Student Voices Leading the Way: Development of a Minority Male Initiative

Strengthening Student Success Conference

October 2016
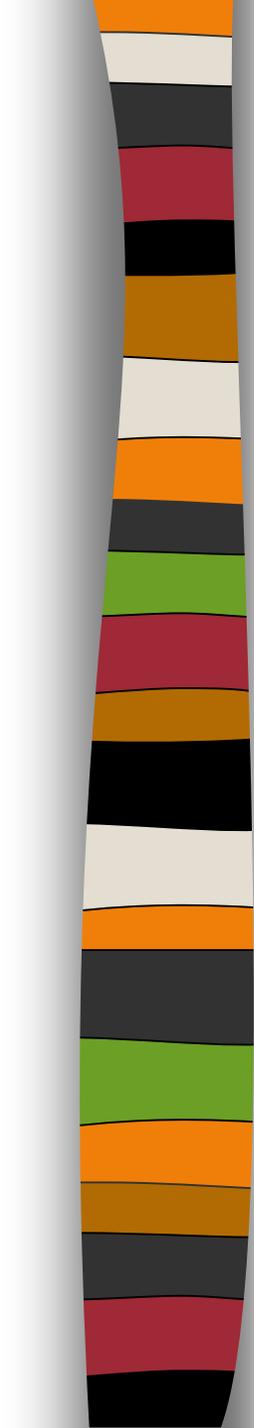
Why do colleges need a Minority Male Initiative?

- The Mt. SAC story is a lot like your story: Data doesn't lie.
  - Overall, success rates for African American, Latino and Pacific Islander students, especially males, are more disparate compared to all other students:
    - Enrollment in college
    - Successful completion of gateway courses in English and Math
    - Degree and Transfer completion
  - Success rates for Dream, Foster Youth and Disabled students are even more challenged.

Why Identities Matter

- Prior educational experiences for men of color largely influence their racial and gender identities
  - K-12 experiences and disciplinary practices, labeling, tracking
  - **Stereotype Threat (Steele): "an individual performs in the shadow of a stereotype."**
  - Racial micro-aggressions: institutional culture that isn't sensitive to diverse students and the conditions of their lives.
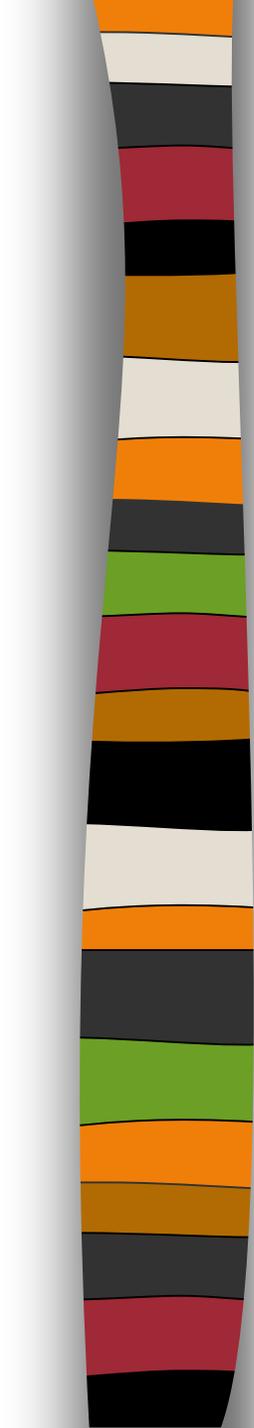
Sharing

What does the research say about addressing Minority Male issues?

Are there best practices you have encountered?
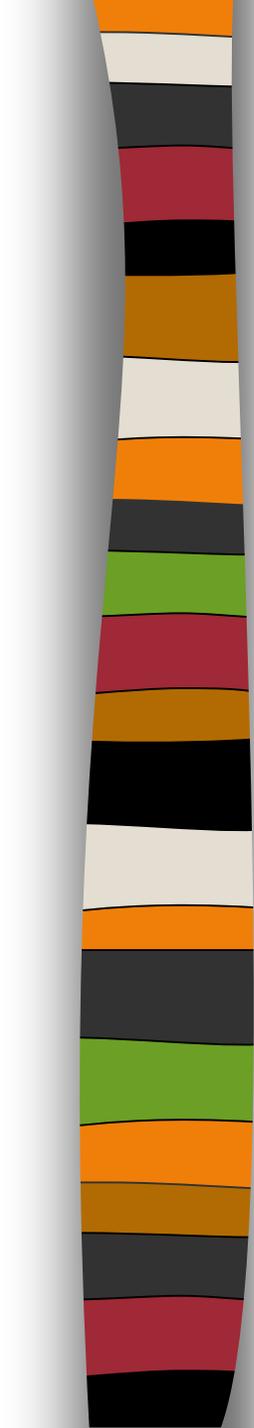
Mt. SAC's Equity Findings

- African American students are far below equity in English composition
- Male African American and Latino/a students are far below equity in Transfer
- African American, Latino and Pacific Islander males are below equity in:
  - Access
  - English writing and math completion
  - Certificate and degree completion
  - Transfer
- Foster Youth, AB 540/Dream, and disabled are far below equity in:
  - Course and ESL completion
  - Certificate and degree completion
  - Transfer
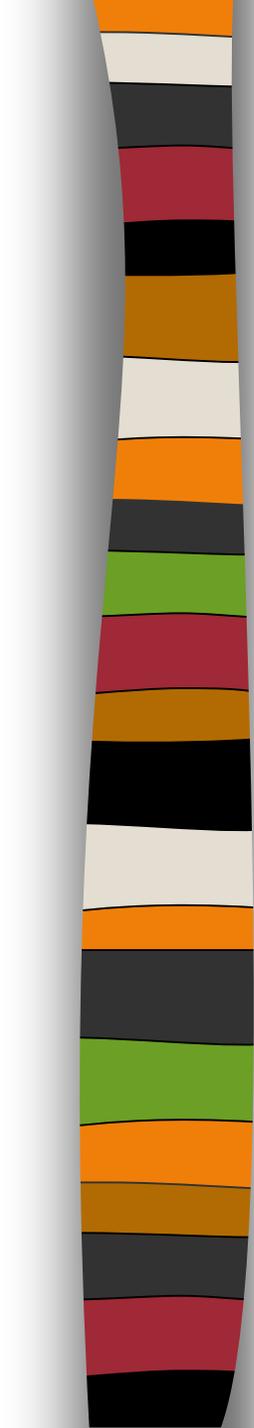
Approaches

- *Colleges can better serve men of color by implementing effective practices for all students, while also emphasizing campus diversity, cultural competence, and other strategies for reducing stereotype threat.* CCRC

- But what can and should colleges really do?

