

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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The Graduate School  
Morehead State University  
April 3, 2020

LEAN ON ME:  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MENTOR TRAINING AND RESOURCE MANUAL  
FOR MENTORS OF THE DREAMS PROGRAM

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Abstract of capstone

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the  
College of Education  
At Morehead State University

By

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Louisville, Kentucky

Committee Chair: Dr. Daryl R. Privott, Associate Professor

Morehead, Kentucky

April 3, 2020

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LEAN ON ME:  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MENTOR TRAINING AND RESOURCE MANUAL  
FOR MENTORS OF THE DREAMS PROGRAM

This project involves the development of a mentor training and resource manual for the mentors of the Dedicated to Retention, Education, and Academic Success (DREAMS) Mentoring and Leadership Program. The DREAMS Mentoring and Leadership Program is a retention initiative at Morehead State University that targets underrepresented minority students to assist with the academic, social, personal, and professional development of participants from the first year to graduation. However, it is open to any student at Morehead State University.

African American students attending predominately White institutions experience unique academic and social challenges, often preventing them from persisting to graduation. Mentoring has been identified as a strategy to assist in the academic and social integration fundamental to postsecondary student success, especially for African American students. While DREAMS mentors and mentees attend program orientation to learn expectations, tips, and traditional first-year challenges to prepare students for mentorship, previously, there has not been a formalized training curriculum for mentors of the DREAMS program.

A review of the literature was conducted to understand the challenges African American students encounter attending predominately White institutions, student persistence, and mentoring to construct a mentor training and resource manual for DREAMS mentors. Additionally, interviews were conducted with former Morehead

State University employees who worked directly with the DREAMS program from inception to where it is currently. Interviews provide a historical perspective on the evolution of the DREAMS program and why the development of a mentor training and resource manual is vital to the continued success of participants.

The DREAMS mentor training and resource manual consist of six sections: program overview, mentoring basics, mentor responsibilities, and expectations, student challenges, getting started, and campus resources. The formulation of a training and resource manual will ensure all DREAMS mentors have the appropriate knowledge, skills, resources, and training to be effective mentors to first-year participants.

**KEYWORDS:** (Mentoring, Training, African American, Students, Retention)

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Candidate Signature

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Date

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FOR MENTORS OF THE DREAMS PROGRAM

By

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## DEDICATION

This capstone is dedicated to my mother, brothers, sister, nephews, nieces, grandmothers, fathers, cousins, aunts, uncles, my love, friends, guardian angels, and everyone who has believed and supported me on my journey thus far. To my mother, my twin, my heart, and my why this one is for you. Growing up, I witnessed all that life has thrown your way, and you never backed down, threw in the towel, or compromised who you were or the kind of mother you wanted to be for Lydell and I. The hard work, sacrifice, resiliency, selflessness, love, and compassion is why are you are my hero. Thank you for instilling in me the very best of you, which is all of you, and inspiring me to be the man I am today. More importantly, thank you for always being in my corner and believing in me right or wrong. I am proud to be the Child of a Deaf Adult (CODA).

My siblings and cousin-siblings, Lydell, Roderick, Josh, Jordan, Johari, Jasmine, Jeffrey, Kanika, Kanita, Ricky, Bobby Jr., and Cindy, I also dedicate this capstone to you. In addition, I include my nieces and nephews, Bobbi Jenee', Shawn, Brooke, Jyaveion, Maverick, J'amauri, and Ja'nauri. Reflecting on the goals I set for my life, one of the primary objectives is to be a good role model for my brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, and cousins. To lead by example and show you that anything is possible regardless of the circumstances or obstacles you may face in this world. Furthermore, to be a living witness to the value of education and where it can take you in this life was my goal. Thank you for the words of encouragement, love, and unwavering belief in me. Lastly, this capstone is dedicated to my family, past,

present, and future, but without the Reid and Green families, it is hard to say I would be in this position today. Who knows where my life would be if the Reid's did not decide to take a chance on two young sisters, one who could not hear or speak, and welcome them into their home and become more than foster parents. Or the decision from Bobby Green Sr. to move his girlfriend at the time, and her son into his home and treat that boy as his own from a baby to adulthood. For those family members whom we lost along the way, this capstone project is for you as well. I wish you were here to witness this monumental event for our family, but I know you were here with me every step of the way.

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First, I have to thank my love, Monique Mozee, for staying by my side throughout this doctoral journey. I know it was not comfortable listening to my self-doubt, experiencing mood swings, or choosing homework and writing over spending time with you these past few years. You were always willing to proofread my work even after you had a long day, and you provided continuous encouragement. I am so lucky to have a phenomenal, educated, selfless, and compassionate woman by my side. There is absolutely no way I could have completed this program without my sweets, thank you.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Definition of Terminology

This project will rely on the following definitions for primary terminology

- **At-Risk** - Used to describe students or groups of students who are considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013)
- **Black or African American** - A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2015)
- **Cultural Competence** - An ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. A culturally competent individual:
  - Has an awareness of one's own cultural worldview;
  - Possesses knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews;
  - Possesses cross-cultural skills to better interact with those from other cultures (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2016)
- **Diversity** - People with varied human characteristics, ideas, world views, and backgrounds. Diversity in concept expects the creation by institutions of a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment that honors and respects those differences (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2016)
- **High-Impact Practices** - High-impact practices (HIPs) represent enriching educational experiences that can be life-changing. They typically demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and other students, encourage

collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2018)

- **Hispanic or Latino** - A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish speaking culture or origin, regardless of race (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2015)
- **Mentoring** - A process where a more knowledgeable or experienced person serves in a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging learning within a less experienced or knowledgeable person to assist in that persons' personal and professional growth (Grima et al., 2014)
- **Predominately White Institution** - Institutions of higher learning in which White students account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Brown & Dancy, 2010)
- **Peer Mentoring** - A more experienced student, helping less experienced students by providing advice, support, knowledge and academic performance (Colvin & Ashman, 2010)
- **Retention Rate** - The percentage of students returning the following fall to the same institution (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)
- **Underrepresented Minority (URM)** - Students who categorized themselves as a) Hispanic or Latino, b) American Indian or Alaska Native, c) Black or African American, d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or e) Two or More Races (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education)

**What is the core of the capstone?**

Since 2016, The DREAMS Mentoring and Leadership Program, hereinafter referred to as DREAMS program, has served as the premier source for best practice solutions and support of mentoring underrepresented minority (URM) students and support of the programs within the Eagle Diversity Education Center at Morehead State University (MSU). Students are recruited to voluntarily sign-up to join the DREAMS program at MSU's Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) program. For students receiving the Diversity Opportunity Scholarship, it is a requirement to participate in the DREAMS program as part of their scholarship agreement. The DREAMS program seeks to advance the individual and institutional development of student success by promoting the use of mentoring best practices in the higher education setting. This program unites a broad cross-section of diverse student, faculty, and staff participants through theory and practice of effective mentoring. Participants bring their unique experiences and a fresh perspective from their various backgrounds and life experiences. Working together, the DREAMS program shares a common commitment to increasing: the impact of mentoring, performance, student success, persistence, and retention of participants the DREAMS program serves.

Traditionally, the nation's public higher education system has two primary goals: economic efficiency and social equity (Marginson, 2016). Recruitment and admissions practices have influenced the racial and ethnic composition of students attending institutions of higher education (Clarke & Antonio, 2012). Postsecondary

education provides the means to create social and economic mobility upon completion, and sadly African American student retention at predominately White institutions has been a looming issue in higher education (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), the four-year graduation rate of African Americans of the 2012 cohort attending postsecondary institutions was 38%, lagging their White (63%), Asian (73%), and Hispanic or Latino (52%) counterparts. Evidence that African American students attending predominately White institutions are retained and graduated at a disproportionately lower rate compared to other racial and ethnic minority student groups.

The experiences inside and outside the classroom are critical to the retention, persistence, and graduation of African American students. Factors that influence the success of racial and ethnic minority students during college are on-campus support, off-campus ties, and the perceived college environment (Baker & Robnett, 2012). Predominately White institutions are still falling short on their assurances to deliver diversity on campus, listen to the voices of minority students, and provide adequate support for success (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). Due to the obstacles mentioned above, African American students' at predominately White institutions encounter a greater disadvantage compared to their counterparts from other racial groups and more than likely to not persist to graduation (Harwood et al., 2012).

MSU is a regional public institution located in rural Eastern Kentucky with a student enrollment of nearly 10,000 undergraduate students. According to Morehead State University (2018), in the 2018-2019 academic year, URM students only

accounted for 7.7% (729) of the total undergraduate student population. The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, the coordinating agency for higher education in Kentucky, defines URM as students who categorize themselves as Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and Two or More Races (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2016). Of the 7.7% of URM students enrolled at MSU during the 2018–2019 academic year, African American students made up slightly under half of the total number of URM students accounting for 3.2% (302) of enrolled students (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's Data and Advanced Analytics Team, 2018).

This recognizes that African American students are responsible for just under half of the URM student population at MSU and the challenges African American students face at predominately White institutions. Institutions must devise strategies to support the academic and social development of all students, especially those at risk of not persisting (Hunn, 2014). The DREAMS program is a comprehensive mentoring and leadership program targeting URM students as an institutional strategy to retain URM students. The DREAMS Mentoring and Leadership Program has three specific tiers: First-Year Mentoring Program, Sophomore Leadership Program, and Project LAG (life after graduation) for college juniors and seniors. The First-Year Mentoring Program is the first tier of the DREAMS program and is designed to assist first-year students with the transition to MSU. First-year students enroll in a transition to college course, reside in a living-learning community, and paired with a peer-

mentor, as well as a faculty or staff member at MSU. African American students make up the largest population of students served in the DREAMS program. In the fall of 2018, first-year African American participants were responsible for 53% of the total DREAMS population (Clark, 2019). Mirroring the institutional URM enrollment data above, where African American students are responsible for the largest percentage of the total URM population.

The core of this capstone is the development of a mentor training and resource manual to help mentors increase their knowledge and skills to become effective mentors of the DREAMS program at MSU. DREAMS mentors are an integral element to the academic and social integration of first-year participants and even more critical for at-risk populations of African American students. As a requirement, DREAMS mentors and mentees attend a two-hour program orientation in the first week of classes. At this orientation, mentors receive ‘need to know’ information to guide mentorship, but to date, the program does not have a formalized training curriculum for mentors of the DREAMS program.

