“A Taste of College”

At risk students from Franklin High School visit Rutgers University for a day, to Experience College, Before they Rule it Out

Tag Words: Role Models; At Risk; Franklin HS; RU Visit; Experience

Authors: Sharlene Dougan with Julie M. Fagan, Ph.D.

Summary

“A Taste of College” is a program that I have created to reach out to underprivileged students in a nearby community. I have coordinated members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority to become mentors to the high school students. Giving the students positive role models to look up to and ask for guidance. The students will visit Rutgers for a day with their mentor and attend classes of their choice, so they may be able to experience it for themselves.
The Issue: Urban Education

Overview
Minority students in urban areas are at lower percentage of going to college or university than Caucasian students. Due to financial reasons, lack of support or not being challenged enough. “A Taste of College” is a program that will offer the support, emotionally through our mentors, give them knowledge of how to receive financial support and experience by being able to attend classes for a day.

Minority Groups face High Dropout Rates and few Obtain Higher Education past High School
“Economic suppression is so great in poor communities that it is nearly impossible to escape from the social ills created by economics alone. Complicate this by poor education, poor health, poor family structures and poor values (choices), and you have a situation that black people can’t escape from” (Anthony Asadullah Samad).

There are a number of reasons why, minority students don’t perform as well as white students. Schools placed in an urban location are frequently, underfunded, with limited resources and often lower test scores compared to the national average. Without support systems, or role models to look up to, minority students are left to repeat history and rarely making it out to defy the odds. With schools not giving the students what they need or offering support, many students drop out of high school, to only find jobs at minimum wage or supplementing with criminal activities to make money the best way they know how. This only produces high dropout rates and even higher percentages of black males in jail, rather than in college.

Statistics
- More black men go to jail vs. college, in fact 2:1
- In 2005, only 1.1 million black people ages 25 or older have higher degrees. Ten years earlier only 677,000 had the same education.
- In 2007 only 19% of 25 years and older black have bachelors
- In 2006 the high school dropout rate for Caucasian was 5.8% where as blacks was 10.7%
- Of the 17million students of all races enrolled in higher education, only 11.5% are black (roughly 2 million students).
- In 2007 Blacks only make up 10% of the student body in top ranking medical schools.
- Blacks with bachelor degrees make $36,694 where as Caucasians make $38,667

Within my high school district:
I attended Triton Regional High School, a predominantly white high school with only 15 black students enrolled the year I graduated. Our counterpart Highland High School a predominantly black school, within the same district had much lower scores across the board when it came to dropout rates, SAT scores, and post education.
Highland High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students in grades 9-12 who dropped out during the school year.</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
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</table>

Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Essay</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>477</td>
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<td>DFG</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>494</td>
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<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>7191</td>
<td>77%</td>
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Triton High School:

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Percentage of students in grades 9-12 who dropped out during the school year.

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<th>School</th>
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<th>School</th>
<th>District</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
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**Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Taking Test</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Essay</th>
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<td>2006-07</td>
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<tr>
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<td>74%</td>
<td>494</td>
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The Service Project: Spend A Day
Partnering with Rutgers Universities “Spend a Day” program, I will reach out to 10 to 15 high school students and offer them a chance to see what college is really like. While the students visit the campus, they will also attend the classes of their choice with an undergraduate student mentor, and eat at the dining hall. By allowing the students to attend college for the day, it will allow them to experience what college can be like for them. The students will also be able to communicate with their mentors even after the program has been completed. The mentors will offer the support and advice to the high school students that they may not have at home. The mentors have been enlisted from Black Fraternities and Sororities such as Omega Psi Phi and Alpha Kappa Alpha Incorporated, with similar backgrounds as the high school students. This program will take place in January, when the Rutgers students return from winter break during the first or second week of class. The students will arrive in the morning and will leave once they have attended two classes, an informational meeting with the financial aid officers, lunch and in conclusion a tour of the campus.

By creating this program, I hope to enrich and change the minds of high school students who didn’t think college was an option due to financial reasons, or never wanted to pursue it due to the lack of support.

In order to create this program, I sent letters out to friends and organizations that would be interested in offering support to the students. Once obtained the support system I spoke to Dean Sharice Richardson, to receive all necessary permission and advice. And finally, I chose to reach out to Franklin High School, because of its close proximity and high minority percentage.

**Mentors Participation Letter:**

To the Members of the Iota Psi Phi Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Incorporated:

I am an undergraduate senior at Rutgers University majoring in Biology. As a part of my 11:015:405 colloquium classes, my Professor Dr. Julie M. Fagan has asked us to research and address an area of concern and create a program that would benefit society. While most of my classmates have decided to explore areas in the environment, I have decided to focus on at-risk youth and create a program for high school students. It is my hope to create a program that targets students that are capable of succeeding in college, but are not pursuing a higher education due to the lack of support, financially or emotionally, or not being challenged.

In my service called "A Taste of College" that I would be doing with my professor and with the approval of Rutgers University, high school students would "shadow" undergraduate students to their classes based on the areas of interest of the high school student. The student would then be able to attend an informational meeting where they would meet with financial aid officers and be informed of grants and programs that colleges have to offer. In addition to this, it is my hope that the students will be set up with a mentor from African American Sororities and Fraternities from Rutgers University. The mentors will be able to offer guidance and experience in dealing with similar circumstances and overcoming obstacles.