- Do you opt just to improve conditions for all students to improve success for men of color?
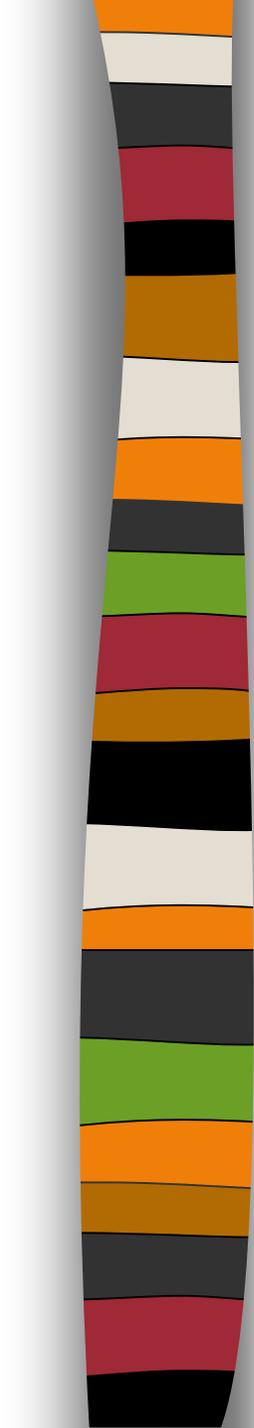
You Need Both

- Specialized Support Services
  - Both ongoing "categorical"
  - New initiatives
  - Don't be dissuaded by the rhetoric around "boutique programs" – our students need these specific-based interventions
- Institutional interventions
  - College-wide approaches to enhance campus climate, student engagement, equity-infused success practices
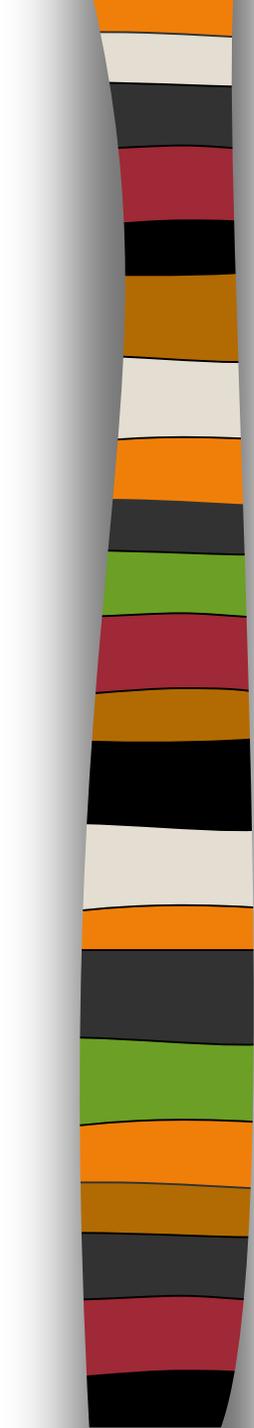
Specialized Student Services Programs

- Aspire (Umoja): African American students
- Bridge: Learning communities for basic skills and first generation students (mostly Latino)
- Arise (AANAPISI): Pacific Islander students
- Dream (undocumented): Latino and Asian students
- Foster Youth: Students in/exiting the foster system
- TRiO and EOPS: Low income, first generation
- Disabled Students: learning disabilities, visual and hearing impaired, autism, acquired brain injury
- CalWORKs/CARE: Single parents, county-supported
- LGBTQ: Designing a support structure; first "Lavender Graduation celebration planned for June
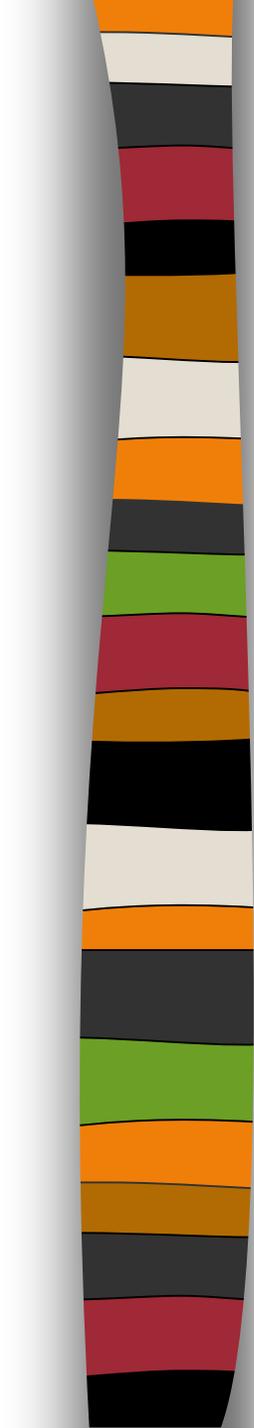
Coordination and Collaboration is the Key

- Combined cultural events
- Coordinated transfer visitations
- Joint leadership retreats
- Joint workshops and training events
- Conference attendance (e.g., sending Latinos and Polynesians to A2MEND)
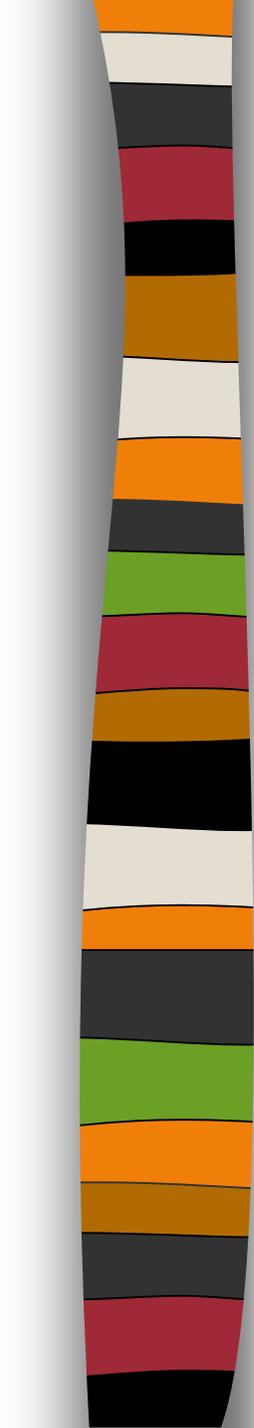
Linking Specialized Programs: The critical nature of coordination and collaboration

- Common Agendas; Common Goals
  - Linking planning for equity and success
  - Leadership from specialized programs linking activities and funding
- Joint Activities
  - Summer Science Transfer Institute
  - Field Trips; Cultural Events
  - Workshops
  - Student Leadership Retreats
  - Conference Attendance (Latinos and Polynesians accompanying African Americans to A2MEND)
- New Equity Center

The New Equity Center

- The college's recognition and acknowledgement of the need for such a physical place.
- Design: open and welcoming; safe places; cultural celebration and sensitivity; academic areas; sharing areas; private offices for counseling support; computer lab and study spaces (individual and group)
- The use of art and images to relate and inspire
- Programs: Aspire, Arise, Foster Youth, Dream
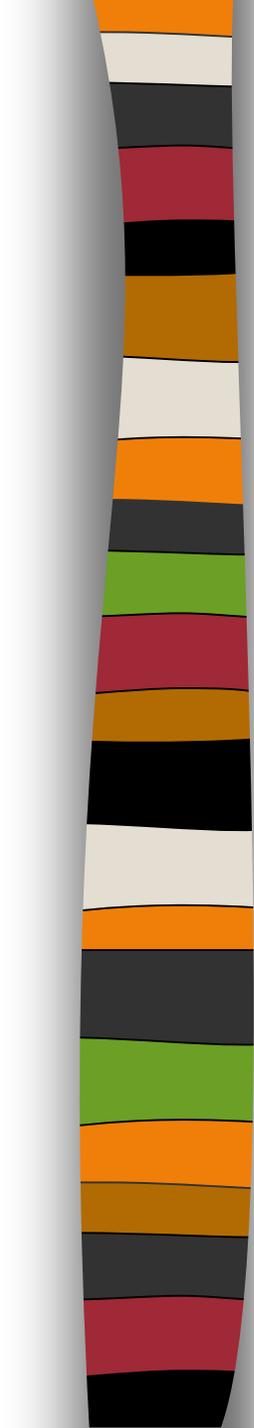
Institutional Approaches and Interventions

