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Minority Enrichment Program: A Cross Curriculum Model for Student Success and Achievement

Abstract

The WrightMath Enrichment Program, which enrolled its first participants in the fall 1994 quarter, is designed for high achieving at risk students from under-represented minority groups who attend Wright State University. Our program incorporates ideas from the University of Missouri at Kansas City Supplemental Instruction Program and Uri Treisman's research at the University of California at Berkeley. The program encourages commitment to success, cooperative learning and ethnic awareness.

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Even though our program is centered on mathematics courses, the model of our enrichment program could be adapted to enhance any of the academic areas offered at any university. We chose mathematics because all of the students at WSU have to take at least one (1) mathematics course, regardless of their major. Mathematics seems to be a problem area for many of our students. Frequently, students are unable to pursue their intended majors because of their difficulties in mathematics.

Each spring we recruit under-represented minority students who have already been admitted to the university (regardless of their intended majors), had three (3) years of high school mathematics and were in the top 50% of their high school class. Letters and response cards are sent to them with information regarding our program. Students who reply are sent additional information about the program. Letters describing the program are sent to the parents of students who do not reply. When all responses are received we contact shidents a third time via phone to ensure they received all necessary information about attending WSU. During the university's Freshman Summer Orientation, we attempt to meet with all of those previously contacted in the spring of their senior year. All under- represented minority freshmen are encouraged to participate in the program, but especially those who plan to major in mathematics, business, mathematics education, computer science, science and other math/science related fields.

In addition to the students taking a mathematics course together, WrightMath students have a special class schedule that allows them to attend other general education classes together. WrightMath offers smaller classes, problem workshops related to the math class, and personal attention to help students attain their goals. Students learn study skills and specific techniques for understanding mathematics as well as gain knowledge of cooperative learning. The program also incorporates a special two (2) credit hour "freshman survival" course which focuses on the relationship between behaviors and attitudes, the connection between planning, persistence, and success, overcoming the challenges of being a minority student on a majority campus and adjusting to a new learning and living environment.

The students are expected to be committed to success and the high standards of the program. They are expected to attend all classes, complete all assignments, and participate in Cooperative Learning Sessions and Problem Workshops. The program gives motivated and determined students the opportunity to achieve their goals in a supportive learning environment.

Presenters

Loretta Wyckoff-Bailey is a native of Union, New Jersey. In 1974 she received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mathematics and Teacher Certification from Douglass College, New Brunswick, New Jersey. She has taken graduate courses in Educational Administration focusing on Mathematics Education. She has taught mathematics for twenty-nine years, thirteen at the junior high and senior high school levels, both stateside and abroad prior to teaching at the college level. She was an adjunct instructor for five years at Sinclair Community College and Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. She joined the professional staff at Wright State University in 1994 as the Coordinator of the WrightMath Program (a math enrichment program). She also is the Assistant Director of the Math Learning Center.

Cynthia Fleck is a native of Beech Grove, Indiana. She received a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics Education from the University of Indianapolis in 1984 and a Master's Degree in Mathematics from fudiana University in 1986. She joined the professional staff at Wright State University in 1986 as the Remedial Math Coordinator. Her primary responsibilities include coordinating the activities of the algebra courses, maintaining and updating question banks from which she designs multiple choice exams for use in several different courses, and working with students from underrepresented minority groups to help them achieve academic success. She also teaches a 10-week course called "Overcoming Math Anxiety" and does presentations on stress management and math anxiety.