PR1ZE

Putting Retention 1st in the Zest for Excellence
Faculty/Staff Mentor Handbook

By Ken Ghee, PhD. © 2008
**Vision:** “A campus environment that embraces diversity as one of our core values, infusing every aspect of campus life and purpose, and every measure of success.”
*President Nancy L. Zimpher, Vision Statement: UC/21 Diversity Task Force, 2007*

**Dear PRIZE Faculty/Staff Mentor:**
Thank you for your support and participation in the PR1ZE Faculty/Staff Mentoring Program for African American students in the college of Arts & Sciences. This handbook should answer many of the questions you may have about the program and your involvement. Feel free to call or email Ken Ghee (ken.ghee@uc.edu; 513-556-5553) at any time if you have further questions, concerns, suggestions or comments.

**The PRIZE Initiative:**
In its efforts to retain, graduate, and *Place Students at the Center*, the College of Arts and Sciences is currently investigating students’ needs, academic expectations, and retention initiatives to help achieve their goals. The PRIZE Initiative (Putting Retention 1st in the Zest for Excellence) is an administration, faculty and staff collaboration to address issues of retention and graduation of African-American students in the college. If successful, this model may be expanded to other ethnic minorities and students in general.

**The PRIZE Faculty/Staff Mentoring Program:**
Mentoring has long been considered an essential component of student retention and achievement. The literature suggests that Faculty/Staff mentoring, regardless of race, gender and ethnicity can play a vital role in student development and academic success. Therefore all Faculty/Staff members regardless of race, gender, religion and ethnicity are invited and encouraged to participate in the PR1ZE Faculty/Staff Mentoring Program. The PR1ZE Mentoring Program will be a catalyst for introducing and connecting low to moderate achieving African American students (< 2.8 GPA) with supportive Faculty/Staff in their departments or field of interest. Research suggests that high achieving students (>3.0GPA) are typically well integrated in their department and/or university (e.g. McNair Scholars, Turner Scholars, Honors Programs) and are highly likely to graduate. This program has the approval and support of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Valerie Hardcastle.

**Why PRIZE? Some Relevant Data:**
Based on student data collected from the UC Registrar data base, it was apparent that approximately 30% of African American students were below a 2.2 GPA between the 2002-2005 academic years; they were academically at-risk by the end of the first year. The 2.2 GPA criteria is used to evaluate student status because one negative grade will jeopardize the college’s minimum GPA (2.0). This compelling data lead to further exploration into the variety of socio-cultural, academic and personal factors which may ultimately affect black student retention.

The PRIZE initiative will attempt to impact college retention using an integrative model, using multiple support services and mechanism to enhance academic achievement and improve retention.

**National Retention Trends**
Based on the University of Cincinnati’s (UC) graduation report (2001), 30.5% of black students graduated as compared to 52.2% white students, completing the degree within six years. The
Journal of Blacks in Higher Education reported in 2005, the national rate for graduating Black students is 42% compared to 62% of white students. Thus, UC is 11.5% below the national average. One immediate goal of the PR1ZE initiative is to increase African American retention rated to the national average.

Table 1: Top A&S Majors for Afr. Amer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Majors in 2007</th>
<th>African American Enrollment</th>
<th>Total Major Enrolled</th>
<th>Percent African American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXPL</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>1323</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGL</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPHR</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOUR</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POL</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHEM</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above shows the top ten majors for African-American students in the College of Arts and Sciences. The largest Major is Exploratory Studies, followed by Psychology and Communications. Often times, due to poor academic preparation from high school or low grade point average at the end of the first year, many students change their majors to Exploratory (EXPL) which is the largest major for African American students and students in general.

Figure 1: UC’s Six Year Graduation

Figure 1 shows the graduation rate of African-American students from the 1995 cohort to 2001. African-American students in the College of Arts and Sciences consistently are below both the overall university and the university black graduation rates. The primarily goal of the PR1ZE Initiative is to increase and improve the college’s graduation rates for African American students.