- Changing the culture of the campus
- Not just a Student Services focus
- Including Academic/Instruction; Faculty
- Involving the entire campus community
- It's everyone's responsibility

Library & Learning Resources: Making It Friendly and Accessible

- Increase in textbooks for Library Reserves
- Library Sunday Hours (1:00 to 9:30 p.m.)
- "Librarians who care" – snacks during finals
- Stress reduction: "comfort animals"
- Learning Resources: diversity training for tutors
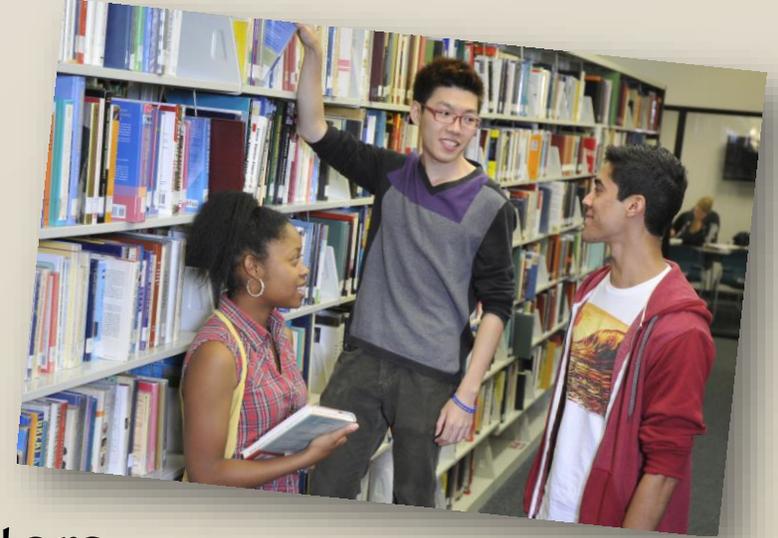
Demystifying Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)

◦ Faculty mentors

◦ Counseling and tutoring

◦ Laptops for student checkout/use

◦ Seminars:

  "Battle Plans for Final Exams"

◦ Science "Field Day"

◦ Robotics Academy

◦ **700 Students Served per Week**
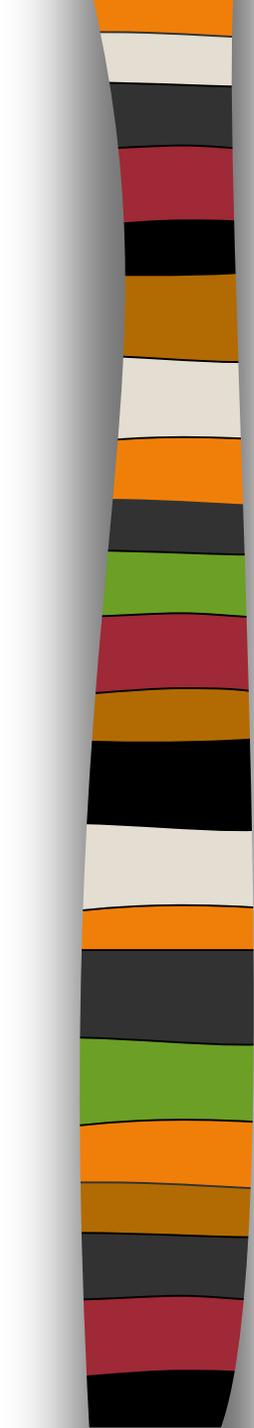
Professional Development

- Guest Speakers
  - Frank Harris; J. Luke Wood—M2C3: "The Converging Influence of Masculine and Racial Identities on Student Success for Men of Color in Community Colleges"
  - Diego Navarro: "Engaging and Building Relationships with Students: the Affective Domain"
  - Cesar Cruz: "To Organize for Change We Must Author Our Voice"
- The Role of the Faculty
  - Academic Senate leadership – on board and paving the way
  - Faculty Opening Meeting: "Addressing Issues of Diversity in the Classroom"
  - Break-out Sessions: Becoming a Veterans Friendly Campus, Language, Power, and Privilege: Talking About Culture, Universal Design and Student Equity
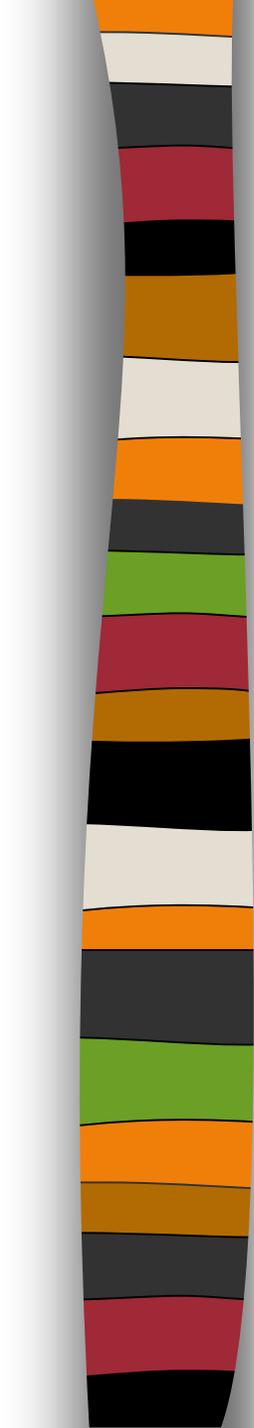
Faculty Professional Development

- Teaching Learning Center – Equity Focus
  - Workshops/Certificate Tracks
  - Fundamentals of the Mt. SAC Student Equity Plan
  - Getting to Know our Student Equity Populations
  - Leveraging Campus Resources to Close the Equity Gaps
  - Classroom Learning Strategies for Improving Equity
  - Improving General Cultural Competency
    - "Why We Drop: Strategies for Improving Early-term Retention" Student Panel

New Faculty Seminar

- Ongoing training, resources and support to improve teaching and improve student success in the classroom
- Activity: assigned an activity from the Student Equity Plan – understand the inequity, the intervention, and define the role they would/will play in addressing the disparity.
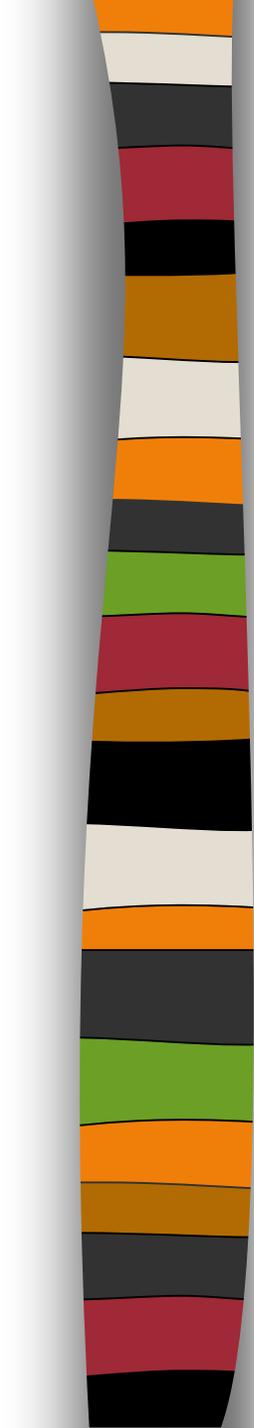
The Minority Male Initiative: Our Process

- Diverse group of managers, faculty, staff gathered to talk about how we address the lack of success of minority males.

