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The Auburn Plan: A Model for Mentoring African American Athletes

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“Because increased retention presents the greatest short-term opportunity to significantly increase the graduation of the African American athlete, the Athletic Department’s objective in developing the mentoring program is to identify additional strategies to retain the African American student athlete.”

Today, the African American athlete needs assistance in negotiating the academic system and life planning options for the 21st century. The objective of this program is to assist the student-athlete in examining priorities, so she/he will be able to graduate within five years. Because increased retention presents the greatest short-term opportunity to significantly increase the graduation rate of the African American athlete, the Athletic Department's objective in developing the mentoring program is to identify additional strategies to retain the African American student-athlete.

Making the dream of achieving a college degree, therefore, is crucial to our mission. At the same time, we recognize that the austere political and economic climate demands—academic excellence, high retention, professional skills, career preparedness—are essential for career success. If America is to flourish beyond the Millennium, our promise to the student-athlete must be fulfilled.

The literature reveals that the presence of black professionals serves to attract black students to institutions and this presence raises the level of aspirations among students for their prospective professional career. Therefore, according to researchers, the most prevalent indicator of black participation in higher education is the number of black professionals available as role models. Mentors can aid the protégé by providing guidance in the following areas:

Academic

Value Clarification

Goal Setting

Understanding the

Curriculum

Study Skills

Protocol

Time Management

Personal

Networking

Professionals
Attire
Friendships with Peers
Risk Factors

Career
College Requirement
Internships
Graduate School
NCAA Fellowship
NCAA Internship
Assistantship

Understanding the areas above will improve the mentor/mentee relationship. The importance of having a mentor as a socializing agent is essential for the student-athletes. According to researchers, those reporting having had a mentor are more confirmed in their life after sports, are more content and able to accept success and failure.

Mentors are important to the training and career development of young student-athletes. In the academic profession, mentorship most often occurs in the informal setting, but special sponsorship that a student-athlete receives from a professional during his tenure in higher education aids his/her retention. Out of this relationship come role modeling, academic advice and eventually, assistance in gaining access to the profession.

PRESENTERS

James C. Brown is the Executive Director for Minority Advancement and Adviser to the Athletic Director on Minority Issues at Auburn University. Dr. Brown has written and lectured on mentoring throughout the U.S. at conferences and universities. Among the publications he has authored are: "Why Networking is Essential for Black Graduate Students' Success" (1995); "A Case Study of Minority Graduate Students that Attended the University of Mississippi from 1977 to 1987" (1992); "Succeeding in Graduate School: Recognizing the Importance of Mentoring" (1994). Brown was selected to participate in the NCAA President's Commission Fellows Leadership Development Program. Prior to his present position, Dr. Brown served nine years (1982-1991) as Assistant Dean of the graduate School at the University of Mississippi. He received the Ed.D. degree from the University of Mississippi in Educational Leadership.

Stacy L. Danley is the Assistant Athletic Director for External Relations at Auburn University. Mr. Danley graduated from Auburn University in 1993 with a baccalaureate degree in Vocational and Adult Education and later earned a master's degree in Higher Education Administration in 1996. While attending Auburn, Stacy was a member of the football team and went on to play in the National Football League. Prior to his current position, Mr. Danley completed an internship at the Southeastern Conference commissioner's office.