In order to make this program efficient and enjoyable to the students, I would like to enlist the help from Fraternities and Sororities at Rutgers University. Participation in this
The program would require a few members from the organization to become a mentor to a student. The mentors would offer support and advice to the students about prevailing regardless of the situations they may have at home.

Once participation is confirmed the mentors would attend one informational meeting before the program starts to be advised on the procedure and stipulations with Dean Richardson. On the day of the event the mentors will meet with the student and be shadowed to a class of the high school student’s choice. It is my hope that the communication will remain, even after the program has finished, but that is optional. Also the mentors can choose who they would like to mentor to ensure beneficial relationship.

In doing this program, I hope to enrich the lives of students that are capable of succeeding but are not urged to pursue college. Also for this program to run past my college career at Rutgers University.

If any of your members are interested in becoming a mentor, please email me their names and I will be in talks with them about the dates and any information that may be needed. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at.

Letter Sent to Dr. Neely Hackett, Principle of Franklin High School:

Dr. Neely Hackett
Franklin High School
500 Elizabeth Avenue
Somerset, NJ 08873

Re: High School Students Participating in Rutgers University “A Taste College” Program

I am an undergraduate senior at Rutgers University majoring in Biology. As a part of my 11:015:405 colloquium class, my Professor Dr. Julie M. Fagan has asked the students in my class, to research and address an area of concern and create a program that would benefit society. While most of my classmates have decided to explore areas in the environment, I have decided to focus on at-risk youth and create a program for high school students. It is my hope to create a program that targets students that are capable of succeeding in college, but are not pursuing a higher education possibly due to the lack of financial or emotional support, or because school as they know it, is not challenging.

In my service called "A Taste of College", I will be working directly with Dr. Julie Fagan and Dean Sharice Richardson of SEBS at Rutgers University. The elected high school students will "shadow" undergraduate students for half a day, based on the high school student’s area of interest. The high school student will then attend an informational meeting where they will meet with financial aid officers and be informed of grants and programs that colleges have to offer. In addition, the student will be paired with a mentor from an African American Sorority or Fraternity at Rutgers University. The mentors will offer guidance and their personal experiences in overcoming educational obstacles and dealing with similar circumstances.
In order for the program to be successful, the guidance counselors at Franklin High School should identify students that they think will benefit from this program. Once the students are selected, I will provide permission slips from Rutgers University and will communicate with the students directly to inform them of the process and will follow-up with additional details about the program. Upon receipt of the permission slips by Rutgers, the students will be matched with their mentors before their visit to Rutgers for the day.

Rutgers University would like to know if Franklin High School will be able to provide transportation for the selected students to attend the program. In the event this is not possible Dr. Julie Fagan and I will explore other possibilities of providing transportation for the high school students to Rutgers University. With respect to meals while visiting Rutgers University, the mentors and I will organize a fundraiser to cover the cost of lunch.

In coordinating this program, I hope to enrich the lives of students that are capable of succeeding but have not been encouraged to pursue college. I plan to remain involved in “A Taste of College” for many years to come following my graduation from Rutgers University.

Please contact me as soon as possible if Franklin High School is able to provide transportation for the high school students. If you have any other questions or concerns please contact me via email.

**External Links:**
1. Blueprint of Black America- [www.blackdemographics.com](http://www.blackdemographics.com)
3. “Between the Lines, Problems Blacks can’t Escape From”- [www.blackcommentator.com](http://www.blackcommentator.com)
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BET Networks
1235 W Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20018-1211
202-608-2000

Editorial: Offering Urban High School Students another Choice
November 4, 2009

All too often as teens grow up in urban communities they are met with many types of
discrimination, or as teens would like to call it “haters”. These are the people who have
discouraging impacts on their lives, and a lot of times can contribute to teens settling for
mediocrity. Without encouraging people by their sides, they often settle for what is the easiest.

Teens in urban communities are at a greater disadvantage than Suburban children. Due to
a lack of funding in schools, they are not being challenged as much or not receiving the same
opportunities available to suburban schools. This in turn leads to minimal amounts of role
models for the teen to look up to. Without role models or proper guidance, many times the teens
only complete what is expected of them, and sometimes less.

So it shouldn’t be surprising to hear that the dropout rate for Caucasian students is 5.8%
where as African American rate is almost doubled at 10.7%. All of which can be avoided if
urban teens were offered more choices for education.

That is why I have created a program called “A Taste of College”, to cater to urban high
school students. This program allows students to see what life can be past high school and a
mediocre job. The students will be able to shadow mentors in college, to a class of their own
choice. As well as, meet with a guidance counselor to inform them of the financial assistance
they may have available to them. Once teens see that college can be an option for them, and the
cost may be covered, high school won’t be the end of their education. The mentors who are
participating in this program are from African American Fraternities and Sororities such as
Omega Psi Phi and Alpha Kappa Alpha Incorporated. The mentors will provide guidance as well
as experience have dealing with similar circumstances and prevailing through what was
expected.

So if you are a high school student in an urban area, who wants to exceed what is to be
expected, then this program is right for you. Don’t let high school be the end of your education,
open more doors of opportunity by attending college. “A Taste College” will be offered to a
limited amount of teens, at no cost. If you are interested in participating in this program and
you’re in Central New Jersey area, please contact Sharlene Dougan.