It is imperative that all mentors of the DREAMS program are trained and equipped with knowledge and skills to become effective mentors to first-year participants of the program. Adequate training on how to mentor and assist with the social and academic transition of first-year mentees, allows African American students to have the institutional support that literature demonstrates will positively impact retention (Hunn, 2014). It is the intent of this capstone project to develop a DREAMS mentor training and resource manual with specific sections to increase

mentors' awareness on mentoring basics. It will also include the scope of their role as mentors, a DREAMS program overview, how to work with mentees, traditional student first year challenges, URM students challenges, getting started, and campus resources.

### **DREAMS Brief History**

To capture a historical perspective on the evolution of the DREAMS program, the researcher conducted personal interviews with former MSU Minority Retention Coordinators and a Minority Academic Services Coordinator. These positions have traditionally worked directly with the DREAMS program. In the fall of 2009, DREAMS was created as a retention strategy of the MSU Office of Retention within the Division of Academic Affairs. What was known then as the DREAMS Project was housed in the Office of Retention and supported by an advisory committee of various administrators and departmental leaders that were instrumental to the launching of the program.

The original purpose of the DREAMS Project was to serve as a first-year mentoring program for first-year students of neighboring counties in Eastern Kentucky, and first-year African American students at MSU (J, Benton, personal communication, November 16, 2019). Two populations of students acknowledged as having a higher probability of not being retained due to many unique variables. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission (2018), many of the counties in the MSU service region are economically distressed. As a result, many students attending MSU are first-generation college students from low socioeconomic

backgrounds, which presents challenges to matriculating to graduation (Peralta & Klonowski, 2017). African American students attending predominately White institutions graduate at a lower percentage rate than their White counterparts (Hunn, 2014). The DREAMS project was designed to provide additional support through faculty and staff mentoring to assist first-year participants in making a smooth transition to MSU and achieve personal and academic success for the identified at-risk populations of students.

Soon thereafter the launch of the DREAMS Project in the fall of 2009, MSU experienced personnel changes within the Division of Academic Affairs. The personnel changes resulted in a shift of oversight over the DREAMS Project from the Office of Retention to the Office of First-Year Programs. With the change, the DREAMS Project became the responsibility of the Minority Academic Services Coordinator, a newly created position within the Office of First-year Programs to assist in the academic and social development of URM students. In the spring of 2011, a vacancy in the Minority Academic Services Coordinator position would result in another transfer of responsibility of the DREAMS project, to the MSU Chief Diversity Officer. Fortunately, this was an individual who played a role in the DREAMS program since inception and served on the DREAMS advisory committee.

It was under the direction of the Chief Diversity Officer in 2011 the DREAMS program shifted its focus away from targeting students from the neighboring counties to specifically becoming a first-year mentoring program for URM students (J, Benton, personal communication, November 16, 2019). It is important to note,

during this time, although the DREAMS program was housed and financially supported by the Chief Diversity Officer. The program was primarily run by a staff member in another department who assumed additional responsibility with the program. The DREAMS program remained under the leadership of the Chief Diversity Officer and his team until spring 2012. Although the Minority Academic Services Coordinator position was filled in fall 2011, by spring of 2012, the DREAMS program would return to the Office of First-Year Programs under the sole leadership of the Minority Academic Services Coordinator.

The Minority Academic Services Coordinator at the time had the vision to grow the DREAMS program under their leadership from spring 2012 to the summer of 2015 but lacked the human and financial resources to fulfill the vision (J, Moore, Personal Communication, November 13, 2019). From fall 2012 to spring 2015, the DREAMS program centered on URM first-year mentoring. Fall 2014, DREAMS began exploring a peer mentoring model, recognizing that lack of diverse faculty and staff presented a challenge when it came to pairing first-year students with mentors. Additionally, the program sought to engage students beyond the first year and took steps toward a tiered model but was unable to move forward due to the circumstances discussed above. The Office of First-Year Programs were allocated less than \$3,000.00 to the Minority Academic Services Coordinator, and the DREAMS program was dependent upon funding from the Chief Diversity Officer and other departments. The lack of financial and human resources limited the evolution of the DREAMS program (J, Moore, personal communication, November 13, 2019).

The Minority Academic Services Coordinator position became vacant again in the summer of 2015. However, the program did not shift back to the Chief Diversity Officer, like in years past (J, Benton, personal communication, November 16, 2019). The DREAMS program remained in the Office of First-Year Programs but was no longer a retention strategy exclusively for URM students. During this time, the DREAMS program became a first-year mentoring program for any first-year student who was interested in being paired with a faculty or staff mentor, but this programming would be short-lived. Midway through fall 2015, the researcher was hired as the Minority Academic Services Coordinator and made the decision to rebrand the DREAMS program to be the comprehensive mentoring and leadership program it is known as today.

In fall 2016, the DREAMS program was relaunched as a comprehensive leadership and mentoring program targeting URM students, but open to any student looking to enhance their college experience. New facets of the relaunched DREAMS program included establishing a cohort model to better track students because there was no succession beyond the first year in the previous DREAMS program model (C, Blakely, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Additionally, two new tiers centered on leadership, and career readiness were created for each cohort to matriculate through after the first year. This new model extended an opportunity to engage with participants from freshman year to degree completion. Within the initial tier of the DREAMS program, First-Year Mentoring Program, the mentoring model evolved from pairing faculty or staff with first-year students, to a cluster model that

would incorporate peer mentoring into the DREAMS program. In the cluster model, two first-year participants are paired with a peer mentor and MSU faculty or staff mentor, who are responsible for supporting first-year participants and the peer mentor.

The establishment of the Eagle Diversity Education Center (EDEC) in fall 2017 is directly linked to the evolution of the DREAMS program. EDEC is both a physical space in the student center for cross-cultural interaction and a unit within the department of First-Year Programs, created to assist with the university's efforts to retain and graduate URM students through specific retention initiatives such as the DREAMS program. EDEC also coordinates a variety of educational, social, and cultural programs for the MSU campus community to increase cultural awareness and competency. Under the leadership of the Minority Academic Services Coordinator, EDEC serves as the vehicle for a multitude of initiatives, co-curricular programs, and workshops to increase URM retention and cultural competency at MSU.

Initial steps taken by the university to institutionalize the EDEC with the allocation of financial and human resources are recognized as the key elements to the progression of the DREAMS program. Financially, the EDEC received over 30,000 of institutional funds to support the efforts of the unit. Also, the Minority Retention Coordinator position was relocated from the Office of Advising and Retention to the Office of First-Year Programs under the EDEC and provided additional support necessary to adequately manage a growing program with multiple components (C, Blakely, personal communication, November 15, 2019). More importantly, moving

the Minority Retention Coordinator to the EDEC allowed the Minority Academic Services coordinator and the Minority Retention Coordinator to work collaboratively and streamline services at the EDEC with a larger budget to support program efforts.

Barriers that may have prevented the DREAMS program from expanding in the past included the separation of the two positions under two separate departments and a limited amount of resources available for programming. As both positions merged to fall under the umbrella of the EDEC, there was adequate human capital to incorporate new high impact practices in the DREAMS program. For example, in fall 2017, a transition to college course was created for all first-year DREAMS participants to enroll, as well as, the formation of a living-learning community in a freshman residence hall to further assist in the academic and social integration of first-year DREAMS participants (C, Blakely, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

Since 2016, the DREAMS program has continued to serve as a comprehensive mentoring and leadership program and one of the primary URM retention strategies of MSU. Under the leadership of the EDEC, the DREAMS program has continued to evolve, and by nature, certain aspects of the DREAMS program have evolved as well. The existing effort of the DREAMS program to utilize a PowerPoint presentation at program orientation is no longer adequate to properly train mentors after understanding the research on the qualities of effective formal mentoring programs. A DREAMS mentor training and resource manual will be a formal complement to the

program orientation. Mentors will have a resource they can read and refer to throughout their formal mentoring relationship.

### **Literature Review**

In the college admissions process, universities consider race to be valuable because admitting students of color contributes to the diversity of the college learning environment (Tienda, 2013). As more African Americans gain access to predominately White institutions, it is incumbent on these institutions to develop ways to support students in a system that was explicitly designed to exclude African Americans. In various ways, the history of segregated schools and colleges continue to affect African American student enrollment and degree attainment with the maintenance of outdated campus policies at predominately White institutions that best serve a homogeneous population, attitudes, and behaviors (Allen et al., 2018). This is found to be evident in the institutional challenges experienced by African American students at predominately White institutions that impede their success and may account for low retention numbers (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Lee, 2018).

#### **African American Students and Predominately White Institutions**

To understand the African American student experience at predominately White institutions, it is important to consider the impact of institutional climate and its influence on persistence. African American students do not experience a similar campus environment as majority students. Instead, African American students report more negative experiences related to campus climate compared to White, Asian,

Latino, and Hispanic students (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012; Clark & Mitchell, 2019). African Americans perceive predominately White institutions to be hostile, unwelcoming, isolating, and alienating (Strayhorn, 2013). Predominately White institutions are deemed as isolating due to the lack of a critical mass of African American students, faculty, and administrators. African American students experience unique stressors attending predominately White institutions that contribute to their perception of a hostile environment such as prejudice, stereotyping, racism, and social isolation (Lee, 2018).

African American students are more likely to perceive higher levels of racial tension and discrimination on campus than their White counterparts (Strayhorn, 2013). Unlike other stressors, experiences of racism and discrimination are considered unique in that they are present only among minority students, intensifying the feeling of not belonging at the institution and affecting a student's academic performance. When African American students observe or experience racism on campus, it diminishes their feelings on the institutional environment, and these stressful encounters have a negative impact on academics, commitment to the institution, and retention (Hurtado & Alverado, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014).

Race-related stressors, such as experiences with racism and discrimination, are cognitively and emotionally taxing and can adversely impede African American students' ability to achieve and persist at a predominately White institution (Griffith et al., 2019; Owens & Massey, 2011). Stereotypes have been used to justify individual racist actions and historically promoted barriers to equal opportunities,

both in the past and in current times. Stereotypes are defined as "gross generalizations applied to a group of people with some level of shared characteristics" (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013, p. 384) and often the rationale for how we treat and relate to others. In Johnson-Ahorlu's (2012) study on campus climate at a predominately White institution, it was found that negative stereotypes of African Americans played a significant role in perpetuating campus racism. Moreover, insisting the racism on campus induced stereotypes to which served as the source of the discriminatory treatment of African American students. Faculty members used these negative racial stereotypes to fuel low expectations of African American students, repress them from pursuing specific majors, and minimizing the opportunity to develop a supportive relationship.