- Consensus direction: *Ask the students!*

- We asked specialized program leaders to send us minority male students willing to share their thoughts and experience with us.
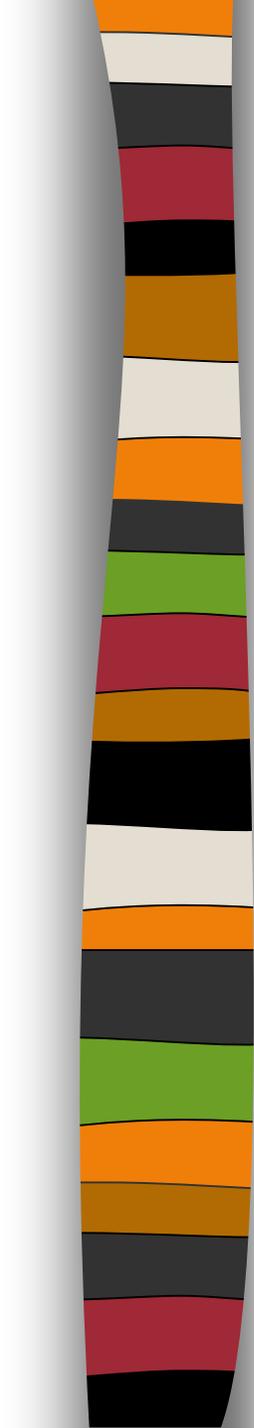
Learning from Listening

First Meeting: We began with individual introductions …

3 ½ hours later, we finished with the introductions
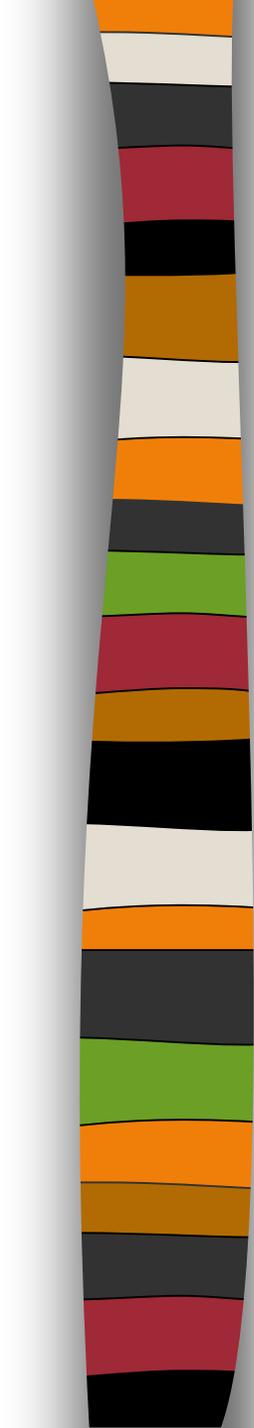
Our students' voices …

- My mother didn't protect me from my Dad and brothers. I learned not to trust anyone. If my Dad didn't die, I wouldn't be here. I landed in the foster care system. I learned not to trust anyone.
- You have to learn to not be afraid to share your story.
- No one in high school talked to us about college.
- Getting arrested was a blessing. I have come back to school to be an educator.
- I no longer live for the moment -- I live for tomorrow.
- I'm not where I want to be yet, but thank God I'm not where I was before.
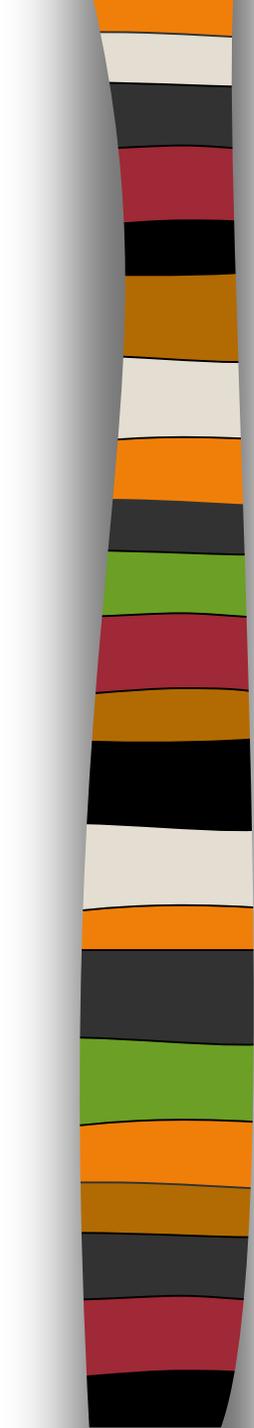
What were your first impressions/experiences?

◦ "I don't belong here."
◦ "Where do I go for help?"
◦ "Who's going to understand my situation?"
◦ "Are THEY going to help students like ME?"
◦ "Can I really go back to school?"
◦ "What if …"
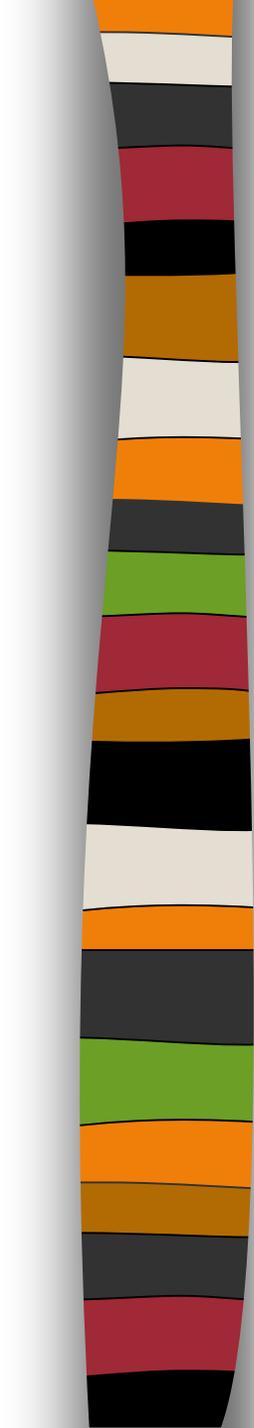
What are the barriers/road blocks you faced?