Conclusion:
The University of Cincinnati is 11.5% below the national average of graduating African American students. It’s evident that retention initiative programs need to be developed and implemented to increase the university’s graduation rate for black students. As A&S moves to a performance based budgeting model, student retention is of greater concern and African American students make up the University’s largest minority cohort. The college of Arts and Sciences is committed to the goal of increasing the retention and graduation rate of all students seeking baccalaureate degrees. The PR1ZE Initiative is a vital component for achieving this goal.
The PRIZE Faculty/Staff Protocol: The Important Role of Faculty/Staff (What’s in it for me?)

PR1ZE is a holistic initiative and the Faculty/Staff Mentoring Program is a major component. The typical Faculty/Staff role is not very time consuming and in many cases may simply recognize and formalize the time and effort you currently spend with a mentored African American student.

As a PR1ZE Faculty/Staff mentor, you will be matched with a student (as Mentor), or student group (as Advisor), in your department for Faculty/Staff mentoring and/or advising. Compatibility (of major, interests, preference (e.g. gender)) are core criteria for matching Faculty/Staff and students, however there is flexibility. **We strongly encourage Faculty/Staff who’s already mentoring a PRIZE eligible African American student (or two) to join PRIZE and invite their current mentees to join as well so that they may benefit from other coordinated support services.**

1) PRIZE Faculty/Staff Mentor:
There will be quarterly luncheons and other gatherings that you and your students will be invited too. You will be expected to make periodic contact with your mentee(s) at least twice a month (see details below). Potential contact activities include e-mail contacts, office hour visitations, lunch meetings, attending invited student events and PRIZE programs. We encourage Faculty/Staff to mentor at least one (or preferably two students) and engage with him/her (or them) for at least 20 minutes every month. This may involve a brief 10 minute office visit (perhaps during your already established office hours) “checkpoint” or “sharing” or “advising” or scheduled “activity” (see glossary of terms* below). We encourage Faculty/Staff mentors to e-mail their mentee(s) at least twice a month simply to ask how things are going or invite them to office hours, or a department or campus event. Faculty/Staff are not obligated or expected to meet with students off campus, although that is not prohibited (e.g. community service activity). **We encourage a Faculty/Staff commitment of one year from first contact point with an option to renew. However (due to the shortage of Faculty/Staff mentors) we encourage Faculty/Staff to consider a new mentee (or to take on a 2nd mentee) the following year.** In respectful consideration of Faculty/Staff time and work load responsibilities to all students, committee work, research and teaching; **one PRIZE mentees is the standard norm and two is the standard maximum.** However Faculty/Staff are more than welcome to take on more than two student mentees if desired and able.

**We also do not encourage or condone mentoring students as merely a way to get volunteers for your own program initiatives.** PRIZE students should not be “obligated” to do “volunteer work” as part of the contractual arrangement to be mentored. However if the mentor invites the mentee to participate in a volunteer activity and the mentee is interested in participating in the activity than that is acceptable as long as there is no undue pressure on the mentee to do so. We encourage Faculty/Staff mentor to expose and encourage mentee engagement in research and teaching related programs and activities pertaining to the mentees professional or personal fields of interest (e.g. inviting the student to a department colloquium, attend a special class or program, or participate in a mutually desired academic or social activity.)
As a PR1ZE Faculty/Staff Mentor, basically, you will do what many of us have been doing all along for one or some of our students, and that is mentoring. However, most of our mentoring is merit based and thus we engage with our best and brightest students (e.g. many faculty rightfully use GPA for recruiting and engaging RA’s and TA’s). As a PR1ZE Faculty/Staff Mentor you will be engaging students who may not necessarily meet those more traditional criteria and are typically excluded from merit based academic opportunities and experiences. The literature suggests that these are the students who are more likely to change majors, transfer schools, or “fall between the cracks” and drop out of college due to low GPA, personal problems or other factors. The PR1ZE Program is an opportunity to help and support the inclusion, retention and self efficacy of these students to achieve academically and to graduate. One aim of the PR1ZE Initiative is to recognize and formalize the work we (Faculty/Staff) do to help our least retained and most disenfranchised students. It gives participating Faculty/Staff another “work load” line item that credits his/her active programmatic student engagement. (traditionally a lot of the extra time, help, assistance and support we provide to an “average” student (or students) falls under the “radar” of workload and thus is not formally recognized, encouraged or supported). This is an opportunity to get some small, but formal, recognition for your non-traditional Faculty/Staff-student engagement and mentoring.