Of all the other racial and ethnic groups, African Americans have traditionally identified stereotypes and stereotype threat as one of the prominent barriers to their academic success (Griffith et al., 2019). The psychological consequences of stereotypes have shown that it can interfere with academic achievement, and those consequences of stereotyping can lead to discouraging test scores, disengaging in class, not seeking academic support, nor participating in group studies (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). Furthermore, when African American students expect to be discriminated against by the majority population centered on minority intellectual inferiority, it intensifies the burden of performance for African American students and the added psychological energy results in lower grade performance (Owens & Massey, 2011).

It is important to note that direct acts of hostility are not the sole contributor to the adverse institutional climate perceived by African American students at predominately White institutions. Racism devalues and demeans African Americans by treating them as a lesser being. The traditional type of racial discrimination was overt, direct, and often deliberate, which has increasingly transformed into a modern form that is found in subtle, indirect, and often disguised prejudiced behavior (Nadal et al., 2014). Over time these acts have evolved from being overt acts to more subtle and implicit acts of racism known today as microaggressions. Microaggressions are:

verbal and non-verbal assaults directed towards people of color, often carried out in a subtle, automatic or unconscious forms; layered assaults, based on race and it's intersections with gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname and cumulative assaults that can take a psychological, physiological, and academic toll on people of color (Huber & Solorzano, 2015, p. 2).

Acts of microaggression are problematic for both the offender and offended because of the unconsciousness, subtle, and covert nature of these acts. From the perspective of the offender, these smears may appear as micro, but the effects can have significant impact overtime on the offended. Racial microaggressions can cause stress, anger, feelings of invisibility, and marginalization for African Americans (Nadal et al., 2014). Microaggressions in academic and social spaces resulted in African American students struggling with feelings of self-doubt, frustration, isolation, and absence of a sense of belonging (Harwood et al., 2012).

A hostile campus environment makes it problematic for African American students to establish supportive relationships and communities that assist in the academic and social integration on campus (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). Social and academic integration attributes to an overall sense of belonging, a primary feature of student persistence (Baker, 2013). Sense of belonging relates to the degree to which a student perceives themselves to be connected, accepted, welcomed, valued, and a respected member of the institutional community (Means & Pyne, 2017; O’Keefe, 2013). Institutions need to support African American student matriculation by forming a welcoming and supportive campus environment that provides academic and social support (Chen et al., 2014). Students who feel a sense of belonging to the institution are associated with higher grades, higher academic motivation, higher completion rates, and a student’s intent to persist (Thomas et al., 2014).

Social support from within the college environment has a vital role in the retention of URM students (Baker & Robnett, 2012). Wilcox (2013) found “the presence or lack of social support networks and supportive interactions to be important for students’ integration and a major factor for students in deciding whether to stay or leave college” (p. 720). The type of on-campus support that is most important for the academic success of African American students is that in which they receive from peers and faculty, particularly African Americans and Latinos faculty (Baker, 2013). Supporting the notion, students that have more peer-group interactions, interaction with faculty, and peer support will have a greater sense of belonging, and a higher probability of persisting (Means & Pyne, 2017). This

accompanies the belief that making compatible friends provides avenues for personal support on campus, and is imperative to the social and academic integration of African American students. Furthermore, it reiterates why it is imperative for institutions to continue pushing for increasing diversity on their respective campuses. The lack of critical mass of African American students limits the opportunities to develop supportive relationships with individuals of the same race that can be helpful to the success of African American students at predominately White institutions.

Traditionally, African American students have difficulty forming relationships with White faculty due to the stereotypical comments, insensitivity to their culture, and taking students' comments as representative of an entire race (Thomas et al., 2014). The racial makeup of the student population, faculty, and staff at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) could explain why African Americans feel more supported at HBCUs. In fact, African American students at predominately White institutions, in comparison to African American students attending HBCUs do not feel integrated into the campus (Harwood et al., 2012).

Luedke (2017) suggested that White staff and administrators did not support students of color holistically in the research exploring relationships between students, staff, faculty, and administrators. Participants described that when meeting with White staff and administrators, they concentrated on students' academic experiences and ignored other factors that affected their role as students, such as personal or familial concerns. Because of these interactions, students overwhelmingly felt these individuals did not attempt to build genuine relationships with them. Feelings as such

further drive students to seek alliances with people of color, who established social capital that was both holistic and authentic. Evidence supports that having a diverse number of faculty and staff contributes to African American persistence at predominately White institutions.

### **Theories and Models of Student Persistence**

Vincent Tinto and Alexander Astin are two of the most renowned scholars of higher education, and their work has contributed a great deal to the literature on student retention. According to Milem & Berger (1997), their work has influenced one another's understanding of student retention and departure. Both theories and models are integral to understanding how the campus environment and student involvement can negatively or positively influence student retention. Tinto's (1993) model of student departure and Astin's (1999) theory of student involvement are two of the most commonly known theories and models dealing with student retention.

Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure is significant in understanding the importance of the interaction between students and the college environment. Tinto theorized that students' integration into their social and academic college environment predicts if they are likely to remain enrolled in college. Academic integration is characterized relating largely to the formal education of students. Social integration focuses on the personal connections of students with peers, faculty, and staff outside of the academic realm of the institution (Baker, 2013). Although they are two distinct concepts, they are interrelated, as Tinto asserted that both were necessary for

retention. Tinto (1993) believed that interactions with faculty and peers, inside and outside the classroom positively associated with the quality of student effort, learning, and persistence. Students that drop out or are not successful in the classroom do not feel connected or a sense of belonging to the institution. Tinto's theory emphasizes the importance of higher education institutions integrating students into the life of the school to increase the likelihood of student persistence.

Astin's (1999) study of student persistence, building upon his original work in 1984, determined factors contributing to persistence are associated with students' level of involvement in college life. However, factors contributing to student departure from college are associated with student noninvolvement. Astin (1999) makes five basic claims on involvement in his theory on student development and these claims are:

(a) Involvement by means of the investment of physical and psychological energy in different objects that range in the degree of their specificity; (b) involvement occurs along a continuum with different students investing different amounts of energy in various objects at various times; (c) involvement includes quantitative and qualitative components; (d) the amount of student learning and personal development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement; and (e) the effectiveness of any educational practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase involvement (p. 519).

Involvement can take on many forms, such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel. According to the theory, the more the student is involved in college, the more student learning and personal development will lead to persistence, which is the foundation of the DREAMS program.

### **Mentoring**

To increase the success of African American students', institutions have implemented a mixture of academic retention strategies, such as mentoring programs, support programs, and programs for first-year students (Lakitta Johnson, 2013). Institutions can positively influence African American student retention by having set in place orientation and retention programs to help African American students adapt to the culture of university life (Brooks et al., 2013). These strategies are devised to increase the retention of African American students due to the disproportionate number of this population dropping out of college (Lakitta Johnson, 2013).

Studies on mentoring programs in higher education (Castellanos et al., 2016; Collier, 2017; Ward et al., 2014) support the value these programs bring assisting students with adjustment to college, satisfaction, academic performance, and persistence. Formal mentoring programs are often designed to address the needs of an organization, and as a result, formal mentoring programs serve varying purposes. These formal mentoring programs are becoming an institutionalized feature of university cultures across the country as a retention strategy (Lunsford et al., 2017). Astin (1999) suggests student involvement, such as a formal mentoring relationship

between a mentee and mentor, increases a student's satisfaction with their college experience and persistence. Programs, as such, commonly target specific student micro-populations (minorities, women, and underprepared students) with the goal of improving institutional degree completion rates (Sinanan, 2016; Brondyk & Searby, 2013).

In higher education, mentoring programs facilitate social and academic integration, as well as involvement, resulting in enhanced satisfaction and commitment, which are essential to the retention and academic achievement of students (Hu & Ma, 2010; Ward et al., 2014). Crisp & Cruz (2009) provided a framework for mentoring to define what mentoring involves:

- (a) Psychological and emotional support, (b) support for setting goals and choosing a career path, (c) academic subject knowledge support aimed at advancing student's knowledge relevant to their chosen field, and (d) specification of a role model (p. 538).

Generally, mentoring is when more experienced persons serve in a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging learning within a less experienced or knowledgeable person to assist in personal and professional growth (Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Hu & Ma, 2010).

Mentoring relationships are customarily categorized in one of two types: formal and informal mentoring relationships (Bell & Treleaven, 2011). Formal and informal mentoring relationships differ in relationship initiation and duration, visibility, and focus (Janssen et al., 2016). How the mentoring relationship is

initiated, and the duration of the relationship are two of the primary differences between formal and informal relationships. Formal mentoring relationships are initiated through an organizational program responsible for the mentee-mentor pairing and supporting the developmental relationship for the predetermined period through training, guidelines, and objectives (Sinanan, 2016). In turn, this necessitates the recruitment and selection of mentors to participate in a formal mentoring program. Distinct from informal mentoring relationships, where the mentor and mentee casually come together based on mutual respect, admiration, and rapport (Cornelius et al., 2016).

In formal mentoring, the organization designs a program and process for mentoring, including selecting mentors and determining the duration of the mentoring relationship (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011). Formal programs communicate to mentors' the relationship structure, guidelines, and specific dates when their formal responsibilities start and end. Termination of the mentoring relationship in a formal program allows for the program to redistribute mentors to new mentees according to the structure of the program. Formal mentoring relationships characteristically last a year (Kiyama & Luca, 2013). The hope is that the relationship continues outside the formal aspect to evolve beyond the formal relationship to become equals and less intense between colleagues. In contrast to informal mentoring relationships, where the relationship is usually long-term and consistent with the casual nature of the relationship (Janssen et al., 2016). Informal mentoring relationships are

comparatively unrestricted regarding frequency of contact and length of the relationship between both parties (Lunsford et al., 2017).

