

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
2017 Chancellor's Student Success Award
Mt. San Antonio College -- *Minority Male Initiative*

Name of Program: **Minority Male Initiative**

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I.A. How the Minority Male Initiative Has Helped Mt. San Antonio College to Make Significant Progress Toward Achieving Student Equity Goals and Success

Background

Our instincts and experience informed us, our data and research confirmed it. Minority male students were simply not achieving on par with all other students. This was not acceptable. Like other colleagues at other colleges, where and how do we start? We began by listening to our students' voices – using Appreciative Inquiry. They trusted us to tell their stories – about abandonment, bonding dysfunction, their personal experiences with multitudes of life setbacks. And then they told us what we needed to do to improve our success rates with such students: to reach out more to others like them and, make connections, to provide more academic support to build upon their connections, to teach them about themselves, and to enhance support services.

- *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.*
- *It sucks. I was on my way out but I didn't finish math.*

The Minority Male Initiative is designed to study, recommend, pilot, train, enlighten, share, and inspire our students, faculty, staff, and managers to address inequities in student success for a large segment of our student population. Minority males comprise 40% of our overall student populations. Our research has found that:

- African American and Latino males 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
- Foster Youth, AB 540/Dream, and disabled students are far below equity in
 - Course and ESL completion
 - Certificate and degree completion
 - Transfer

Research from the Community College Research Center advised that “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.” The College’s student equity and student success focus is to look at deep, systemic changes in a holistic approach that will enhance success and close equity gaps across the campus for all groups. Our students’ lives are so complex and their issues and concerns extend well beyond the classroom. Many of our male students of color are also foster youth, Dream, and/or have some type of disability. To that extent, Mt. San Antonio College has developed an initiative to focus on the improvement of minority male student success, knowing that this improvement will move the needle for the entire campus.

Program Description

The Minority Male Initiative (MMI) is not a self-contained program. Rather, it is an “initiative” in the sense that it is organic and dynamic – constantly under development and making additions and adjustments to improve our reach and our outcomes. It includes both direct services and interventions to students as well as an action plan that incorporates campus-wide approaches to improving student success. Through a network of strategies, the College is addressing student equity, access, success and social mobility.

The Components of MMI

- **Student Development**
 - Leadership Retreats: There have been three, highly successful MMI student leadership retreats comprised of minority male students who have been nominated from equity programs (EOPS, Aspire/Umoja, Arise/AANAPISI, Dream, Bridge, ACES/TRiO, DSPS, REACH/Foster Youth). With the theme “I Can, I Will,” training topics have included: Imposter Syndrome, Locus of Control, Social Capital, Stereotype Threat, Code Switching, Emotional Intelligence. Results show:
 - Greater understanding on the importance of communication/code switching (96.4% of respondents agreed)
 - Have a better understanding of how emotions affect their actions (87.5% of respondents agreed)
 - More informed about services offered to students from marginalized groups (89.3% of respondents agreed)
 - Cultural Capital: Students have participated in field trips to movies and theatrical productions to expose them to issues as well as the arts. Movies include: Spare Parts, They Call Me Malala, Hidden Figures, Moana. Theatrical productions include: Wicked, Motown, Hamilton.