In Sum, the three phase time commitment for PR1ZE Mentors is as follows:

- (at least) one face to face engagement per month (minimum)
- (at least) one e-mail (or phone) engagement per month (minimum)
- (schedule permitting) interest in attending a quarterly PR1ZE sponsored program with (or without) your mentee.

2) PR1ZE Faculty/Staff Advisors:
PR1ZE Faculty/Staff advisors will assist the Prize Administration Team in setting up a peer support network within your major. For example in Psychology we have NUAAM-P (The Network of Undergraduate African American Majors in Psychology). A peer support network can be from four to as many students you have as majors and is open to all majors (and related majors) regardless of race, gender or GPA. Peer support networks meetings are open to all student interested in supporting one another around issues of retention excellence and cultural inclusion (i.e. making the major relevant to the ethnic history and identity of the students). A good example is the successful “best practice” E3 Engineering program which offers a 3 credit course entitled “Black in Math & Science” which theoretically gives African American Engineering students cultural relevance and continuity for their own professional aspirations in the field. Likewise, NUAAM-P highlights the contributions of Blacks in the field of Psychology as a cultural identity development component of the peer support group. NUAAM-P, like the many other student groups on campus get University support funds for meetings, speakers, programs and other operating expenses. PR1ZE Faculty/Staff advisors will work with the PR1ZE Administration to help set up a NUAAM-P type student support group in your department. The PR1ZE Faculty/Staff advisors and the student groups have the option of giving their NUAAM group a unique name and identity of their choosing or they could keep the
NUAAM acronym and add their major at the end as is the case in Psychology (i.e., NUAAM-P (Psychology), NUAAM-C (Communications), NUAAM-B (Biology), etc.)

**PR1ZE Faculty/Staff advisors are expected to help students identify ethnically diverse faculty and literature that often times are excluded from the students’ mainstream education.** This is but one element of the peer support group. Others include peer tutoring and moral support, sharing job and scholarship opportunities, strategies for getting into graduate school, a forum for discussion relevant and contemporary social topics of concern to students of color, sharing specific class and course experiences and evaluative feedback, sharing research, teaching and service opportunities and other basic support activities including regular e-mail correspondence and “Facebook group” interface for sharing literature, videos and blogs relevant to the major as well as networking and connecting to majors and alumni at other universities.

**PR1ZE Faculty/Staff Advisors are expected to attend at least one student group meeting per quarter and to encourage students to meet at least twice a quarter.**

In Sum, the seven phase time commitment for a **PR1ZE Faculty/Staff Advisor** is as follows:

- Be a PR1ZE Faculty/Staff Mentor to at least one NUAAM student leader
- Help identify and recruit student peer leaders to establish a NUAAM group in your department, or for collaboration across departments with common majors (e.g. Chemistry and Biology = NUAAM-Science).
- Be responsive to typical student group needs, questions and concerns in maintaining the NUAAM support as needed.
- Faculty/Staff Advisors should know and follow all the rules and regulations for Faculty/Staff advisors of student groups as outlined in the UC Faculty/Staff Advisors handbook and the UC student activities Board (SAB) faculty Advisors guidelines.
- Attendance at, at least one NUAAM student peer meeting per quarter (minimum).
- one e-mail (or phone) engagement per month with the peer group leader (minimum).
- interest in attending a quarterly PR1ZE sponsored program with your mentee.

In Sum, PR1ZE is a holistic initiative and there are multiple components. However, the personal and supportive relationships established through the Faculty/Staff mentoring program are a valuable component for its success. There are other integrative components in the holistic model that both compliment and supplement the Faculty/Staff mentoring program. For more information about these initiatives contact Ken Ghee (ken.ghee@uc.edu).

Thank you for helping our students to “keep their eyes on the prize.” **The prize is Graduation!**
*PR1ZE Glossary of Terms:*

“Checkpoint” - A brief meeting to learn about the academic status and progress of a PR1ZE student.

“Sharing” - A brief meeting to learn more about the personal life, family, dreams, and concerns of a PR1ZE student.

“Advising” - A brief period to offer advice and/or provide resources to a PR1ZE student.

“Activity” - A shared personal, professional or academic activity with a PR1ZE student.