Informal mentoring relationships are frequently not officially recognized or articulated, which can result in a lack of visibility compared to formal mentoring relationships (Janssen et al., 2016). Mentor and mentee are descriptive terms commonly associated with formal mentoring programs to designate pairings, often not used to describe informal relationships. It is not uncommon for individuals in an informal mentoring relationship to distinguish one another as a mentor or mentee. However, due to the organic connection, it is possible that a participant in this kind of relationship may not see themselves as part of a mentoring relationship (Bell & Treleaven, 2011). In comparison to formal mentoring, the determination of mentor and mentee pairing by an organization makes it more acceptable to participants and the organizational community.

The focus of a formal mentoring program is the development of the mentee accompanied by predetermined intersecting objectives for the organization, program, and mentee (Leidenfrost et al., 2014). As for mentors, they volunteer to participate in formal programs understanding their obligation is to support less experienced individuals in their growth. The same cannot be said for an informal mentoring relationship because the emphasis is not on one individual. Support and learning are reciprocated by both parties, as the needs of both parties drive the informal relationship (Janssen et al., 2016). A characteristic of formal mentoring is to communicate to mentors the goals outlined by the organization, which can guide their

relationship to some degree. Furthermore, formal programs are used to satisfy a need, and establishing goals allows the organization to assess the effectiveness of the program.

Formal mentoring programs are a successful strategy for connecting students with university representatives and peers as well as aiding in student's personal, social, and academic adjustment to college (Castellanos et al., 2016). Contact with faculty has been found as a vital factor in student retention and persistence (Astin, 1999). Adjustment to college is a facet of student retention, and faculty-student mentoring programs are a way to assist URM students' adjustment to college (Newman, 2015). Faculty members serve as agents of socialization and through student interaction, influence students' satisfaction, adjustment, social development, academic achievement, and persistence (Fuentes et al., 2014). According to Trolan et al. (2016), student and faculty interactions facilitated higher levels of academic motivation, achievement, and persistence. Furthermore, it represents the quality of faculty-student interactions and frequency of faculty contact as the most significant factors influencing students' academic motivation.

According to Kendricks et al. (2013), African American students identified mentoring as the most contributing factor in their academic success and essential to academic and social development. For students who are members of historically marginalized groups attending predominately White institutions, formal interactions with faculty members has many educational benefits but more importantly, faculty contribute to fostering a sense of belonging in students, which in turn, impacts

academic progress (Kim & Lundberg, 2016). Particularly in the early years of college, where the support from faculty mentoring can alleviate the feelings of isolation and alienation from African American students, which has been an underlying cause for stop-outs (Hu & Ma, 2010). Discovering and feeling empathy, connections, and empowerment can transform URM students' sense of themselves and how they engage with others (Cook-Sather & Felton, 2017). African American students who experience mentoring have a smoother transition into higher education than those without mentors (Castellanos et al., 2016; Flores & Estudillo, 2018). Consistent with Tinto's theory on social integration that suggests students who feel integrated to the university has greater odds to persevere and graduate.

Newman (2015) found that homogeneity in student-mentor backgrounds was recognized as a fundamental factor that influenced students' academic performance and social adjustment. Mentors of the same race/ethnicity were more identifiable role models to students and the similarities in value, expectations, and background from the same race/ethnic mentors enhanced the perceived level of support, benefits of the relationship, and level of connectedness to the university. Unfortunately, due to the lack of critical mass of faculty of color, it is not always possible for African American students to find a faculty member of the same race (Brooms & Davis, 2017; Griffin, 2012). Faculty mentors not only serve as role models for minority students but developing a faculty-student relationship is positively linked to African American students' satisfaction and retention (Newman, 2015).

Peer support has been identified as an important component for increasing the success of students of color in higher education (Brooms & Davis, 2017). Peers have an impact on one another, and over the years, there have been many attempts to develop this influence more formally as mentoring programs. Peer mentoring emphasizes a more experienced student, helping less experienced students by providing advice, support, knowledge, and academic performance (Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Gunn et al., 2017). For underrepresented groups in higher education, peer mentoring is a practical approach to provide role models and leadership that links first-year students to the new academic environment, thus helping them make a transition to the university (Ward et al., 2014). Equally, this enhanced students' self-confidence, personal growth, sense of belonging, and self-empowerment as they integrate socially and academically to the campus. Students with a peer mentor have a greater chance of persisting and graduating college because of their feelings of being integrated to the university, compared to those without peer mentors (Yomtov et al., 2017). With minority students, opportunities for cultural connectivity afforded through interacting with peers through mentorship and leadership positively impact the sense of belonging, involvement, self-esteem, higher academic motivation, performance and URM student retention (Flores & Estudillo, 2018; Gibson, 2014; Gunn et al., 2017).

Peer mentoring programs are not only beneficial for first-year students but also a strategy to retain upperclassman mentors as well (Snowden & Hardy, 2013). Peer mentors are positively impacted academically and interpersonally from their

roles as mentors due to the satisfying and rejuvenating experience of helping a student leading to improved performance (Grima et al., 2014). Supported by Kiyama & Luca (2013), who found that serving as a peer mentor significantly enhances personal and professional growth, as they found in their study, peer mentors develop enhanced academic and communication skills, as well as a sense of responsibility and confidence. “Peer mentoring enables students to utilize support strategies, provides effective role modeling, and enhances participation in the academic community” (Snowden & Hardy, 2013, p. 90). The sense of community, communication skills, sense of identity, and self-satisfaction being leaders and role models for other minority students are benefits to peers serving as mentors and ultimately encourages retention for all participants (Ward et al., 2014). Tinto (1993) established that formal forms of association, such as involvement with a peer mentor, influenced social integration for students of color. African American students that do not establish supportive communities increase the chances of not being retained (Baker, 2013).

### **Summary**

Higher education is a driver of social mobility and a gateway to economic empowerment for students who enter the nation’s postsecondary institutions each year (Marginson, 2016). African Americans seek higher education as a means to close the gap of opportunity widened historically with systematic oppression and marginalization in America (Maralani, 2013). Evident in the increased number of African American students attending predominately White institutions over the last century and will continue to grow (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Theoretically, a

postsecondary education should enhance a person's life by affording them with more career opportunities, thus influencing socioeconomic background (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). Unfortunately, African American students enrolled at predominately White institutions are disproportionately retained and graduated compared to the majority population of students (Lee, 2018).

Institutions need to support African American student matriculation by forming a welcoming and supportive campus environment that provides academic and social support. Mentoring programs are a strategy used by colleges and universities to aid with social and academic integration of African American students to the college environment to increase odds of persisting (Hu & Ma, 2010). It is imperative that African American students are retained because they are essential to the overall quality of the educational experience at MSU. Furthermore, increasing access and success in higher education is beneficial to everyone's public interests when more Americans across racial/ethnic groups earn college degrees and undertake societal roles that improve global competitiveness, decrease crime and poverty, and help the U.S. embody its democratic ideals (Palmer, Davis, Moore, & Hilton, 2010).

The DREAMS First-Year Mentoring program seeks to assist program participants with the academic and social transition to MSU, which the literature (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1993) states are essential to student retention. Additionally, pairing first-year participants with a peer mentor and a faculty or staff mentor is a strategy to address the challenges first-year African American students traditionally experience at predominately White institutions. This project seeks to develop a

mentor training and resource manual to prepare individuals to become mentors within the DREAMS Mentoring and Leadership Program. A properly trained mentor can provide academic, social, and cultural support to aid participants in reaching their full potential and persist to graduation.

### **Who is this capstone meant to impact?**

In addition to this capstone project producing a first-time mentor training and resource manual designed for mentors of the DREAMS program, it will also have a domino effect that positively impacts first-year DREAMS mentees and MSU. This capstone project is designed to have a direct impact on mentors of the DREAMS program at MSU. The DREAMS mentor training and resource manual will provide mentors with the knowledge and skills essential to be an effective mentor of the DREAMS program. With the content of the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual covering a myriad of subjects such as the DREAMS program, basics of mentoring, goals, responsibilities, expectations, student challenges, campus resources, etc., mentors will have the tools to effectively mentor a diverse first-year DREAMS participant. Furthermore, it will provide the support strategies vital to the academic and social integration to college that literature (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1993) suggests is essential to first-year students and their continued success in higher education. Literature (Alessa, 2017; McCann, 2013; Kupersmidt et al., 2017; McQuillin et al., 2015) on formal mentoring recommends participants become educated on the purpose of the program, as well as their roles and responsibilities to ensure mentors

understand all aspects of the program. An understanding of the program can foster mentor enthusiasm and program effectiveness.

The effectiveness of a formal mentoring program is contingent upon the behavior and interactions of the mentor with the mentee. The development of a mentor training and resource manual for DREAMS mentors will lead to greater commitment and self-efficacy in mentors. Mentor commitment in a formal program is critical, given the actions of the mentor to support their mentee's development can be the difference in whether program goals are met (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011). For an informal mentoring relationship, commitment can be different from that of formal mentoring due to the structural differences in the two types of relationships (Bell & Treleaven, 2011). The familiarity between two individuals is a key element in the organic initiation of an informal mentoring relationship, and it is that interpersonal connection with one another that may result in a greater commitment from mentors in an informal mentoring relationship (Janssen et al., 2016). As opposed to formal mentoring programs where mentors and mentees are usually unfamiliar with each other prior to being paired together by a third party (Bell & Treleaven, 2011).

Training is a facet of effective formal mentoring programs that can be utilized to positively impact mentor and self-efficacy and commitment (Alessa, 2017; Kupersmidt et al., 2017; Martin & Sifers, 2012; McQuillin et al., 2015). Self-efficacy, in the context of mentoring, is conceptualized as the confidence level of mentors in relation to skills and knowledge in their ability to developing a successful relationship (Alessa, 2017). Mentor training enhances mentors feeling of readiness and self-

efficacy, which has been found to positively influence the retention of mentors, quality of the mentoring relationship, and overall program outcomes (Kupersmidt et al., 2017). Efficacy in mentors leads to higher amounts of contact between mentor and mentee, an increase in engagement with program-related activities, and reduced relationship obstacles (Martin and Sifers, 2012).