- **Success Intervention Plan:** At each leadership retreat and at subsequent meetings on campus, students have developed particular interventions they believe will enable the college to improve success rates, especially with minority male students. These interventions have resulted in the development of an overall MMI Success Intervention Plan.
 - *Student Ambassadors:* In order to reach students like themselves (first generation, low income, foster youth, formerly incarcerated, disabled, male of color) the students developed a Student Ambassador program. Student ambassadors are stationed at key locations on campus to provide direct inreach services to students on campus and conduct information sessions for new students (Mountie Fast Track).
 - *Ethnic and Multicultural Studies:* Students undertook a proactive strategy by approaching the Board of Trustees, the College President, and the Academic Senate to advocate for an increase in ethnic studies classes and an ADT in ethnic studies. A faculty task force is moving forward to address these concerns and establish a new ADT.
 - *Student Leadership and Development:* MMI students are planning two special leadership events – a conference for high school students and a conference for fellow Mt. SAC students. The students were intent on sharing what they have learned with other students on campus. However, the students also desire to give back to the community and to ensure that younger students like themselves have the opportunities of a higher education. The MMI students also articulated their need for their further psycho-social development by addressing topics such as: Empowerment/Self-Esteem, Positive Ways to Deal With Failure; Advocating for One’s Self; How to Talk About Issues; How to Deal With Family Pressures.
 - *Transfer and Career:* As MMI students became more focused and confident as students, their concerns shifted to wanting more career development and preparation for transfer. They articulated the need to prepare for what it is like to transfer and reached out to former students who have transferred to return and mentor them.
 - *Monthly Mentoring Meetings, Fale Fono, Indaba:* Monthly meetings are held in which mentors help to lead guided discussions with students on topics ranging from time management, communication skills, money management, stress management, career planning. The *Fale Fono* and *Indaba* are culturally-based, safe spaces where students share and discuss cultural identity, personal development, and life challenges.
 - *Professional Development:* MMI students want their teachers to better understand them. By participating as student speakers at faculty-oriented campus trainings and convenings, MMI students have shared their thoughts and experiences, both on-and off-campus. Guest speakers for professional development have included: Cornel West, Frank Harris/J. Luke Wood, Diego Navarro, Cesar Cruz. Faculty have focused their opening meeting on “Addressing Issues of Diversity in the Classroom” and have offered workshops ranging from sharing of the Student Equity Plan to “Becoming a Veterans Friendly Campus” to “Language, Power, and Privilege: Talking About Culture” to “Universal Design.”
- **Academic Support:** MMI students have articulated the need for academic support. However, they do not talk about “tutoring”. Rather, they ask for more opportunities and spaces for

“group study.” They desire to be with others like them and to be in a supportive environment where they are comfortable attending, yet have access to resources (tutors). Based on both research, as well as our students’ own expressions of concern, increased emphasis on math success has been a critical development.

- Math Boot Camp: students enroll in a 6-8 week program in which they use the ALEKS online program to review math and learn new concepts to prepare both for placement testing as well as for enrollment in math classes. Students who complete the program have placed one to two levels higher, and enroll in math classes upon the completion of the boot camp at a 60-75% rate.
- Math Success Lab: a safe space for students to go and study and review math has been developed. Tutors in the classroom/supplemental instruction tutors are available to review lessons and assist students as necessary. Students have the ability to use the ALEKS software to enhance their learning and preparation for enrollment in math. Study spaces, computers, and tutors are available. The space differs from the college’s math tutoring center in that students are encouraged to form study groups in their classes and meet in the lab where they can study together as well as receive direct assistance as necessary. MMI students have articulated the need to be able to go to safe spaces where they can study with individuals like them.
- **Career Development**
 - SSEED – Student Success through Educational and Employment Development was developed to provide low income students, especially those who have few to no job skills, with opportunities to learn job skills and earn money. Jobs on campus enable students to interact with college staff who acknowledge them as students and provide a critical source of support by demonstrating interest in their roles as students. Students who are encouraged, and supported, to learn job skills and soft skills while earning a paycheck tend to attend class more regularly and have higher pass rates. Outcome data regarding SSSEED has shown that students with multiple disadvantages have had outstanding success: 85% of students maintained at least a 2.0 semester GPA with 40% of students maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA. Additionally, 98% of employers agreed that students displayed an improvement in their quality of work.
- **Research**
 - Student to student surveys – Student ambassadors survey students on campus regarding services provided, services needed, suggestions for improvement. This information is included in planning and evaluation of Student Services, accreditation, and annual program reviews.
 - Student focus groups—Students have been posed specific questions to enable college staff/faculty/administrators to better understand and work collaboratively with students to better meet their needs. Students responded to prompts such as: *What are the barriers/road blocks you faced? What does Mt. SAC need to do?*
 - M2C3: contracts with the Minority Male Community College Collaborative to conduct student, faculty, staff surveys.

