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M. Colleen Jones

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, cjones3@unl.edu

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A Model for Enhancing Retention of Students of Color: Living the Legacy

M. Colleen Jones

Assistant Professor, Management, Assistant to the Chancellor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Abstract

Colleges and universities are very concerned and employ considerable resources toward the retention and academic success of all students; but for students of color, those objectives are particularly salient. The Melvin W. Jones Learning Community was established in 2003 (with the first class enrolling in 2004) through the initiative of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln’s African American Caucus to enhance the first-year experience and improve the retention of first generation students and students of color on the UNL campus. The learning community was originally conceived as an “urban” transition facilitator to help students from larger cities and smaller, rural communities to adjust to the environment of the UNL campus which present particular adjustment issues for each kind of student. As the “urban transition” community was being developed, the organizing group felt that the objectives could be met and expanded by including a broader context that included leadership development and community service. Consequently, the work group thought that naming the community after the late Dr. Melvin W. Jones, former Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance, would capture the essence of his legacy of mentorship, leadership and community service, and meet the intended transition and retention objectives . In this presentation, the Faculty Advisor will discuss the structure, activities and management of the learning community. She will be joined by "Jones Scholars" who will present their reflections about participating in such an innovative program."