Training in a formal mentoring program demonstrates a commitment to the success of the program, but also provides mentors with the confidence and enhanced understanding of their role and how to effectively mentor (Alessa, 2017). It is in the knowledge acquired through training regarding mentoring, skills, program understanding, and any other facets of mentoring that confidence and commitment is developed in mentors (McQuillin et al., 2015). Mentors who are knowledgeable about their role and value through training, are often more effective and the success of the relationship resulting in higher mentor commitment (Kupersmidt et al., 2017). Martin & Sifers (2012) found that mentor training and confidence are linked to higher levels of mentor satisfaction, which translated into favorable mentoring outcomes. Mentor training not only shapes knowledge but leads to self-efficacy and commitment in mentors, which can affect mentor satisfaction, retention, and impact (Kupersmidt et al., 2017).

As mentioned above, this capstone project is designed for mentors of the DREAMS program. There is also a mutual benefit for first-year DREAMS participants as beneficiaries. Overall, the purpose of the first tier of the DREAMS program is centered on supporting and assisting first-time freshman participants to

make the transition to MSU. With the development of this capstone project, every DREAMS first-year participant to sign-up from fall 2020 onward, will be positively impacted through their interaction and connection to a DREAMS mentor. First-year participants will be assigned a mentor who has been trained to help their mentees navigate through their academic and social integration to MSU. They will also facilitate personal and professional development in assigned mentees when opportunities arise, contributing to a positive experience at MSU. Shook & Keup (2012) reveal, students being mentored by a knowledgeable and well-trained peer, can develop a greater sense of community, social and academic integration, and a community of resources and referral agents devoted to their success.

In 2018, students who self-identified as African American made up 53% of the DREAMS freshman participants in the First-Year Mentoring Program (Clark, 2019). If first-year DREAMS participants can make a positive transition to MSU by their interaction with a trained peer and a faculty mentor, the university has a greater chance of retaining these diverse students. The retention of African American students positively impacts the campus diversity and the quality of the learning experience for all students enrolled at MSU. Experiences with diversity inside and outside the classroom expose students to diverse perspectives, which often spark more progressive thinking and a multidimensional worldview compared to submissive ways of thinking based on previous experiences (Clarke & Antonio, 2012). The beauty of higher education is the ability to foster a higher level of thinking in students through unfamiliar encounters and experiences that may lead to evolved

ideas and perspectives. Institutions with greater diversity in student demographics increase the likelihood of students from varying backgrounds interacting and influencing one another's opinions and viewpoints of students (Cole & Zhou, 2014). Furthermore, students that engage in diversity through extracurricular activities or experience racial interactions are linked to having a greater sense of self-efficacy, academic skills, and capacity to engage with racial and cultural dissimilarities (Clarke & Antonio, 2012). African American students make up the largest percentage of minority students at MSU, these students must be retained because they are essential to the overall quality of the educational experience at MSU.

#### **How was the capstone project developed?**

The researcher was hired fall of 2015 as the Minority Academic Services Coordinator at MSU to support the university's desire to retain and graduate URM students assisting in their academic, social, and cultural development. One of the responsibilities of the position is to provide leadership and oversight of the DREAMS program. By fall 2016, there were several changes to the DREAMS program, with the most significant being the return to a retention initiative for URM students, the use of a cohort model to better track students and extend engagement beyond the first-year to become more comprehensive. Also, the integration of high-impact practices to the first-year experience (peer mentoring, living-learning community, and transition to college course).

To achieve the objectives of the First-Year Mentoring Program, it was essential to incorporate the above-mentioned high impact practices in the changes to

DREAMS First-Year Mentoring Program. High impact practices involve meaningful interactions with faculty and other students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2018). Peer mentoring is beneficial to helping students adjust to a new environment, obtaining social support, skill development, access to information, and a sense of belonging (Gunn et al., 2017). Johnson and Stage (2018), identified freshman seminars as a high impact practice that assists with the persistence of first-year students to the second year. Furthermore, freshman seminar courses are more impactful on persistence when they educate students on matters concerning study skills and health. For at-risk students, there is a positive correlation between freshman seminar courses and persistence (Johnson and Stage, 2018).

“Living-learning communities includes students who live in a themed residence hall (related to a specific content area, i.e. social and economic justice), enroll in common courses and participate in academically and intellectually engaging learning activities designed for the cohort” (Ericksen & Walker, 2015, p. 1). LLCs provide a unique opportunity to foster comprehensive learning environments, inside, and outside the classroom and encourage engagement activities that benefit students and faculty interaction (Brower & Inkelas, 2010). Literature (Brower & Inkelas, 2010; Ericksen & Walker, 2015) on living-learning communities has revealed that students who participate in living-learning communities have a smoother transition to the university from high school. The first-year experience is fundamental to student success because it sets the tone for the rest of a student’s collegiate career.

Incorporating high impact practices in a student's early years of college is vital to student integration and retention (Johnson & Stage, 2018). Not all was overhauled with the new changes to the DREAMS program. In an attempt not to reinvent the wheel, there were components of the program that remained the same such as the program orientation.

The DREAMS program orientation, now known as the DREAMS networking mixer, serves as the sole method to educate mentees and mentors about the program, expectations, objectives, what to expect, and opportunity for participants to meet. As part of the continuous improvement plan of the DREAMS program, research on best practices of formal mentoring led the researcher to the conclusion that the program lacked in-depth formal training to ensure mentors have the knowledge and skills to be effective. Of the various strategies used by other formal programs to prepare mentors, developing a mentor training and resource manual was believed to be the ideal approach to train and support mentors of the DREAMS program.

A mentor training and resource manual is a great compliment to the DREAMS networking mixer because not only will mentors be able to read and study the material on their own, but it would serve as a physical resource they can lean on throughout the formal mentoring relationship. Furthermore, a mentor training and resource manual ensures a level of consistency and shared understanding amongst mentors of the DREAMS program. Developing a mentor training and resource manual allows the researcher to utilize his experience to be creative and intentional in development so it's specific to MSU and the DREAMS program.

A collection of the researcher's experience in higher education with the DREAMS program, best practices, program objectives, literature, institutional knowledge, and examples of mentoring manuals from other formal mentoring programs was essential to generating content for the manual. The DREAMS mentor training and resource manual consist of six primary sections: DREAMS program overview, mentoring basics, mentoring responsibilities & expectations, student challenges, getting started, and campus resources. With a subject such as mentoring, which has a considerable amount of information to cover, the researcher needed to be intentional with content development. Specifically, to be creative about how the content would be delivered and designed because it is critical to keep the reader engaged with direct knowledge. This was accomplished by summarizing the literature using bullet points, lists, visual aids, and grids.

To recruit peer mentors for DREAMS program an email communication is sent to all upperclassman DREAMS participants from the Minority Academic Services Coordinator encouraging students to become a mentor if they meet requirements and have the desire. Requirements are the completion of 30 credit hours, 2.5 cumulative grade point, and is interested in assisting first-year students transition to MSU. Additionally, peer mentors must be an existing upperclassman DREAMS program participant. Although the existing DREAMS participants may know about the DREAMS program through personal experience, it is important they understand the program correctly. Once selected to become a mentor, they are afforded an

opportunity to remain a mentor for the incoming DREAMS cohort at the end of their formal mentoring relationship.

As for faculty and staff mentors, DREAMS student recommendations and personal interactions are used to recruit MSU employees to volunteer to be a mentor of the program. Current DREAMS students are asked in person and through email, to identify employees they believe would be suitable mentors based on experience. Once a recommendation is received, an email is sent to the employee to notify them they were identified as a potential DREAMS mentor. In the email communication, brief information regarding the program, responsibilities, and expectations are provided with hopes the recommended employee would apply to serve as a mentor.

Additionally, the Minority Academic Services Coordinator utilizes professional discretion to identify and recruit MSU employees and upperclassman DREAMS participants alike to be mentors based on personal interactions. Outside of the brief program overview inside the initial recruitment email and program orientation, faculty and staff mentors may not fully understand the inner workings of the DREAMS program.

In the creative process of determining content for the manual, there was a priority to incorporate an overview of the DREAMS program. Mentors may not know much about the DREAMS program holistically, aside from their involvement with the First-Year Mentoring Program. Reviewing the purpose of the DREAMS program, program outcomes, and the student development model, it is the hope with an enhanced understanding that mentors comprehend their role more clearly. If

necessary, mentors would be able to help first-year participants understand the DREAMS program if they have questions about what to expect in the first year and beyond.

Developing this capstone project, the aim was to create a product that educates, rather than simply instructs individuals on the dos and don'ts of mentoring. The content for the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual takes the approach that every person who will read this manual has zero experience with mentoring. This makes it necessary to provide foundational knowledge on mentoring, such as the definition of mentoring, different types of mentoring (formal and informal), and how to distinguish between the two, benefits of mentoring for those involved and the role of a mentor and mentee. Foundational knowledge on mentoring provides the groundwork needed to advance a mentor's understanding of what is required to mentor and what that looks like in a practical sense as they continue to expand their knowledge. To summarize the basics of mentoring, the question is asked, what makes a good mentor? Derived from Elon University's training manual for mentors of the new employee mentoring program, a list of skills, characteristics, and examples are listed to drive home the points.

Linda Phillips-Jones (2003) is a well-known researcher on mentoring and believes that there are certain skills mentors possess or can acquire that result in the most successful mentoring relationships. In her book, *The Mentor's Guide: How to Be the Kind of Mentor You Once Had-Or Wished You'd Had* (2003) identifies active listening, building trust, establishing goals, developing capacities, encouragement,

and inspiration as some of the critical skills mentors should possess. When an individual does not possess a desired skill set, that skill can be developed over time with the proper attention. The work from Phillips-Jones (2003) was incorporated in the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual because it allows mentors an opportunity to self-reflect and self-assess where they may be strong and where improvements may be warranted. As a result, with the content surrounding mentoring skills, mentors will not only identify the skills mentioned above but comprehend the significance of each skill in relation to mentoring and why it is imperative to the success of the relationship. For each skill listed, practical recommendations and examples are provided to demonstrate what that skill looks like in practice and how mentors can develop. The approach is very general when talking about mentors' progress through the manual, and the content becomes more specific on what it looks like mentoring in the DREAMS program.

