



Your Degree First: The Success of a Recognized Student Organization for Student- Athletes

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Objectives.....

- Identify strategies designed to assist students of color and improve their academic performance
- Develop a cohesive plan to address challenges among African American men and women based on anecdotal data
- Create a student-centered model focused on life skills and student-athlete graduation rates



Overview

- Challenges that students of color face
- Current Minority Initiatives
- Your Degree First
- Structure of YDF
- Challenges of YDF
- Now What
- Questions



Challenges that students of color face

- Black students at PWIs have higher attrition rates, poorer academic performance, and are less likely to pursue graduate degrees than white students (Allen, 1992).
- Arguments have surfaced regarding the inequity in higher education for African American students. In general, black students seem academically, culturally, and economically incompatible with the PWI model of education (Hunt, Schmidt, Hunt, Boyd, & Magoon, 1994).
- Issues that are particularly challenging for student athletes of color are social and academic integration, performance pressure in their sport, and racism, and sexism on campus (Person and LeNoir, 1997).



Current Minority Initiatives

- Peer Mentoring
- Academic Performance and Retention/Faculty Student Pairing
- Annual Awards Ceremony
- Outreach Opportunities
 - African American Success Project Seminar
 - Community Outreach Program
 - Soul Food Sunday
- Your Degree First



Peer Mentoring

- **Peer Mentoring Program**

This program is a peer-to-peer contact program designed to reach out to all first-year/ new students attending Colorado State University. The program is also a component of the Rites of Passage Program



Academic Performance and Retention

- **Rites of Passage**

This program is designed to improve the academic performance and retention rate of African American, first-year and transfer students. Components of this program include peer mentoring, seminars/community building forums, mid-semester grade monitoring, faculty/staff mentoring, African American Success Project Seminar, alumni speakers-bureau, community service involvement and leadership development.



Awards Programs

- **Annual Awards Ceremony**

This program has been in existence for the past 19 years. The program is designed to acknowledge and recognize the accomplishments of African American students, academically and as student leaders. The program also recognizes the accomplishments of individuals in the community (as well as alumni) who have played an integral role in the success of African American students and the Office of Black Student Services.



AASPS

- **African American Success Project Seminar**

This program is geared toward providing students with a basic introduction to college life at CSU. The program is designed with first-year, African American students in mind, speaking directly to their experiences.



COP

- **Community Outreach Program**

The Office of Black Student Services receives many invitations to participate and speak at various campus and community events. Examples: classrooms, community forums/programs.



Soul Food Sunday

- **Knowledge for the Soul Chats**

This monthly program is designed to create community and knowledge among the entire University community, in particular, the African American community. When possible, traditional “soul food” is offered as a taster during this noon time tradition. Guest speakers share information related to careers, culture, history, etc.



Your Degree First

- **Mission Statement:**

Your Degree First is a program designed to assist, motivate and promote minority student-athletes in pursuing the degree of their choice. It is constructed to offer a support system among minority student-athletes regarding educational progress, degree program awareness, skill development and future employment opportunities.