- Academic Direction
  - Don't know how to register
  - Don't have a computer or internet access
  - Unsure of course selection (and don't know major)
- Campus Culture
  - Unable to understand professors; they go too fast; they talk over us
  - Not sure where to go/how to get help
- Financial
  - Unable to pay for books; need financial aid but applied late
  - Transportation needs
  - Family demands
  - Need a job
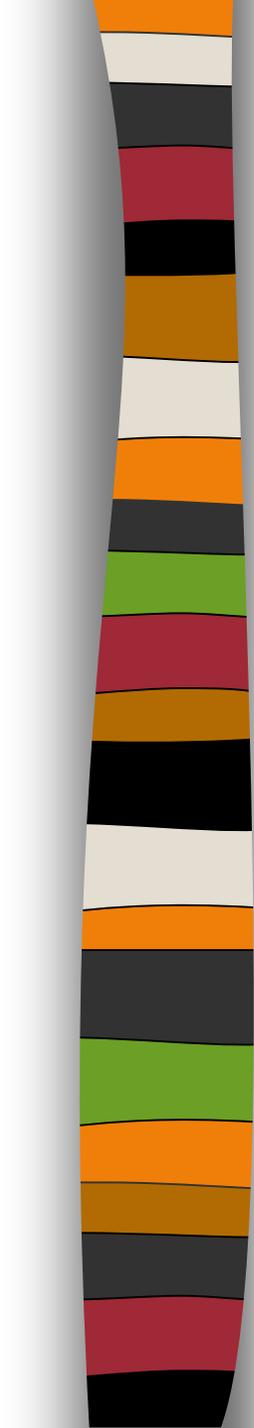
What does Mt. SAC need to do?

◦ Better services for **job** opportunities
◦ Town Hall meetings to keep students informed
◦ Share **success stories** for motivation
◦ **Outings**; community work
◦ **Study halls**; study skills
◦ Opportunities to do research
◦ Networking opportunities
◦ **Culturally relevant courses**
◦ **Safe spaces**
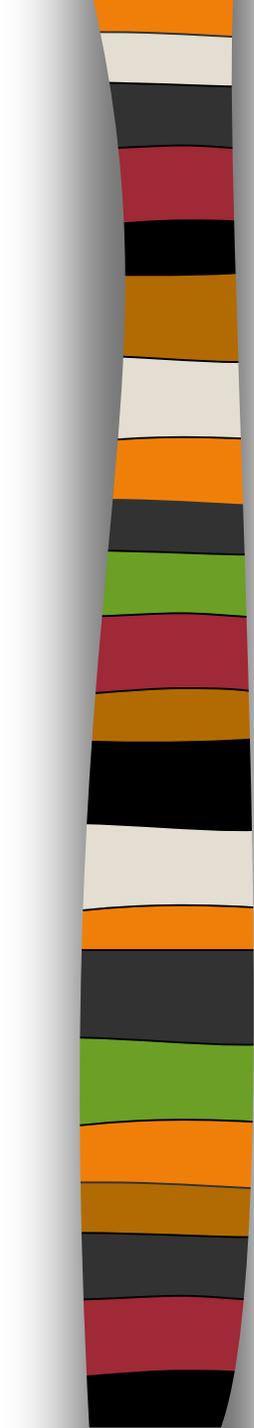
We Study; We Explore; We Develop

Summer Day-Long Retreat

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy– your greatest fears

- Going back to the pen
- You'll be just like your father
- Your goals are too big to achieve
- You'll never make it
- You can't change
- You're not disciplined enough
- Oh, so people like *YOU* can go to college?
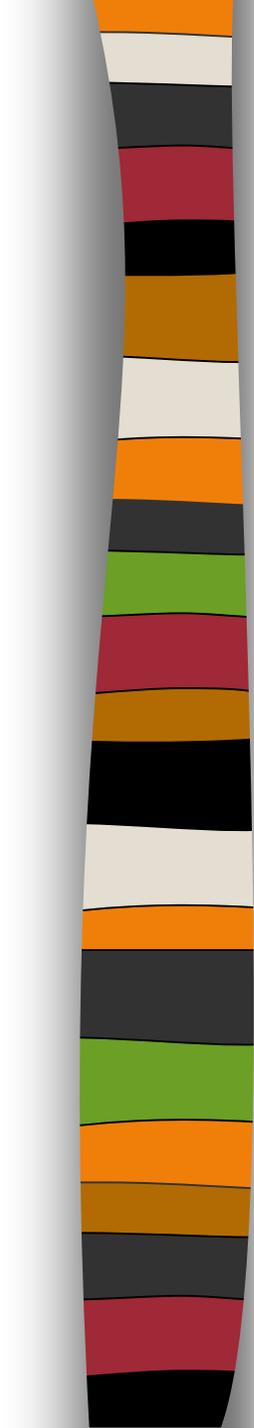
Confronting Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

- Prior life; prior scripts; prior reality
  - How to change the scripts?
    - *You'll just be another statistic*
  - From hopeless to hopeful
  - From flight to fight
- Dealing with the fear of failure
  - *People like me aren't supposed to succeed*
- Anticipatory socialization
  - *This is all new to me, I don't fit in. How am I supposed to act?*
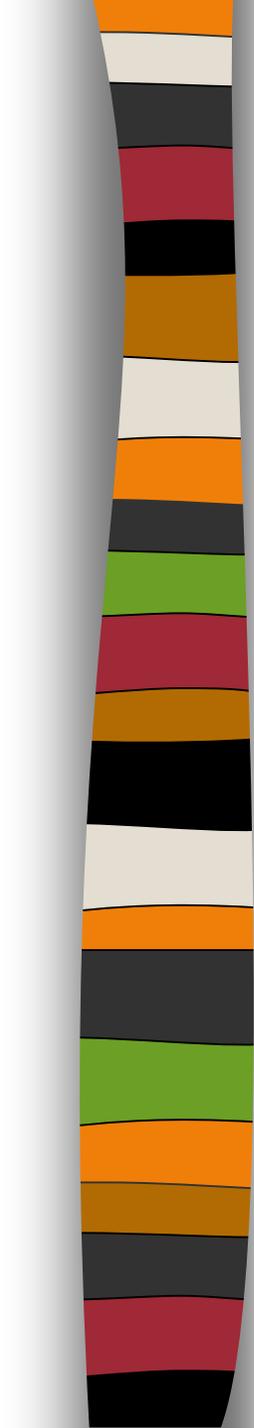
Listening and Letting Our Students Point the Way

Students work collaboratively to define the critical pathways for our work

- Academics
- Services
- Peer to Peer
- Cultural/Ethnic Identity

Academics

To inspire and motivate students to see their potential in education as a lifelong career by aspiring towards their academic/educational goals.

