

**TSU QEP PROPOSAL: Expanding  
Student/Faculty Engagement through  
Mentoring**

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8/20/2009

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## **TSU QEP PROPOSAL: Expanding Student/Faculty Engagement through Mentoring**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Student Faculty Engagement through Mentoring (**SFEM**) is designed to provide the academic and personal support for all of our students. The strategic goals are:

1. To retain students in the university.
2. To develop supportive relationships with fellow students, faculty, staff, and alumni.
3. To promote academic excellence through expanded engagement.
4. To advance students' knowledge of campus and community resources.
5. To help students to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for successful completion of their academic goals.
6. To encourage protégés to become future student mentors.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

For Texas Southern University to raise the level of learning achievement that will best serve our students in this society, in the community, and in their personal lives, we must raise the level of college engagement. Primarily, we serve first-generation and low income students, and we must create a clear path for achieving the outcomes that they need by presenting clear connections between specific high impact practices and learning outcomes. Texas Southern University has identified the essential learning outcomes that educators and employers alike endorse. Now we are challenged to connect the intended outcomes with our students' successful engagement in high impact practices. Through the promising educational activities and practices listed above, students can acquire the necessary skills and competencies to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and reap rewards in terms of financial security associated with the completion of baccalaureate and advanced degrees. Ultimately, Texas Southern University can increase retention through the development of both horizontal and vertical campus relationships via Peer-to- Peer, Faculty- to-Student, Professional –to-Student, and Alumni –to-Student mentors.

### **ANTECEDENTS**

In recent years, more attention is being directed to the notion of faculty/student engagement and student professional development, as strategies to help students more fully reach their potential. Indeed, we know that students are likely to be more successful if they are provided with more individual attention, more guidance, more encouragement, more support. Yet, at a time when faculty and staff members are faced with overwhelming demands of increasingly diverse student needs, more student supports are needed to increase success rates. Some would argue that faculty members currently advise students, and that mentoring requires expanded effort in that it constitutes engagement beyond coaching students in course selection. The faculty at TSU, through leadership by the Faculty Senate, has taken the lead in designing a comprehensive campus-wide mentoring initiative aimed at increasing success of

students and junior faculty. Although the model is evolving, pairing students with faculty members, senior level students, alumni, and professionals is a program feature. Junior faculty will benefit from mentoring support provided by senior faculty members, chairs, and deans. In general, mentees will be provided guidance and support as students and junior faculty members navigate unfamiliar collegiate experiences. It is through campus-based mentoring that institutions around the country are offering students new avenues for exploring educational and career paths, stronger incentives for staying in school, and increased confidence in their ability to succeed. For students having social or academic difficulties, or for students at risk of dropping out, mentors are expected to become personally involved in students' success, and they can both encourage students and hold them accountable for going to class and getting their work done. And mentoring programs are not just limited to these scenarios. Although mentoring is often considered to be primarily for students with low grades and limited opportunities, it is useful for gifted and mainstream students as well, providing them with opportunities to develop job and communication skills, practice decision-making, and learn more about subjects such as art, science, history, math, and technology. Broadly defined, however, mentoring is a sustained "one-to-one relationship between a caring adult and a child who needs support to achieve academic, career, social, or personal goals" (McPartland & Nettles, 1991, p. 568). Unlike "natural mentoring" relationships-- which may develop independently between students and teachers, older friends, relatives, or coaches-- "planned mentoring" relationships are those in which a young person, the "mentee," is matched with a mentor through a structured program with specific objectives and goals (Floyd, 1993). *Educational or academic mentoring* focuses on improving students' overall academic achievement. While these programs generally have specific institution-related goals, such as raising students' grades, improving attendance, or curbing dropout rates, mentors do not concentrate only on tutoring or doing homework with their mentees. Instead, the TSU academic mentoring programs expects that mentors spend time encouraging, talking to, and becoming connected to their mentees, hoping to boost academic performance indirectly by improving students' attitudes about school, raising personal goals, giving them incentives to attend classes regularly, etc.

## **BEST PRACTICES**

The "high impact" practices described below, while not exhaustive, provide benchmarks that frame curriculum and pedagogy that potentially foster active intellectual student engagement across the entire educational experience. Information is obtained from the following an array of sources.(REF)

## **ESSENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES/COMPETENCIES**

Students should prepare for the twenty-first-century challenges by gaining:

### **\*Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**

Through study in the sciences, both natural and social, including mathematics, humanities, histories, languages, and art

**\*Intellectual and Practical Skills, including:**

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem-solving

**\*Personal and Social Responsibility, including:**

- Civic knowledge and engagement-local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

