification. Key components of the C-UPS and Life Skills and Mentoring program include counseling, academic preparation and support, parental involvement, career development, and re-entry into a public school setting.

The C-UPS program vision was to develop a program that will ultimately serve the community by providing a pool of educated, skilled, and technology-proficient individuals, backed with Microsoft Certification."

Norfolk State University

Norfolk State University was founded in 1935 as Norfolk State College. The College, brought to life in the midst of the Great Depression, provided a setting in which the youth of the region could give expressions to their hopes and aspirations. Today, Norfolk State University is an urban institution located in the heart of a metropolitan area with an enrollment of nearly 8,000 and a student-teacher ratio of 22:1. NSU is providing an affordable, high-quality education for an ethnically and culturally diverse student population, equipping them with the capability to become productive citizens who continuously contribute to a global and rapidly changing society.

Norfolk State University has an online learning campus. Students, whose circumstances won't allow traditional access to our exceptional bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs, have access to online course offerings. In this manner, NSU is assisting students to gain an edge on today's extremely competitive work world.

NSU recently acquired a RISE Supernode that provides it capability to be a regional gateway for connectivity to the National LambdaRail, gives it an extensive long haul fiber footprint for interconnecting other HBCUs and members of the Southeastern Universities Research Association.

LeMoyne Owens University and Virginia State University, year two participating institutions, also have strong technology capability.

II. SELECTION CRITERIA FOR HBCUS

In selecting HBCU partners for the demonstration project, consideration was given to the following:

1. Ability to achieve T.D.M.S.S.I. program
2. Evidenced commitment to community service
3. School of Liberal Arts and Education having capacity (proposed personnel and institutional resources) to achieve the individual program and total project goals
4. Availability of key staff members for eight weeks during the summer
5. Capability to sustain T.D.M.S.S.I. after the initial grant funding
6. Proximity and/or working relationships that foster project collaboration

The Ties that Bind

The church and other faith-based community institutions are vital to the success of T.D.M.S.S.I. These institutions typically have community-outreach centers and offer a range of support services for at-risk youth. In a June 1, 1998 Newsweek article entitled *God vs. Gangs*, the power of religion is touted as the “hottest idea in crime fighting”. The collaboration of police and clergy works because according to Rev. Eugene Rivers, the co-founder of the National TenPoint Leadership Foundation, “the only way to rescue kids from the seductions of the drug and gang culture is with another, more powerful set of values: a substitute family for young people who almost never have two parents, and may not even have one at home. The only institution with the spiritual message and physical presence to offer those traditional values is the black church.” According to the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) mentoring is a means to address multiple risk factors, including availability of drugs, family conflict, academic failure, delinquent peers and the inability to gain positive attention and engage in health relations. In the 1998 Report to the Congress, JUMP concluded, “alone or in combination, these risks can make it difficult for families to ensure that their children develop the knowledge, skills and positive life values needed to achieve success and avoid problems later in life.”

III. PROGRAM PLAN

T.D.M.S.S.I. will facilitate the conducting of classes, tutoring, study and instructional sessions, seminars, tests, and surveys, by HBCUs and learning communities. Churches will interact with the target students via the Internet. Church programs, counseling sessions and mentoring programs will be available to participants online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. T.D.M.S.S.I. portal will be established to enable virtual face-to-face interactivity. Online games and other creative outlets will also be offered from the convenience of the laptop personal computer. The technology utilized in the Project will allow these entities to virtually interact, providing students with tools and experiences to ultimately shape their future, to positively contribute to the economic base of their communities and foster a better life for the participants.

HBCUs, learning communities, and churches will enter the program through the T.D.M.S.S.I. web portal. The portal affords different access at different user levels. NAFEO will establish two committees to serve the participants in T.D.M.S.S.I.: an **Advisory Committee** and a **Mentoring Committee**. These committees will work in concert to ensure that the individual needs of each participant are met and that the project goals are met.