Recommendations

- Collaborative study halls with peers
- Group study
- Subject-based help
- Book donations [reserve textbooks]
- Academic progress checks
- Career exploration field trips
- Milestone recognition events –

    elevate your sense of accomplishment: celebrate all successes, including grades (GPA); awards "rookie of the year"/"MVP"

- [Sunday library hours]
- [Math Boot Camp]
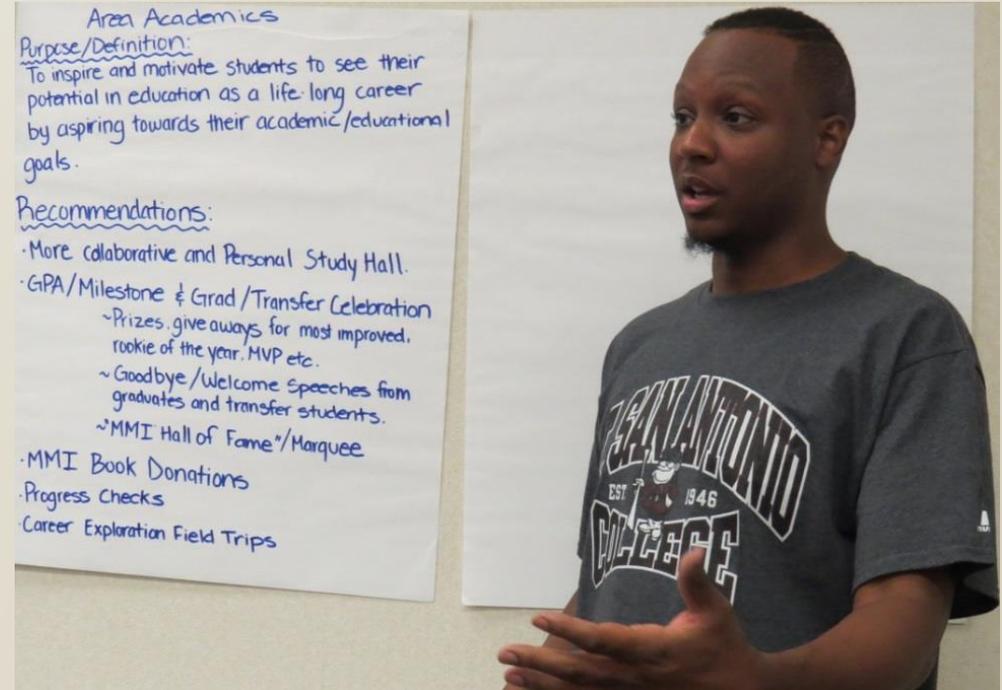
Services

Programs and services designed to enhance/enrich minority students' (males and females) educational, personal and emotional needs.

Recommendations
- Interpersonal communication workshops
- Mobile Inreach Unit (MIU) – student ambassadors*
- Community service opportunities
- "Latino" program like Aspire and Arise
- Outreach efforts to minority high school students
- **[New Equity Center: Aspire, Arise, Dream, REACH]**
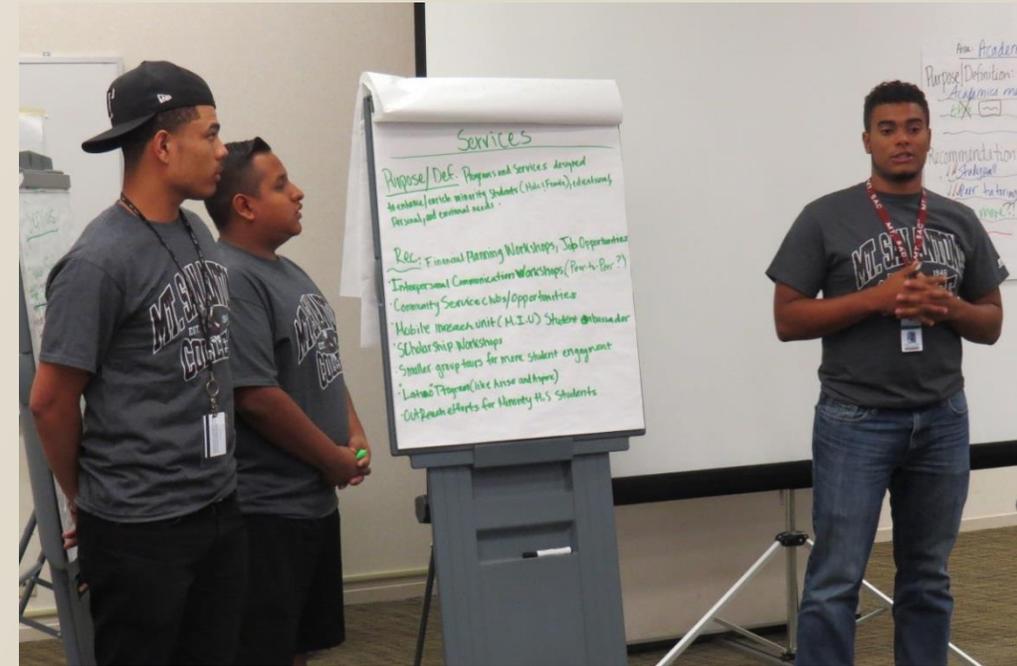
Peer to Peer

An individual who motivates, relates and understand the experience of another while attempting to create a bond with individuals to work toward accomplishing each other's goals.

Recommendations

- Multiple "3 man teams" to interact with students daily, proactively searching for students where they gather to provide resource information
- Peer tutors and peer support groups
- Weekly check-ups (peer to peer)
- Mentoring
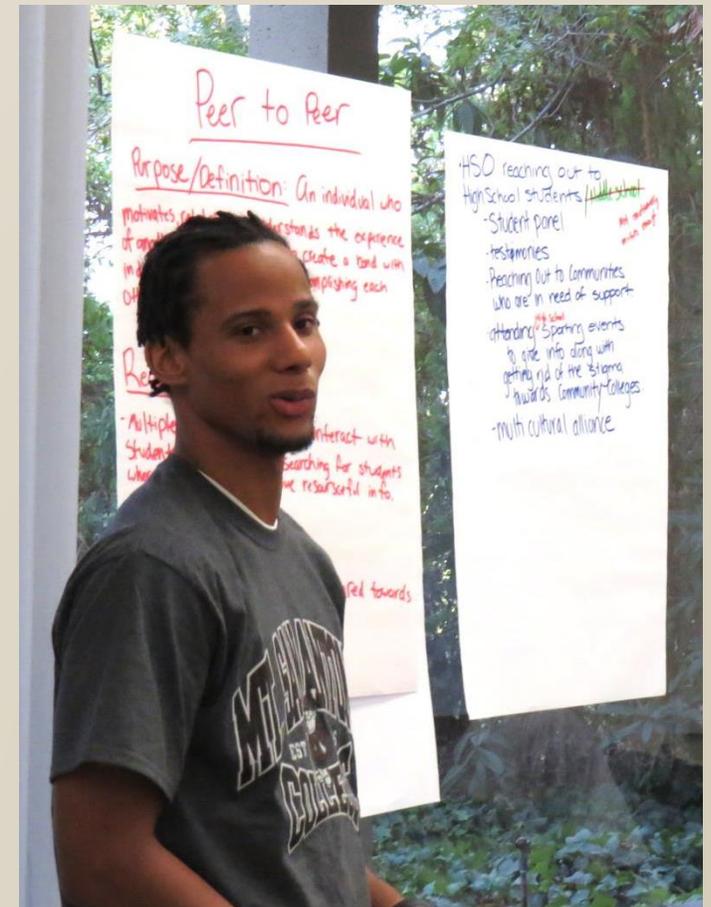
Cultural and Ethnic Identity

To recognize traditional practices and cultural values along with multi-cultural collaboration between each other.