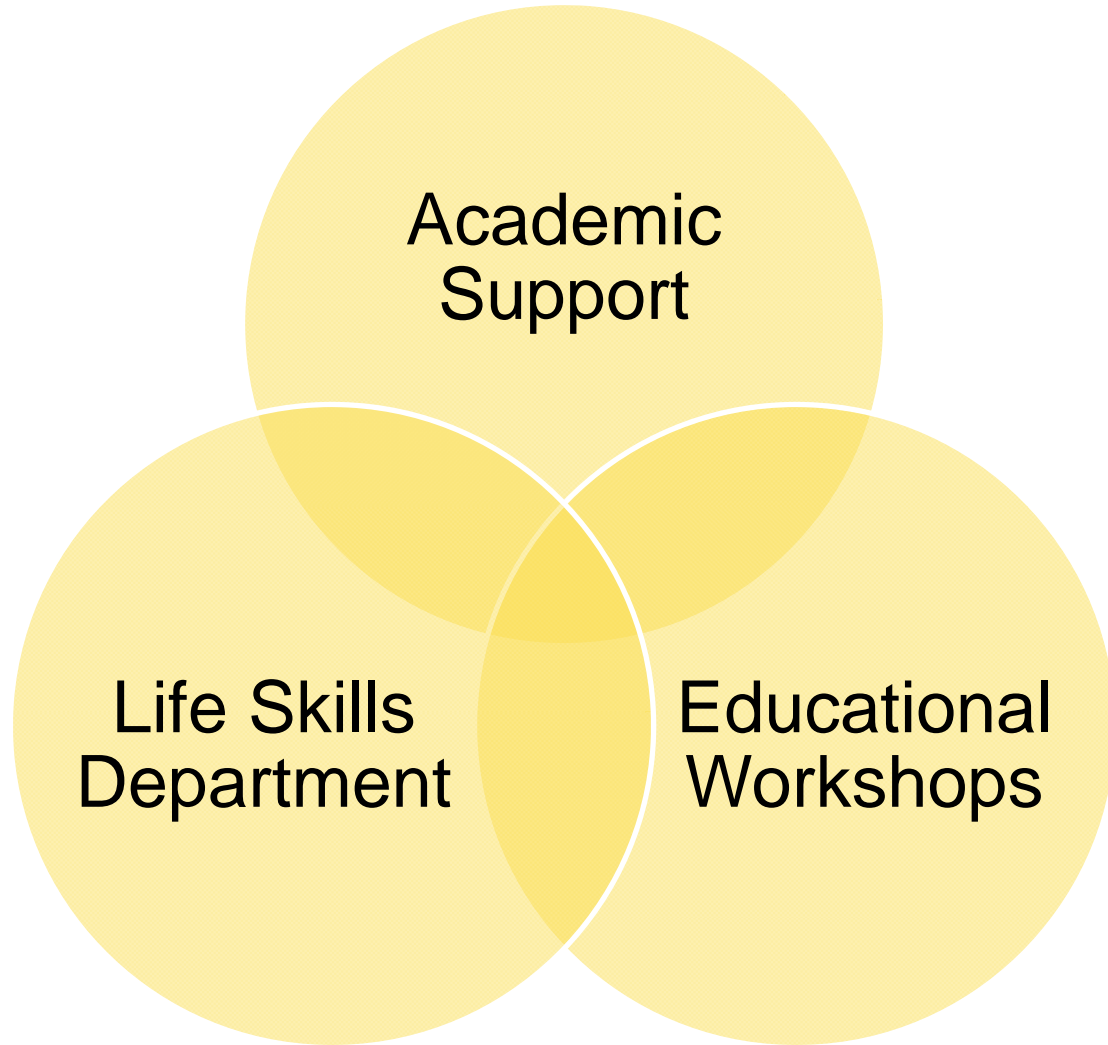


Goals

- Progress towards graduation and beyond
- Learn valuable tools that will help them with life after sports
- Allow leadership opportunities to gain experience outside the classroom- speaking events, outreach program development



Structure of YDF



Why YDF is Important

- During the 2003/2004 academic year, 60% of the student athletes in YDF obtained an academic honor.
- During the 2006/2007 academic year all minority student athletes that exhausted their eligibility graduated.



Academic Support

- Bi-Weekly Meetings
- Weekly Grade Reports
- Peer Accountability
- Free Tutoring
- Supplemental Instruction



Life Skills Department

- Community Outreach (Tour of Excellence)
- Resume` Building
- Internship Opportunities
- Life Beyond Sports



Educational Workshops

- Acclimation to Husker Nation
- Financial Management
- Relationships
- Professional Etiquette
- Guest Speakers (Former Student-Athletes)



Challenges of YDF

- Student-Athlete Involvement
- Buy-in of Coaches
- Funding
- Time Commitment



Campus resources

- Student Involvement Center
- Multicultural Center
- Funding Opportunities
- Collaborations with other student organizations
- Women's Center
- Counseling Psychological Services
- Career Services
- Life Skills Department
- Student Body Senate



Now what?

- Identify the needs of your institution and department
- Work collaboratively with academic units
- Develop relationships with student-athletes
- Appoint strong leadership
- Solidify funding



Resources

- Swail, Dr. Watson Scott. Barriers to Student Retention and Success On College Campus. Student Success March 2006.
<http://www.studentretention.org/20063/default.htm>
- Allen, W. (1992). The Color of Success: African American College Student Outcomes at Predominantly White and Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities
- Astin, A.W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. Journal of college Student Personnel, 25(4), 297-308.
- Howard-Hamilton, Mary F., and Sherry Kay Watt. Student Services for Athletes. New directions for student services, no. 93. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.
- Chickering, A.W., and Reisser, L. Education Identity. (2nd ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993



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