The Advisory Committee will establish the curriculum and create custom portfolios for each student. This committee's curriculum includes reading, writing, quantitative and qualitative skills, and the development of a set of experiences tailored to the goals and objectives of the Project. A core curriculum will be developed based on participant needs, as determined by initial assessments, parental involvement, and socio-economic data. Other areas such as student academic achievement, attitude toward school, attendance, student interviews, records, behavior patterns, youth strengths and weaknesses will also be considered. The role of this committee will be review T.D.M.S.S.I. curriculum data activities and continually examine areas of program refinement from the data collected.

The Mentoring Committee will consist of faculty members and/or staff who interact with the youth on a daily or weekly basis during their progression through the Project. From data collected, they will devise a curriculum setup and schedule for the participants' individual development plan. The Mentoring Committee will assist the youth in executing the planned curriculum.

The church will play an important role in T.D.M.S.S.I. in helping to meld character, assisting with behavior shaping, and providing a framework for assuming responsibility for self and community. Affiliate business and community organizations will participate by providing employment training, employment, internships for cohort members.

An initial orientation will be conducted with cohort members to discuss program expectations, rules of conduct, and the goals of the project. Computer literacy skills of cohort members will be assessed to determine proficiency and drive the individual plans. Other skills will be assessed to ensure appropriate tutorial sessions.

IV. EVALUATION PROCESS

Data will be collected and analyzed by Dr. Elmima Johnson, a nationally recognized, large scale, multifaceted, program evaluator. This evaluator will conduct pre- and post-intervention data evaluation of youth in the program. HBCU advisors and mentors in the project will determine the exact form of the evaluation. Areas of focus in the evaluation are:

- fewer youth with undesirable activities and behaviors,
- more stable atmosphere in the classroom for teaching and learning,
- reduction in juvenile delinquents and increased retention of at risk youth,
- higher attainment levels of education,
- potential earnings capacities,
- reduction of behaviors incidences such as anger and frustration,
- increased tolerance, diversity, values and family relationships, and
- better decision making skills and appreciation for learning.

The ultimate goal of T.D.M.S.S.I. will be its ability to impact other social and community areas to include education, delinquency and crime, employment, health and family factors.

Project Feasibility and Sustainability

Several factors argue well for the sustainability and replicability of the project. T.D.M.S.S.I. is built upon existing community relationships. HBCUs participating in the project have a strong institutional presence and community service mission. The community partners and learning institutions are established and will remain beyond Project completion. The technological infrastructure will be in place for replication. The NAFEO network of more than 100 HBCUs is well established and will be used to transfer and replicate the lessons learned from the demonstration project. NAFEO also has a number of technology partners that will likely be interested in supporting the project beyond the demonstration phase if it yields favorable results. The information will be disseminated using the websites of NAFEO, the piloting HBCUs, other partners, and reports and presentations of project mentors and researchers.

V. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Dr. Lezli Baskerville, President and CEO of NAFEO will serve as the Fiscal Agent for the T.D.M.S.S.I. Project; and Dr. Deborah White, the Chief Information Officer for Hampton University and the NAFEO Information Systems Consultant, will serve as the Project Leader/Principal Investigator. This management team has overall responsibility for the financial and budgetary accounting and dissemination of the results.

The Project Leaders will be appointed by the president of the participating HBCUs. These leaders are ultimately responsible for the coordination of the implementation of proposed activities, and communications with participants. The Project Leaders provide day-to-day management for the T.D.M.S.S.I.

Timeline

Year 1: T.D.M.S.S.I. will be regionally based. Working with Hampton University and Norfolk State, NAFEO will build the organizational structure to the supporting Advisory and Mentoring Committees. The coordination of the partnership teams will focus on development of applications and services. In addition the technology delivery systems will be operationalized. During this year, TDMSSI will provide services to 50 youth participants

Year 2: The pilot will expand to include LeMoyne Owen College and Virginia State University, attracting 25 additional participants. Program offerings will be reviewed and additional services will be added as needed. The technology infrastructure will be reviewed to examine what programs can be improved upon. Research data will be compiled which should lead to articles promoting the achievements of T.D.M.S.S.I.

Year 3: NAFEO will work with the members of T.D.M.S.S.I. to sustain the operation of the program. This year will focus on data gathered from the project and making improvements to the operation and services of the Project.