Producing quality mentors is the all-encompassing goal of developing this manual, but establishing comprehension and uniformity amongst mentors is equally as important. Particularly, as it relates to mentors understanding the mentoring model of the DREAMS program, responsibilities, expectations, confidentiality, and resources. Presently, many of the topics mentioned above are addressed in the program orientation as PowerPoint slides, discussion, or handouts. A significant part of the content development of the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual consisted of taking existing information or talking points and spelling them out in writing based on knowledge, expectations, and objectives. A good example is the

mentor responsibilities and expectations sections where topics range from listing specific documents that need signatures, obligations, policies, where to find the resources for mentors online, and how to submit monthly reports on mentees. A luxury of this capstone project is that it allows the researcher to take existing material and centralize it in the manual.

The researcher sought to create a product that was unique to the DREAMS program and MSU. As a first-year mentoring program that targets URM students, it was determined it would be imperative to include typical concerns and challenges of first-year students as well the traditional challenges of URM students attending predominately White institutions. Particularly, if mentors are expected to play an integral part in the academic and social integration that Tinto (1993) references are vital to the retention of collegiate students. Utilizing a combination of higher education experience and an examination of the literature (Briggs et al., 2012; Johnson, 2013; Means & Pyne, 2017; Muller et al., 2017) on first-year retention and URM retention, this research articulates the significance of the first-year on retention, a list of the typical concerns and challenges of first-year students. The first-year experience is critical to student retention and graduation. If mentors are aware of the typical challenges of first-year students, they can use this information to better support their mentees. For peer mentors, they may have personally experienced the challenges listed in the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual and hopefully use their experience to share with mentees how they overcame obstacles and can recognize them now because of the manual. The same can be said for the experiences

of the URM students, as over 90% of the mentors identify as URM students (Clark, 2019).

As for the decision to incorporate the traditional challenges of URM students, the researcher was bearing in mind the faculty and staff mentors. According to Newman (2015), African American students in mentoring relationships with a faculty member of the same race attributed to a higher level of satisfaction. In the pairing of faculty and staff mentors, it would be ideal to pair students in a same-race mentoring relationship. Unfortunately, at MSU, there is a low number of URM faculty and staff of color requiring the program to rely on employees of the majority race to serve as mentors of the DREAMS program. Additionally, the institution also lacks the means to ensure employees are taking steps to become culturally competent.

The DREAMS mentor training and resource manual is an opportunity to contribute to the cultural competency of faculty, staff, and students in the name of retention. To be part of the solution, and not the problem is the goal. Utilizing literature (Eakins & Eakins, 2017; Johnson, 2013; Lee, 2018, O'Keefe, 2013) on African American student retention, the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual focuses on three primary barriers to success that are traditionally experienced by URM students at predominately White institutions: adverse institutional climate, sense of belonging, social isolation, and alienation. For each barrier, an explanation of how that barrier presents a challenge for URM students is provided for the reader. Additionally, through research on African American retention, institutional knowledge was utilized to make recommendations to circumvent each of the

highlighted barriers. URM students must fight the same battles as their first-year peers trying to navigate freshman year, but also have additional barriers because of their minority status.

Lastly, the assessment of mentoring training manuals or guides used by other formal mentoring programs from other universities or organizations across the country were very integral to the development of the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual. Although numerous models were researched, the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual is heavily influenced and inspired by a select few programs. The mentoring manuals of Florida Atlantic University Mentoring Project, Elon University Orientation Mentoring Training Program, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and the Center for Health Leadership and Practice were used as references. The research focused on the preferred subjects/topics included in these mentoring manuals, formatting, organization, quality of content, and more.

The research on the various mentoring manuals presented an opportunity to compare how the manuals were similar, different, and unique. Also, if they were beneficial, finding a way to remodel and make it specific to the DREAMS program and MSU. For example, of the models mentioned above, the mentoring training manual for the Florida Atlantic Mentoring Project was the only manual to include a mentoring timeline. Further inspiring the formation of the DREAMS mentoring timeline to incorporate into the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual

specific to program responsibilities, suggestions, programming, and what to look for at specific times throughout formal mentoring relationship.

### **How was the capstone project implemented?**

DREAMS mentors are required to attend the DREAMS networking mixer, a two-hour program orientation for mentors and mentees the first week of classes in the fall semester. The program orientation is designed to communicate expectations, objectives, and traditional first-year challenges. It is also a good time to voice concerns and prepare mentors and mentees for mentorship. The DREAMS mentor training and resource guide will be distributed to all DREAMS mentors at the fall 2020 DREAMS networking mixer.

### **Why were this capstone and related strategies selected?**

To ensure the effectiveness of a formal mentoring program, a training procedure is recognized as a best practice principle and recommended as a prerequisite to participation in formal mentoring programs (Cornelius et al., 2016; Gunn et al., 2017). Effectiveness in mentoring is measured on whether the desired results come to fulfillment. Consequently, effective mentors are a vital element in achieving program and organizational objectives (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011). An example of this in a formal mentoring relationship is when mentors meet program requirements and contribute to the development of a mentee. Mentors and their level of support are an important component of any mentoring system.

Literature (Cornelius et al., 2016; McCann, 2013; Kupersmidt et al., 2017; McQuillin et al., 2015) on mentor training suggests mentor training should address

mentoring history, participant roles, success factors for pairing mentors and protégés, practical hints and suggestion. Additionally, the training should include information on the structure of the program, policies, goals and evaluation. It is through training that mentors familiarize themselves with the needs of the group they will be working with, learn about the procedures of the matching agency and develop the skills of mentoring (Martin & Sifers, 2012). Mentoring programs where training is nonexistent achieve modest outcomes, and as a result, could have a negative impact on the mentee. When mentors have a greater understanding of the program and population they are working with, they are more likely to feel comfortable in their roles and comprehend how to use the relationship to achieve developmental objectives (Hamilton et al., 2016).

Mentors of a formal program will have diverse levels of understanding and experience with mentorship. Nonetheless, there may be mentors who have participated as a mentor in a formal mentoring program and those who have never served as a mentor at all. It is important not to assume an individual knows how to mentor. Mentor training ensures a level of consistency across the board amongst mentors in the program, expectations, mentoring, objectives, and other essential knowledge and skills (Cornelius et al., 2016). Using a peer mentor model in formal programming, it is expected there would be some degree of training being they are students.

It is presumed that faculty members would serve as an excellent resource for students because they are professional educators with knowledge of the expectations

of academia. On the contrary, this logic exaggerates the proficiency of faculty, assuming they are equipped to facilitate an effective mentoring relationship. Griffin (2012) found there is very little preparation for the task of mentoring for faculty at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. In fact, many faculty members use their educational and life experiences, alongside observation and adoption of their own mentor's behavior for mentoring knowledge. Considering the role of faculty in the integration and socialization of students to the college environment, faculty members can benefit from knowledge on the nature, role, benefits, requirements, and boundaries of effective mentor relationships to ensure effectiveness (Griffin, 2012).

### **Limitations of the study**

The limitations of developing a mentor training and resource manual for mentors of the DREAMS program begins with this project being designed specifically for the DREAMS program at MSU, a public regional comprehensive institution in rural Eastern Kentucky. Therefore, the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual cannot be used as part of any other formal mentoring programs at other institutions or organizations. The DREAMS mentor training and resource manual was developed to impart knowledge and skills on mentoring for DREAMS mentors on the front-end of the relationship. Another limitation associated with this project is the absence of ongoing training and assessment of DREAMS mentors throughout the academic year. Primarily, considering DREAMS mentors that decide to remain a mentor for future first-year DREAMS cohorts. Lastly, it is imperative to document the researcher interviewed two members of the researcher's doctoral

committee as part of detailing the history of the DREAMS program to reveal the evolution of the DREAMS program. In the spirit of transparency and objectivity, it is important to recognize the additional role two committee members played in the collection of data used in this study.

### **Reflections**

The development of a mentor training and resource manual for mentors of the DREAMS program has been a fascinating and educational experience. Elevating the DREAMS program to what it is today is one of the greatest achievements of my professional career. The idea to rebrand the DREAMS program as a URM retention strategy began as a thought in my head and to now witness how the program has grown in four years has been astounding. I have thoroughly enjoyed this journey.

From a leadership standpoint, it is my responsibility to continuously assess aspects of the DREAMS program and uncover room for improvement to ensure effectiveness. It is not, however, always easy to look at something you created and determine the flaws but it is necessary. Honestly, when I decided to pursue this capstone project of developing a mentor training and resource manual, I assumed it would be simple because I love creativity. I soon realized there was much more to mentoring from what I understood at the time, and I needed to start from scratch. In reflection, starting from scratch was ideal because, as I re-educated myself, it helped determine content critical for the DREAMS mentor training and resource manual from the perspective of a new mentor. There is a grand amount of research on mentoring and facets of mentoring. I found the most challenging part of developing

the training manual to be taking the multitude of information learned, deciphering through the literature to determine what was essential, and further breaking down what I learned in a manner that would be easy for the reader to comprehend.

As an African American that graduated from a predominately White institution, I understand the challenges these students encounter. This led me to a career in higher education to help students overcome the challenges that prevented my friends from standing next to me at graduation. The DREAMS program is committed to supporting students in their pursuit to achieve personal and professional aspirations and to achieve the objectives they began in the first year. Thus far, DREAMS mentors have done a great job with what has been provided to support their mentoring relationship. I believe with this mentor training and resource guide, mentors' have a tool that will help them to be effective mentors of quality to first-year DREAMS participants.

Overall, this has been a long journey, and I am excited to see how mentors respond to having a mentor training and resource manual. Furthermore, from the new knowledge gained through the research on mentoring and formal mentoring programs, I am intrigued by the ways I may be able to incorporate what I learned. Incorporating this new information will allow me to further advance the First-Year Mentoring Program, like developing a manual specifically for DREAMS mentees. It will also allow me to set new standards for the future of the DREAMS program.

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**Appendix A  
Capstone Project**

Dedicated to Retention Education &  
Academic Success at Morehead State



**Mentor Training  
&  
Resource Manual**



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### DREAMS MENTOR TRAINING AND RESOURCE MANUAL OVERVIEW

The DREAMS First-Year Mentoring Program is intended to assist first-year DREAMS participants with the transition to Morehead State University (MSU). The goals of the DREAMS First-Year Mentoring Program is to connect first-year students with successful upperclassman peer mentors, as well as, an MSU employee so first-year participants can:

- Demonstrate college level study strategies and skills
- Identify careers associated with their academic majors and co-curricular interests/activities
- Acknowledge and communicate valuable resources available for student growth
- Develop interpersonal skills valuable to their personal development
- Acquire an understanding of their own personal identities
- Develop sensitivity to and appreciation of human differences

In order for the DREAMS First-Year Mentoring Program to be effective, it is essential mentors are properly prepared and trained. The DREAMS mentor training and resource manual will provide an overview of the DREAMS Mentoring and Leadership Program, basic concepts of mentoring, responsibilities, expectations, student challenges, getting started, and campus resources required to aid first-year participants in reaching their full potential and persist to graduation.