1B. Identify the Specific Elements That Have Made the Program Effective

Goals and Measurable Progress

- Continuously study and conduct ongoing research to monitor the disparities in success rates for students of color, especially males.
 - Participation with M2C3 to conduct the Community College Survey of Men with students, staff and faculty to determine campus climate, perceptions, and to identify areas of need improvement.
 - Campus-wide “Equity Convening” scheduled for the fall with dissemination of results and break-out dialogs to determine next steps
 - Ongoing data analysis of student success rates to monitor progress of specific ethnic and gender groups in targeted areas (completion and success rates) has shown slight improvements for low income, AB 540, and African American Female students.
- Utilize data and input from students to develop and amend policies, services, interventions, and best practices to meet the needs of students, especially minority males.
 - Four areas of focus have been refined for further development to be addressed by student-staff-faculty work groups: Peer Outreach, Institutional Impact, Cultural/Ethnic Identity, Enhancement of Services.
 - Peer Outreach workgroup is developing college awareness mentoring program in which college students will mentor younger students from the community.
 - Institutional Impact workgroup is completing the M2C3 Research, scheduling of campus speakers for professional development and planning specific training and workshops for students.
 - Cultural/Ethnic Identity workgroup is developing a Latino Center, planning a Spring 2018 Multicultural Conference on campus, and developing a greater cultural presence on campus with posters, quotes, and a guide to programs and services designed for specific equity populations.
 - Enhancement of Services workgroup is developing interventions for marginalized groups, including formerly incarcerated and homeless/food insecurities. This workgroup is also developing an MMI Transfer Support System to include checklists, mentoring, and milestone celebrations.
- Develop an integrated system to improve the success rates of minority males in course completion, degree completion and transfer.
 - Math Success Center and Math Boot Camp. Math success rates are the lowest for minority males. MMI students have been hired as mentors and tutors in the Math Success Center to help organize study groups and to assist students in accessing an online tutorial/learning system to both review and enhance learning. Increased number of minority male students are enrolling in and passing upper level math. Students completing the Math Boot Camp are enrolling directly into math courses.
 - Monthly Mentoring Meetings are providing more systemized assistance and mentoring to students in a supportive framework.
 - Library outreach efforts have placed librarians out on campus to better reach students.
 - Hundreds of textbooks have been placed in the library and are being regularly accessed to allow students to have access to required course materials.
 - Sunday evening hours in the library have been tracked to show high rates of study by low income and ethnic minority students.
 - Transfer Summer Science Program expanded to enable students to both pass a transfer-level science course and experience university life as a potential transfer student.

Impact the Program Is Having – Testimonials

There are many ways to measure the impact of a particular program or initiative. We are meeting our goals, continuing our work, and monitoring our progress. Students are becoming self-actualized and in turn are impacting others. Thus, the efforts of MMI on a concentrated core is having an increasing impact across the entire campus. We continue to listen to our students' voices and use their words to be our compass. Their testimonials demonstrate the impact the program is having and how we are meeting our goals.

Dewayne: *The MMI program as a whole helped me focus more in school, it helped me narrow down what I want to do in the future, and it helped me lean towards being a leader. When we talked about helping students who "look like us," it made me realize I am not the only one who goes through what I go through. I realized that sharing my experience and knowledge can help others transcend the obstacles that are in their way. The MMI program allowed me to be engaged with students and interact with them. Doing this is fulfilling for me, students come in needing help, and it is comforting to know that they are comfortable with me when they see me. And the things I have gone through allows me to give them my input, give them recommendations. It helps build my social capital and my base here at Mt. SAC. When I meet students through the Mountie Fast Tracks, I see them around campus and they thank me. It solidified that I want to go back and give to my community. I never knew I wanted to do that until this whole experience where now I just want to constantly give myself to others.*

So, MMI gets students connected. It gets people to know others who are going through similar things. I have always thought that my stuff was isolated. But being in MMI helped me realize that there are others going through it. There is no better way to get connected to students and to really understand yourself without helping others with similar situations, and that was through MMI. On my transcript, I see that I was struggling academically. And things started to turn around when I became more motivated. I realized I do have a presence on this campus. MMI and my job showed me that others are looking to me too, to give them my motivation. They are looking to me for the next step.

