

Vice President for Student Affairs Briefing

Ali Raza

Florida State University

araza@fsu.edu

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Dave Kratzer, Vice President for Student Affairs at University of Florida  
FROM: Ali Raza  
DATE: 16 September 2014  
RE: Minority Student Retention Rates and Programs Briefing

**BACKGROUND:** The American college student is increasingly diverse and non-traditional. In 1976, approximately 1,690,800 students of color enrolled in a four-year college or university compared to the most recent release of the *Digest of Education Statistics*, where enrollment increased to 7,878,800. Since 1976, the percentage of students who are non-White increased from 15.7% to 39.7%. The average college student today is different from the college student ten, twenty, and fifty years ago. The University of Florida is not unique, as minority enrollment numbers have more than doubled from 1990 to 2006 and now make up nearly 15,000 students.

**ISSUE:** The University of Florida needs to take leadership in accommodating and addressing the needs of our diverse students. The level of financial and psychological support for programs and resources made available to our student population must be increased. The goal is to maintain a positive educational experience for students and ensure retention rates are improved. Programs and services need to be evaluated in order to assess success rates and determine student impact.

**CURRENT SITUATION:** Whereas the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Florida “fosters a community that values and respects diversity” and is “committed to developing concrete steps to further diversity and inclusion as well as continually improve the campus climate for students and staff”. Adequate attention and resources must continue to be provided as a disproportionate number of students come from low socioeconomic classes. University of Florida boasts nearly 80% six-year graduation rates for White and minority students.

**SERVICES OFFERED:** The University of Florida offers several resources targeted specifically for minority students. Our Division is in charge of the Florida Opportunity Scholar Fund, which provides resources and scholarships to assist low-income, first generation students and families. The Multicultural & Diversity Affairs department also provides “services, educational communities, learning, support, outreach, activities and engagement”. Other programs include: University Minority Mentor Program (UMMP), Successful Transition through Enhanced Preparation for Undergraduate Programs (STEP-UP), and the Center for Leadership and Service.

**PEER INSTITUTIONS:** Comparable large, public institutions including Florida State University, University of Central Florida, and University of South Florida have similar programs offered with a strong emphasis to diverse student populations. Leading institutions including The Ohio State University, The University of Texas at Austin, University of California Los Angeles, and San Diego State University create and maintain specific Centers for student populations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The University of Florida should increase funding to target students of color. Retention and graduation rates among minority population are adequate but still require attention and improvement. Establish a Center focused specifically on researching best practices, collaborating with peer institutions, monitoring, and supporting students of color. Finally, enlist in President Barack Obama’s *My Brother’s Keeper* which focuses on improving education for minority males and refer to “Advancing the Success of Boys and Men of Color in Education”.

**CAMPUS IMPACT:** Funding will be necessary. Current state of declining state funding could pose issue and may require reallocation of existing funds. Other areas of campus needing attention may react negatively. Results may not be immediately available. Long-term, University of Florida may be seen as a pioneer in retention and graduation rates for students of color.

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