Recommendations
- Ethnic Studies courses
- Multi-cultural Center
- Cultural workshops
- Professional/faculty training
- Cultural field trips
- Cultural campus events
- **[Washington DC/HBCU Tour, A2Mend, APAHE, *Wicked, Spare Parts, He Named Me Malala*]**
- **[Digital Stories]**
- **[Ethnic/Gender Studies Course Review]**

Year 2 Retreat – August 2016

- Areas of Focus – defined by combined team of students, faculty, staff, and managers:
  - Outreach/Mentoring to Youth in the Community
  - Transfer: Mentorship from students who transferred, critical connections, greater exposure
  - Student Leadership Development
  - Marginalized Groups: LGBTQ, former incarcerated, homeless
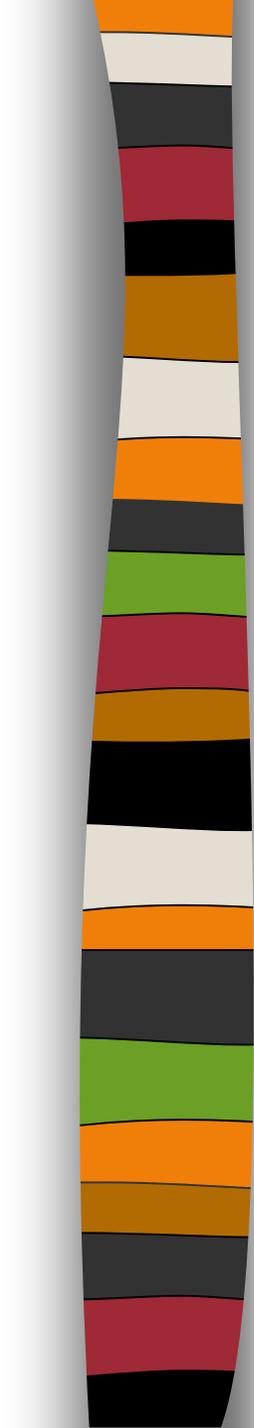
- Other Areas to Be Developed and Implemented
  - Career development/exploration: helping students' discover their potential, sense of direction; develop sense of self efficacy
  - Community mentors for students: bringing in role models from the community
  - Campus integration: institutionalizing MMI effort
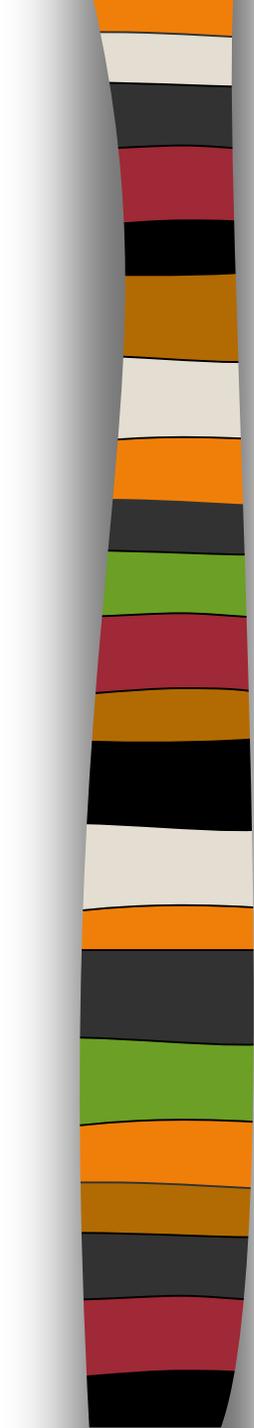
Year 2 Retreat Focus

- Code Switching
- Defining Social Capital
- The social capital activity showed me how much I'm really worth
- Color Code
- Imposter Syndrome/Stereotyped Threat
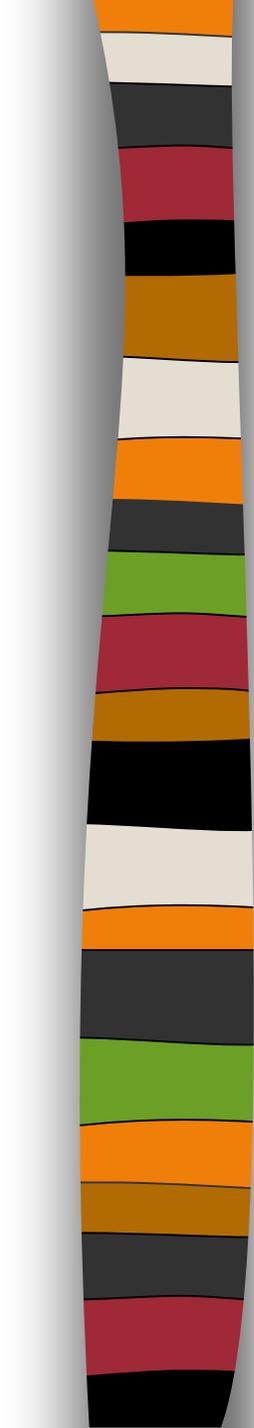
Resiliency: *What makes you believe you can make it?*

- To provide for my family – even if it is a foster home.
- Toughness; will power.
- Adjustable; adaptable; flexible
- Opportunistic
- Receptive
- Confident
- Courageous
- Hungry – I never had the opportunity to shine, to achieve
- Ambition
- Stay humble, but hungry – to have the drive but the humbleness to keep going

Managers, Faculty, Staff Working Alongside Students
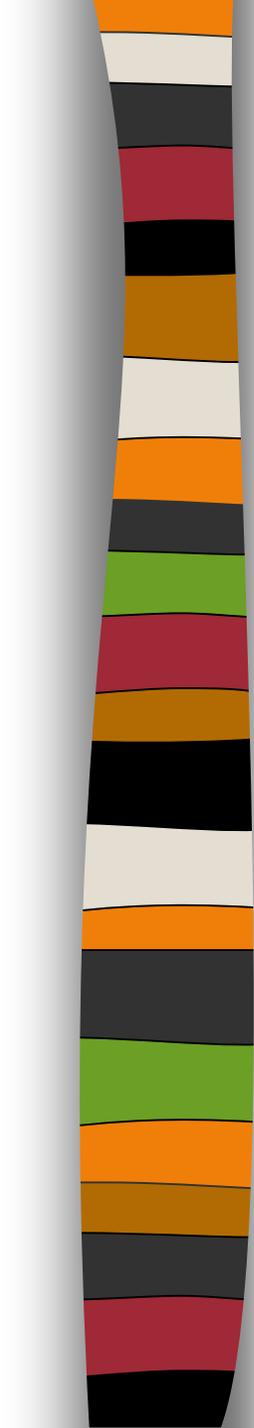
Reminder: *What does Mt. SAC need to do?*