Alejandro: *MMI has allowed me to cross cultural boundaries, talking to others and seeing how our cultures are very different (in terms of indigeneity, and sharing a multicultural experience). Being exposed to different people of color, different ethnic groups, to learn from them and grow with them. It has expanded my worldview because it has let me travel. I went to Washington, DC with MMI. I experienced places and things outside of my narrow horizons. We created a strong bond of brotherhood and now we are all succeeding together. I was able to explore my world when I couldn't even explore my city or state. MMI has also provided me with a job on campus that I am extremely grateful for. It has made me feel welcome, appreciated, rooted, and a part of this campus. It is providing me with connections after I get my Bachelor's Degree because of the Ambassador program. It has helped me shape my career and educational goals with regard to Student Services (through MMI). It has given me tremendous leadership skills because of the Student Representative positions I have held while in MMI, like planning the Multicultural conference and being an advocate for the expansion of ethnic studies and the development of the new Multicultural Center.*

As a man of color, we don't have that support or examples of successful men of color in our families and networks. Through MMI, I have found those men that I aspire to be (administrators and peers). So now I look up to Amrik, Dr. Dorame, Clarence Banks, Ula. All men of color in these positions. Now I see the example of what I can be. Here, we are seen as valuable and wanted. In the streets we are viewed as something bad, and here we are wanted and I love it. MMI has inspired me to give back to my

community and to create spaces for men of color even before community college (at the high school level). It works, it is an amazing program and a blessing to be a part.

Other Voices

- *It's a game – and Mt. SAC teaches you how to play the game.*
- *"Closed mouths don't get fed." My first year here, I kept my mouth closed ... but I got hungry.*
- *Be the individual you needed when you were younger.*
- *You give me a reason for being here ... my Mt. SAC family.*
- *The humiliation I go through when I think of my past is grace.*
- *Your stories of success drive me.*
- *I'm not where I want to be yet, but thank God I'm not where I was before.*

Soap Box Testimonials

A highlight and closure to our leadership retreats is the Soap Box Testimonial. Students sit/stand on a box in front of their peers and express themselves.

Tra'von: *It's been a long journey. But it's a journey I needed to go through....to find my purpose. It actually gives me an opportunity to share what has been so freely given to me. A lot of people have it but don't give it away. Knowing how to deal with feelings. Your feelings can cost you your life – and to hurt those around you. I grew up in L.A. in the jungles. I was lonely and I found the streets were for me. I practiced to be the best gang member I could be every single day. But I was still lonely. Everything I glorified was a way to mask what was going on in my life. I was in group homes. I didn't want to be that person on skid row all alone. There aren't a lot of people who think about foster youth. We are outcasts. Some of us are mentally strong enough to survive. But if you survive, how do you create your identity? We don't have an identity. We search but sometimes it doesn't happen. I practice perseverance on an everyday basis. I'd rather die for you in this room than the person out there on the streets I don't know. I pledge my allegiance to you.*

Javier: *My journey started out coming to this country. Growing up I didn't feel like I fit in even though there were other Latinos in my community. It didn't seem like they had the same story ... being undocumented. Once I got to high school I wasn't planning to go to college but to start working to help my family. Once I passed my first AP class, I knew that education was 10 times better and that I could get to a college. I graduated high school and came to Mt. SAC. It was one of the best experiences. Not just because of the resources, but because of the stories of others. If they can do it, why shouldn't I be able to? Coming here I was scared. I felt like everyone here was huge. I was intimidated. The reason that I never fit in is that I never let myself fit in. I don't let myself identify with people like me. But as soon as I came here, I knew it was okay to do it...to unravel myself. Others put their trust in me to share their stories, so I thought why shouldn't I? I will be so happy seeing you around at Mt. SAC. I have learned to be comfortable in my own skin....and to go to a UC and represent undocumented people.*



Alejandro Juarez, reporting on cultural Identity.
Photo Credit: Audrey Yamagata-Noji



Felix Ricarte Jr., explains his point view on imposter syndrome. Photo Credit: Audrey Yamagata-Noji



Group picture of MMI Retreat 2016
Photo Credit: Audrey Yamagata-Noji



Students review handouts about social capital



Matthew Torres, getting to know his fellow cohort mates
Photo Credit: Tarik Ross



Shonnardo Bodie, explains how his life plan is shaping
Photo Credit: Tarik Ross



Dewayne Wallace, brainstorming ideas to draw for his vision board. Photo Credit: Tarik Ross



Lonnell Edwards, Stands to be recognized at commencement. Photo Credit: Jeffrey George