### DREAMS MENTOR TRAINING AND RESOURCE MANUAL OUTCOMES

Mentors will be able to:

- Detail an overview of DREAMS program and its objectives
- Define the purpose, value and essence of effective mentoring
- Apply basic mentoring knowledge and skills to assist first-year DREAMS participants with their academic and social transition to Morehead State University
- Identify traditional challenges of first-year college students and underrepresented minority students attending predominately White institutions
- Describe responsibilities and expectations of a DREAMS mentor
- Identify institutional resources and offices essential for student success



### DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGY

This manual will rely on the following definitions for primary terminology:

- **Black or African American** - A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2015)
- **Cultural Competence** - An ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. A culturally competent individual:
  - Has an awareness of one's own cultural worldview;
  - Possesses knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; and
  - Possesses cross-cultural skills to better interact with those from other cultures (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2016).
- **Diversity** - People with varied human characteristics, ideas, world views, and backgrounds. Diversity in concept expects the creation by institutions of a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment that honors and respects those differences (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2016)
- **High-Impact Practices** - High-impact practices (HIPs) represent enriching educational experiences that can be life-changing. They typically demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and other students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2018)
- **Hispanic or Latino** - A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish Speaking culture or origin, regardless of race (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2015)



- **Underrepresented Minority (URM)** - Students who categorized themselves as a) Hispanic or Latino, b) American Indian or Alaska Native, c) Black or African American, d) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or e) Two or more Races. (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education)
- **Peer Mentoring** - A more experienced student helping less experienced students by providing advice, support, knowledge and academic performance (Colvin & Ashman, 2010).
- **Predominately White Institution (PWI)** - Institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Brown & Dancy, 2010)
- **Mentoring** - A process where a more knowledgeable or experienced person serves in a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging learning within a less experienced or knowledgeable person to assist in that persons' personal and professional growth (Grima et al., 2014)
- **Retention Rate** - The percentage of students returning the following fall to the same institution. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)



# Program Overview



### WHAT IS THE DREAMS PROGRAM?

The Dedicated to Retention, Education, and Academic Success at Morehead State, hereinafter referred to as DREAMS, is a comprehensive mentoring & leadership program centered on first-year transition, mentoring, and leadership.

### BRIEF PROGRAM HISTORY

The DREAMS program originated in fall 2009 as a retention strategy of the MSU Office of Retention functioning as a faculty and staff mentoring program for African American students and students from specific counties in the Morehead State University service region. Over time, the DREAMS program shifted from its original focus to solely African American students to eventually a faculty and staff mentoring program for all first-year MSU students. As the program relocated between the MSU Office of Retention, Diversity initiatives, and first-year programs as did the focus. Since fall 2016, the DREAMS program has transformed into a comprehensive, multi-tiered mentoring and leadership program targeting underrepresented minority students. Serving as the primary URM retention strategy of the Eagle Diversity Education Center (EDEC). EDEC is a unit within the department of First-Year Programs to assist with the university's efforts to retain and graduate URM students through specific retention initiatives such as the DREAMS Program.

### DREAMS MISSION STATEMENT

DREAMS is committed to increasing retention for African American, Latino and Hispanic students and/or any other participant by supporting in the academic, social, cultural, personal, and professional development of participants. DREAMS students will be inspired to be actively engaged in the pursuit of their educational goals and overall quality of their educational experiences at Morehead State University. Upon completion of the program, the overarching goal is for participants to be encouraged to become lifelong learners, and leaders in a diverse and inclusive community.



### DREAMS MENTORING AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Guide and support participants in their transition to Morehead State University
- Retention rates for DREAMS students will meet and/or exceed all university student retention rates
- To help students feel connected to Morehead State University by being matched with a peer mentor and a faculty/staff mentor who can help them navigate and maximize their experiences at Morehead State University
- Strengthen DREAMS participants understanding of leadership and leadership styles
- Develop a sense of community for the students in the program
- Develop confident graduates with excellent leadership, communication, critical thinking, professionalism and additional skills essential to transition to the workforce.
- Encourage participants to become lifelong learners, and leaders in a diverse and inclusive community.
- Participate in co-curricular activities, organizations, or initiatives
- Develop multicultural awareness and understanding
- Challenge students to start strong and achieve academic success.

### DREAMS FIRST-YEAR MENTORING PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- Demonstrate college level study strategies and skills
- Identify careers associated with their academic majors and co-curricular interests/activities
- Acknowledge and communicate valuable resources available for student growth
- Develop interpersonal skills valuable to personal development
- Acquire an understanding of their own personal identities
- Develop sensitivity to and appreciation of human differences



**DREAMS STUDENT DEVELOPMENT MODEL**



**\*First-year Mentoring Program (mentee)** – Ensuring first-year DREAMS students have the essential tools, knowledge and support to make a successful transition from high school to Morehead State University by participating in the First-Year Mentoring Program. First-year DREAMS participants are paired with a DREAMS upperclassman student and a Morehead State University employee (faculty or staff). Additionally, participants are enrolled in a DREAMS First-year seminar course and assigned to live together in a DREAMS Living-Learning Community. In a living-learning community, student live in a themed residence hall or floor, enroll in common courses and participate in academic and social engaging activities for the cohort<sup>1</sup>.

**\* DREAMS Sophomore Leadership Program-** DREAMS Sophomore leadership development workshop series is a 1.5-hour per month commitment per semester by Sophomore DREAMS students. The workshop series is designed to teach students the interpersonal skills, job knowledge, proficiency, and competency to engage as leaders in their role as emerging student leaders. Supporting DREAMS students in eluding the “sophomore slump”<sup>2</sup> with an emphasis on leadership development.

**Project Life After Graduation (LAG)** – Themed around career preparation and graduate/professional school, the primary objectives of Project LAG are for participants to gain a greater awareness of graduate school and career preparation. Additionally, to assist students in the formulation and implementation of their short- and long-term career plans. As we engage with students, we encourage them to start devising important questions about themselves that will guide decisions as graduation approaches.

**\* Denotes mandatory program participation**

<sup>1</sup> From “*The Value of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Collaboration: Living-Learning Communities at Historically Black Colleges and Universities* (Ericksen & Walker, 2015).”

<sup>2</sup> From *Student experiences in the second year: Advancing strategies for success beyond the first year of college* (Sterling, 2018).”



# Mentoring Basics



**WHAT IS MENTORING**

A process where a more knowledgeable or experienced person serves in a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging learning within a less experienced or knowledgeable person to assist in that persons’ personal and professional growth (Grima et al., 2014).

**TYPES OF MENTORING**

**Informal<sup>3</sup>** - Informal mentoring is the natural coming together of a mentor and mentee usually done through personal and professional respect and regard towards one another. Often occurring at the workplace and in social, professional and family activities where the mentor and mentee gain knowledge, friendship, insight, and support from each other.

**Formal<sup>4</sup>** - An organization designs a program and process for mentoring, including selecting mentors, and determining duration of the mentoring relationship.

**Distinguishing formal & informal mentoring**

Janssen et al. (2016) outlines the features of formal and informal mentoring that make them distinctive of one another using the framework of how formal mentoring programs are designed. The four dimensions are as follows:

Dimensions	Informal	Formal
Intensity	Greater intensity due to the intrinsic motivation of the relationship between parties	Less intense
Visibility	Less visible as a result of the relationship not being formally recognized or articulated	Designate mentor-mentee pairs Relationships are accepted by both participants and observers
Focus	Driven by the needs of both parties Goals often are not articulated	Focus is on the development of mentee Has prescribed goals and outcomes
Duration	Developed over years Unrestricted in length and frequency	Duration is clearly stated with start and end dates

<sup>3</sup> From “Mentoring in Higher Education (Lunsford, Crisp, Dolan, & Wuetherick, 2017).”

<sup>4</sup> From “Formal mentoring programs: A mentor-centric and longitudinal analysis (Weinber & Lankau, 2011).”



### BENEFITS OF BEING A MENTOR<sup>5</sup>

- Improved communication and personal skills
- Develop leadership qualities
- Assist first-year students' acclimation to the Morehead State University environment
- Increased confidence and motivation
- A way to give back to Morehead State University
- Enhance resume or CV
- An opportunity to expand your university knowledge and network
- A sense of fulfillment and personal growth

### BENEFITS OF BEING A MENTEE<sup>6</sup>

- Positively adjust to college
- Possess greater overall satisfaction with their college experience
- Have an increased likelihood of graduation
- Acquire a greater level of self-efficacy and perceived confidence in their ability
- Perform better on other critical measures of student success than students without a mentor connection
- Students have a resource to help them navigate the campus that can be overwhelming

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<sup>5</sup> From "Institution-wide peer mentoring: Benefits for mentors (Beltman, & Schaeben, 2012)".

<sup>6</sup> From "Can peer mentors improve first-year experiences of university students? (Yomtov, Plunkett, Efrat & Marin, 2017)."



### CENTRAL MENTORING SKILLS

The literature on mentoring, validates the idea that mentors and mentees whom possess certain skills or abilities manage to result in cultivating the most successful mentoring relationships. Linda Philip-Jones, Ph.D, a well-known author on mentoring, outlines the key skills for mentoring in her book, *The Mentor's Guide: How to Be the Kind of Mentor You Once Had-Or Wished You'd Had (2003)*. The key skills for successful mentoring discussed in this section were tailored from her work. However, it is important to note, these skills can be developed.