- Better services for **job** opportunities *[SSEED]*
- Town Hall meetings to keep students informed
- Share **success stories** for motivation *[Digital Stories]*
- **Outings**; community work *[Field Trips]*
- **Study halls**; study skills *[Math Boot Camps; Study Hall]*
- Opportunities to do research *[Student researchers]*
- Networking opportunities *[Conference attendance]*
- **Culturally relevant courses** *[Ethnic Studies Task Force]*
- **Safe spaces** *[Equity Center]*
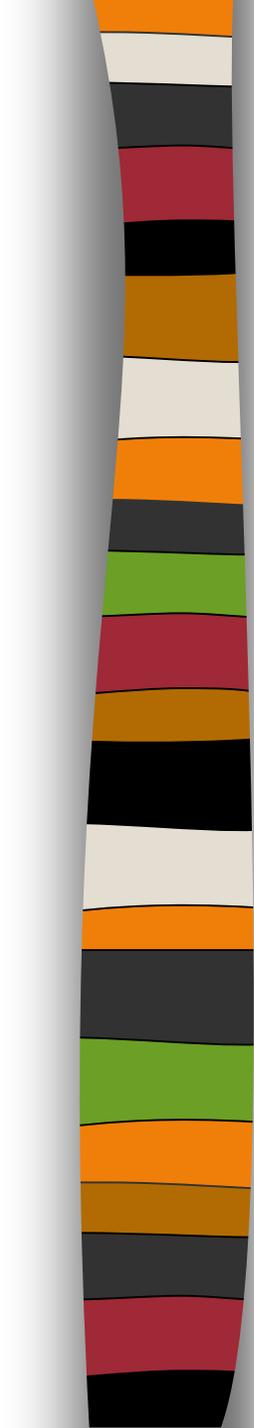
What We Have Put in Place

- Student Ambassadors
- SSEED
- Fale Fono
- Math Study Hall; Math Boot Camps
- Leadership Development
- Professional Development
- Digital Stories

The Student Ambassadors Are Launched!

- Inreach efforts are developed to better reach students
- Students say they are the best to reach their own
- Progress has been immediate and overwhelmingly successful
- Student ambassadors have the pride and fulfillment of assisting other students and the responsibility
- Lost and disconnected students have help to find their way

SSEED: Student Success for Education and Employment Development

- ## A tool for engagement
  - Many students pursue college are "all alone"
  - At the worksite, someone knows you and cares
- ## A tool for persistence
  - Students get paid (financial reward);
  - Students go to work and go to class
  - Required academic progress checks
- ## Skill development
  - Employers and program provide professional skill building: office etiquette, dress attire, soft skills development
  - Regular training provided from Microsoft office to financial literacy to ethics in the workplace and networking skills

SSEED Statistics

- 95% completion rate in year 1 of pilot
- Overall GPA average 2.64
- Placements:

Research Office

Payroll

Food Services

Academic Divisions

Business and Kinesiology

Student Services

Fale Fono

- Becoming a village – a safe place to share impacts of stereotypes, goals and dreams, "each one, check one", "no shame to ask" (confronting pridefulness)

- Utilizing a familiar cultural practice to help students find a focus, validation of self/culture, motivation, sense of belonging.

- Sharing of personal testimonies, guest speakers, resource workshops

Math Study Hall; Math Boot Camps

- Let's be real about where to start
- Minority students aren't taking math – they can't graduate and transfer
- We need to learn how to support students' learning of math
- Intensive preparation for placement testing led by math instructors
- They didn't ask for tutoring, they asked for "group study" where they can support each other
- Math Study Hall has led students to feel comfortable seeking help in other learning centers and the library.

Leadership Development and Ethnic Identity

- Leadership Retreats
- Speakers and Workshops
- Field trips and Cultural Events
  - Washington, DC Trip/HBCU Tour
  - *Spare Parts; He Named Me Malala; Wicked*
  - Transfer field trips; Summer Science Transfer
- Speaking to other students; speaking to faculty and college leaders
- Participation in conferences; presentations at conferences

Digital Stories
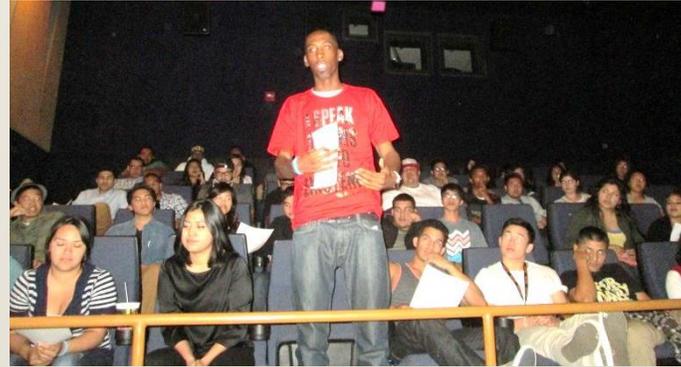
- Financial struggle
- Illness
- Immigration
- Migration
- Family separation
- Individual struggles

- Creative, self-reflective process to capture students' uniqueness, personal journeys, that serve as a

    motivation to others.

- Began with Arise program (AANAPISI-funded) effort with 8 students— presentations nationally, locally, on campus.

- Method is highly impactful and offers

    incredible opportunities for dialog,

    greater understanding and inspiration

    and opportunities to tell the untold

    stories… a powerful educational tool

Agenda Moving Forward

- **Academics**: collaboration with tutorial resources (LAC, MARC, Writing Center, STEM) for study groups and safe learning environments; workshops; summer focus opportunities
- **Services**: Latino-based services – *¡Lanzate!*
- **Peer to Peer**: outreach to K-12; enhance inreach efforts; expansion of Student Ambassadors
- **Cultural and Ethnic Identity**: collaborate on Ethnic/Gender Studies courses and AAT degree; in Social Justice; faculty development; workshops/speakers [Organizing for Change]
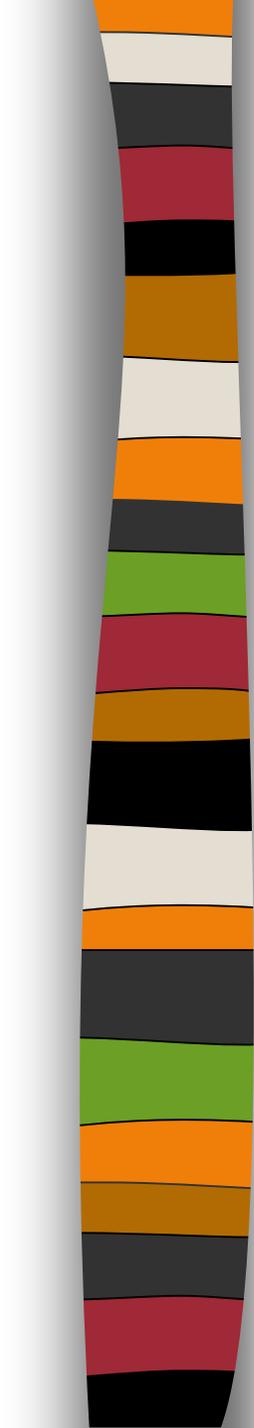
- **Milestone Recognitions:** keeping students motivated and on course
- **Leadership Development:** cross-cultural leadership forum and retreat
- **Professional Development**: continued focus on affective domain; increasing depth of reach to faculty
- Research: M2C3 Research Surveys – students, faculty, stakeholders; harder/closer look at Basic Skills placement and impacts on men of color