**\*Integrative and Applied Learning, including:**

Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

## Employer Views on Achievement of Essential Learning Outcomes: 2008 National Survey Findings

	Very Well Prepared (8-10 ratings)*	Not Well Prepared (1-5 ratings)*	Mean Rating*
Global Knowledge	18%	46%	5.7
Self-direction	23%	42%	5.9
Writing	26%	37%	6.1
Critical Thinking	22%	31%	6.3
Adaptability	24%	30%	6.3
Self-Knowledge	28%	26%	6.5
Oral Communication	30%	23%	6.6
Quantitative Reasoning	32%	23%	6.7
Social Responsibility	35%	21%	6.7
Intercultural Skills	38%	19%	6.9
Ethical Judgment	38%	19%	6.9
Teamwork	39%	17%	7.0

**\*Ratings on 10-point scale: 10=recent college graduates are extremely well-prepared on each quality to succeed in entry-level positions or be promoted/advance within the company.**

*Note: These findings are taken from a survey of employers commissioned by the association of American Colleges and Universities and conducted by Peter A. Hart Associates in November and December 2007.*

Each college program within the **SFEM** should provide services that are especially enriching for the particular group of students that it is charged to serve. The colleges could provide weekly workshops for students to enhance their knowledge of University and community resources, academic skills, leadership skills, and social opportunities.

### Connecting Essential Learning Outcomes with High Impact Practices

Clarifying essential learning outcomes is an early step in the process of connecting high impact practices to desired outcomes. An array of connections to be activated by mentors for the benefit of protégés is outlined in chart form (Table 1 and detailed in Appendix 1).

**Table 1**

**Connecting Essential Learning Outcomes with High Impact Practices**

<b><u>Connecting Essential Learning Outcomes with High Impact Practices</u></b>	<b>exploring ‘big questions</b>	<b>Undergraduate research</b>	<b>Learning communities</b>	<b>global learning (Study abroad)</b>	<b>Capstone courses</b>	<b>1st year seminars and experiences</b>	<b>Writing-intensive courses</b>	<b>Collaborative assignments and projects</b>	<b>Internships</b>	<b>Ethics-intensive courses</b>	<b>Service and community-based learning</b>	<b>Capstone projects and culminating experiences</b>
<b>Fostering Broad Knowledge</b>												
<b>Strengthening Intellectual and Practical Skills</b>												
<b>Deepening Personal and Social Responsibility</b>												
<b>Practicing Integrative and Applied Learning</b>												

**Table 2**  
**Comprehensive Evaluation Plan**

	Course Pass Rates	Course-Level Assessment	Mentor Evaluations	Program Level Assessment	1 Year Retention Rates	Graduation Rates
<b>I. Student Retention</b>						
General Education course outcomes	X		X		X	X
Major course outcomes	X	X	X	X		X
Improved Attendance	X	X	X		X	X
<b>II Relationship Development</b>						
Student/Faculty Relations	X	X	X		X	X
Student/Alumni Relations			X	X	X	X
Learning Community Participation			X			X
<b>III Student Professional Development</b>						
Utilizing Campus/Community Resources		X	X	X	X	X
Enhanced Self-Esteem			X			X
Heightened career awareness		X	X			X
Student Readiness for Mentoring	X	X	X	X	X	X

## **Additional Metrics**

1. Learning community participation by first year students
2. Impact of educationally purposeful activities on first academic year GPA by Pre-college achievement level (SAT, ACT)
3. Impact of educationally purposeful activities on first academic year GPA by race/ethnicity
4. Impact of educationally purposeful activities on the probability of returning for the second year of college by race
5. Senior participation in high-impact activities (culminating senior participation)

## REFERENCES

George D. Kuh , “High Impact-Educational Practices.....What They Are, Who Has Access To Them, And Why They Matter”, Association of American Colleges and Universities, ( AACU) LEAP (Liberal Education and America’s Promise)Initiative.

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1. “How Should Colleges Prepare Students to Succeed in Today’s Global Economy?” Survey among employers and recent graduates by Peter Hart Research Associates, Inc.
2. “How Should Colleges Assess and Improve Student Learning” (Association of American Colleges and Universities, January 2008).
3. Ann Leskes and Ross Miller, Purposeful Pathway: Helping Students Achieve Key Learning Outcomes (Washington, D. C. Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2006), iv.
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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Connecting Essential Learning Outcomes with High Impact Practices**

#### **\*Fostering Broad Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural World**

- Common Intellectual experiences (exploring “big questions” in history, cultures, science, and society)
- Undergraduate research
- Learning communities (multiple courses linked to a “big question”)
- Diversity, civic, and global learning (Study abroad)
- Capstone courses

#### **\*Strengthening Intellectual and Practical Skills**

- First-year seminars and experiences
- Writing-intensive courses (across the curriculum)
- Skill-intensive courses (quantitative reasoning, oral communication and information literacy across the curriculum)
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Undergraduate research
- Internships

#### **\*Deepening Personal and Social Responsibility**

- Common Intellectual experiences (exploring “big questions” in history, culture, science, society)
- Diversity, civic, and global learning (Study abroad)
- Ethics-intensive courses
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Service and community-based learning

#### **\*Practicing Integrative and Applied Learning**

- Learning communities (multiple courses linked to the “big question”)
- Undergraduate research
- Service and community-based learning
- Internships
- Capstone projects and culminating experiences