Reporter

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UM-Dearborn, HFCC host conference on minority retention

A program that combines the resources of UM-Dearborn and Henry Ford Community College to help minority students earn degrees in business administration may serve as a model for other institutions in the state.

In September, the two campuses will host a statewide conference on retention and graduation of underrepresented students, supported through a grant from the Michigan Department of Education's Office of Equity. Two university presidents, Frederick Humphries of Florida A&M University, and Earl Richardson of Morgan State University, will be featured speakers at the conference.

The conference, titled "Education Partners: Bridging the Gap," is planned to provide an opportunity for college administrators, faculty and staff members to discuss strategies that will help African American, Hispanic American and Native American students who transfer from community colleges to universities to complete their bachelors' degrees.

"Partners Plus" is the name of a program that aims to provide a "seamless" transition for students who begin their college careers at HFCC and go on to earn bachelors' degrees at the UM-Dearborn School of Management

Nearly 100 students are currently enrolled in the program at HFCC, more than a dozen have made the transition to UM-Dearborn, and two have already graduated from the program, which was started in 1993 with funding from the state Department of Education's King/Chavez/Parks Initiative.

"The Michigan College University Partnership Program was created as part of the King/Chavez/Parks Initiative, a comprehensive effort to achieve parity in Michigan's graduation rates," according to Earl Nelson, director of the Office of Equity, Michigan Department of Education. "This competitive grant program has been successful in building bridges between 2-year and 4-year institutions and in increasing the number of community college students who are completing their baccalaureate degrees in Michigan. We are looking forward to this conference as an opportunity to gain a national perspective on the transfer issue, to share successful strategies piloted through this grant program in Michigan, and to open up a dialogue which will lead to collaborative solutions to remaining barriers."

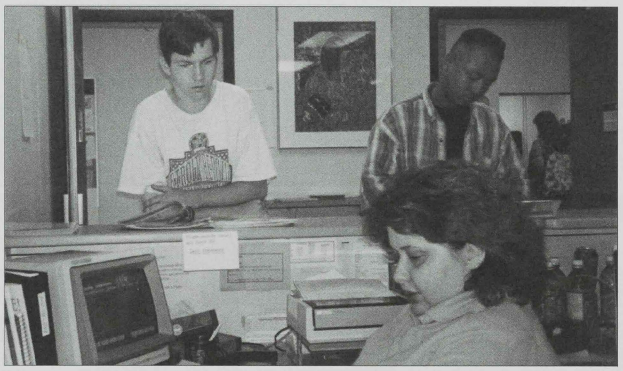
Students in the Partners Plus program receive academic counseling and support, curriculum advising and help with study skills, financial aid and potential careers. Scholarship awards also are available.

"This program has succeeded thanks to the dedication of the students, the commitment of dozens of faculty members at both institutions, and the support we have received from the state and the corporate sector," Chancellor James C. Renick said. "Now it's time to share some of what's been learned, and gain some insight into our future directions, through discussions with people from other institutions, agencies and industries throughout the state."

"This program exemplifies the benefits that our institutions gain from working together," according to HFCC President Andrew Mazzara, "but more importantly, it shows the benefits that our students and their future employers in this region gain by taking advantage of the unique resources of our two campuses."

Michael Thomas, coordinator of Partners Plus, notes that the conference will include representatives from most of Michigan's colleges and universities.

Back to school



UM-Dearborn recorder Kate Markotan helps students Ken Lindeman and Hason White register for classes on Aug. 29, for the Fall 1996 term. Students can register for Fall term classes until Sept. 17.

Agenda for Women report recommends improvements to campus environment

"The majority of our students and staff are women but only about a fifth of our faculty are women," according to a report from the Committee on the Agenda for Women. "Clearly women and their professional development are vital to the success of this University."

In a report completed in May, the committee identified seven topics of concern to women faculty, staff and students, based on issues raised in two open forums held on campus last year, and through surveys, interviews and University documents.

The topics are administrative responsibility and accountability; campus safety; child care and flex-time arrangements; gender insensitivity and sexual harassment; faculty professional development; staff career development; and the Women's Studies Program and the Women's Commission.

The committee developed a total of 68 recommendations for improving the campus environment for women, listed by priority and by budgetary impact. Recommendations include making child-care more accessible; providing more information about gender issues for new students, staff and faculty members; and recognizing the contributions of the Women's Studies Program.

"This report will be enormously helpful to the campus as we work to continue to make the University a supportive environment for all members of the community," Chancellor James C. Renick said. "Some of the issues raised in the report have already been addressed, and the relevant academic units and offices across campus are being asked to review the other recommendations and complete preliminary reports by the end of the Fall term. We will expect final reports on the status of these recommendations by the end of the academic year, and plan to conduct annual reviews from then on."

Patricia K. Smith, associate professor of economics and director of the Women's Studies Program, chaired the committee, which included 16 students, faculty and staff.

"Our recommendations were designed with three goals in mind: to make UM-Dearborn the kind of campus where we would want our daughters, sisters, and mothers to attend college and/or to work; to help all students, staff and faculty, male and female, to achieve their full potential; and to give UM-Dearborn a strong competitive advantage in terms of gender equality," according to Smith.

Many of the recommendations will have little budgetary impact, and most of them will improve the campus environment for all students, staff and faculty, not just women, Smith said.

For example, one of the committee's recommendations, for better lighting in the parking lots, will make all members of the community safer, according to the committee report. In response to the report and concerns raised by students, faculty and staff in other forums, the campus will spend nearly $50,000 this year to provide better lighting in the parking structure and other areas of campus, according to Robert Behrens, vice chancellor for business affairs.

The committee also linked their recommendations to the campus's mission, and described how their recommendations will help the University achieve its goals.

"Strongly pursuing the goals of the Agenda for Women will signal the University's commitment to gender diversity," according to the report. "Doing so will demonstrate that the University values and respects its female students and employees and recognizes their increasingly important role in the labor market. Implementing the Agenda's recommendations also will signal a female-friendly environment to both current and potential students, staff and faculty. Such an environment will give the University a comparative advantage as we enter the next century."

Copies of the report have been placed on reserve at the Mardigian Library.