#### **1.) Active Listening**

One of the central and basic mentoring skills. Active listening is essential to the mentoring relationship because it is paramount to building upon other key mentoring skills. Furthermore, actively listening establishes a positive and accepting environment for the mentee to openly communicate interests, wants and needs. For example:

- ⇒ Show interest in what your mentee is saying and recite key elements of what was said or paraphrase to express you understand
- ⇒ Utilizing nonverbal cues like eye contact, head nodding, facial expressions, smiling, laughing, etc. can show you are engaged in what he or she is saying
- ⇒ Avoid interrupting
- ⇒ Resist the temptation to immediately turn the conversation to your experiences and opinions to immediately solve the problem you hear but instead try to help them become better problem explorers (listen first, problem solve later)

#### **2.) Building Trust**

Trust is an important building block of any quality relationship and is something developed over time. The more a mentee trusts you, the greater his or her commitment to your mentorship. To build trust, you should:

- ⇒ Spend time together
- ⇒ Keeping conversations with your mentee confidential
- ⇒ Respect the mentee's boundaries
- ⇒ Consistently show interest and support
- ⇒ Be honest
- ⇒ Be dependable



### 3.) Establishing Goals

As mentors, talk to your mentees about their vision, dreams, personal and professional goals. When the times comes, feel free to share your personal and career goals. To help your mentee identify and achieve goals you can:

- ⇒ Discuss values and aspirations with your mentee
- ⇒ Identify strengths and growth areas
- ⇒ Share how you determined your own personal and professional goals
- ⇒ Establish a one to five-year plan to achieve the personal and professional goals determined

### 4.) Developing Capacities

By nature, mentors engage in some form of instruction or coaching as part of their mentoring. The instructing will be informal, through modeling behavior and discussing ideas in a one on one setting. Contribute to the capacity development of your mentee by:

- ⇒ Serving as an agent for learning and development
- ⇒ Assist your mentee in finding resources such as persons, books, campus resources, websites, etc.
- ⇒ Exhibit effective behavior and share what you are trying to accomplish
- ⇒ Assist your mentee in monitoring performance and progress

### 5.) Encouragement and Inspiration

Philips-Jones (2003) discovered encouragement as one of the most esteemed mentoring skills by mentees. Set an example and expose your mentee to inspirational people or stories. Ways to encourage and inspire your mentee include:

- ⇒ Acknowledge his or her accomplishments or actions
- ⇒ Communicate your belief in their ability to grow personally and professionally
- ⇒ Aid him or her witnessing of others who are inspiring
- ⇒ Highlight positive traits
- ⇒ Counter their frustrations and challenges with words of support, understanding, care and praise
- ⇒ Describe what people or events inspire you
- ⇒ Share your mistakes, lessons and triumphs



## **ROLE OF A MENTOR<sup>7</sup>**

### **Coach and Advisor**

- Offer advice and direction, share ideas and provide feedback
- Share information on keys to success at Morehead state
- Encourage mentee to try new tasks or challenges
- Share experiences
- Serve as a sounding board for ideas and action plans

### **Source of Support and Encouragement**

- Act as a sounding board for school concerns, career choices, and ideas
- Offer insight into possible opportunities
- Distinguish when it is best to listen
- If appropriate, provide support on personal issues
- Respect the mentee's individuality, your mentee may or may not have a similar style

### **Resource Person and Champion**

- Identify resources (*institutional support and services, books, tool, websites, etc.*) to enrich your mentee's personal and professional growth
- Increase your mentee's network and contacts
- Operate as an advocate for your mentee when necessary
- Help your mentee think through important decisions

### **Role Model**

- Lead by example
- Exhibit the behaviors of a successful student and professional

Overall, serving as a mentor, your chief role is to provide guidance and support to your mentee to assist in the academic and social integration to Morehead State University based on their unique needs. Furthermore, throughout the mentorship you will find yourself serving in one or all the roles listed above. Overall:

- Understand your shared values and worldviews
- Identify your differences and discuss how they can be an asset
- Agree on what is in it for both of you and help each other get there
- Do frequent and thorough progress checks

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<sup>7</sup> From "Student perceptions of benefits and challenges of peer mentoring programs: Divergent perspectives from mentors and mentees (Gunn, Seung & Steed, 2017)."



**ROLE OF THE MENTEE**

**Driver of the Relationship**

- To identify and communicate the skills, knowledge and goals they want to achieve
- Discuss topics important to them
- Maintain regular contact with mentor
- Provide feedback to mentor

**Development Partner**

- Work with mentor to devise a plan for the mentorship
- Work with mentor to establish goals and activities

**Continuous Learner**

- Take advantage of opportunities to learn and develop

**WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?**

To summarize previous sections on mentoring, below is a recap of the skills and qualities that make a good mentor.

<b>Mentors listen</b>	They maintain eye contact and give mentees their full attention.
<b>Mentors guide</b>	Mentors are there to help their mentees find direction, never to push them.
<b>Mentors are practical</b>	They give insights about keeping on task and setting goals and priorities.
<b>Mentors educate</b>	Mentors educate about life and their own careers.
<b>Mentors provide insight</b>	Mentors use their personal experience to help their mentees avoid mistakes and learn from good decisions.
<b>Mentors are accessible</b>	Mentors are available as a resource and a sounding board.
<b>Mentors criticize constructively</b>	When necessary, mentors point out areas that need improvement, always focusing on the mentee’s behavior, never his/her character.
<b>Mentors are supportive</b>	No matter how painful the mentee’s experience, mentors continue to encourage them to learn and improve.
<b>Mentors are specific</b>	Mentors give specific advice on what was done well or could be corrected, what was achieved and the benefits of various actions.
<b>Mentors care</b>	Mentors care about their mentees’ progress as well as their career planning and personal development.
<b>Mentors succeed</b>	Mentors are not only successful themselves, but also foster success in others.
<b>Mentors are admirable</b>	Mentors are usually well respected in their organization and community.

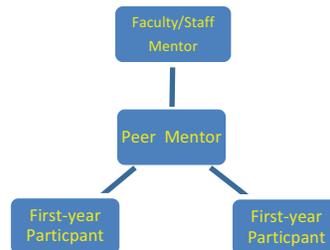
Courtesy of the University of Carolina at Chapel Hill: Training and Talent Management department, 2013.



# Mentor Responsibilities & Expectations



### DREAMS MENTORING MODEL



The DREAMS program is a formal mentoring program of the Eagle Diversity Education Center to ensure DREAMS first-year participants are provided the essential support to make a smooth transition from high school to Morehead State University. Educational priorities of the program are for students to experience the following:

- **Sense of belonging**
- **Interpersonal development**
- **Academic success**

To achieve our key objectives above, each first-year participant is paired with a DREAMS peer mentor and a faculty or staff mentor by the Program Director. The combination of two first-year participants, a peer mentor and an MSU faculty or staff member make up a single mentoring cluster. As pictured above, at the top of the cluster is the faculty or staff member who works with the peer mentor to be a resource and best support everyone in the mentoring cluster, including the peer mentor.

DREAMS mentors are integral in the academic and social integration of first-year participants to MSU. Students that are academically and social integrated to the college environment have a better chance of persisting to graduation<sup>8</sup>. Academic integration is mainly associated with the formal education of students. Social integration emphasizes on the personal connections of students with peers, faculty, and staff outside of the classroom (Guiffrida, 2013).

Peer mentors and faculty or staff mentors each have responsibilities outlined under the mentor responsibilities section of this manual for each of the two assigned first-year participants. Peer mentors should refer to the faculty or staff mentor when they are unsure about how to handle a serious situation or address a challenge. Mentors commit to formally mentoring a first-year participant for one academic year. Upon fulfillment of the formal yearlong commitment, there may be an opportunity to continue mentoring in an informal manner, if desired, but there is not expectation beyond the first-year.

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<sup>8</sup> From “*Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (Tinto, 1993).”



### FIRST-YEAR MENTORING PROGRAM GUIDELINES

- Peer mentors and mentees will meet or make contact at least two times each month
- Faculty and staff mentors are expected to have one face to face meeting and one other contact (email, text, phone, etc) each month
- Mentors and mentees will provide feedback on their experiences and evaluation of the mentoring program one time each semester
- Mentors and mentees agree to a year-long commitment
- Mentors and mentees will contact the Program Director at 606-783-9051 with any questions or concerns

### MENTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Sign confidentiality agreement (*see appendix A*)
- Sign mentor and mentee agreement (*see appendix B*)
- Attend the DREAMS Networking Mixer and Program Orientation
- Make regular contact with mentees through personal meetings, events, phone, email, social media, office hours, etc.
- Provide university resources to mentees and connect them to people and offices that can support their individual needs
- Address any concerns regarding your mentee
- To be a role model who shares personal and professional growth
- Complete monthly mentor report (*see appendix C*)

### CONFIDENTIALITY

To build a trusting relationship with your mentee, it is critical that you maintain confidentiality. All information shared and obtained as a result of the mentoring process is strictly confidential, and is not to be discussed outside of the mentoring situation under any circumstances unless agreed upon by all parties in advance. If the mentee gives you permission to share information, feel free to proceed. Remember, you signed a confidentiality agreement. **Breaches of this agreement may result in forfeiture of program participation and your mentoring partnership.**

*State regulations and Federal Government does require partisans to reveal any information that depicts harm to self, harm to others, and/or any form of child or sexual abuse. This is an ethical and legal principle that all participants must abide by.*



**DREAMS MENTOR’S CORNER**

The Mentor’s Corner is a section of the DREAMS webpage exclusively for the mentors of the DREAMS program (pictured below). Mentors corner is designed to be a one stop shop for all the resources and necessary forms mentors. See appendix A for confidentiality agreement, appendix B for Mentor & Mentee agreement and appendix C for Monthly Report.



**MONTHLY REPORT**

The monthly report is one form mentors can find in the Mentor’s Corner. One of the responsibilities of all mentors is to submit a monthly report for each first-year mentee. Reports are due on the last Friday of each month to inform the Program Director of interactions and issues if relevant for that particular month. Faculty and Staff mentors do not have to provide a report on peer mentors. The expectation is for the director to receive a report for each mentee from the faculty mentor as well as the peer mentor. See appendix C for monthly report form.



# Student Challenges



According to the literature (Briggs et al., 2012; Johnson, 2013 and Muller et al., 2017) on first-year student retention, students experience several ups and downs in their adjustment to college life. A student's experiences in the first-year of college can have a significant influence on their success not only in the first year but also subsequent years. Below are a number of challenges and concerns traditionally experienced by students during their first year of college.

#### TYPICAL FIRST-YEAR STUDENT CONCERNS

- Finding friends & connections
- Academic success
- Adjusting to college
- Pursuing goals
- Being away from home for the first-time
- Managing the demands of studying
- Finances (tuition, spending money, bills, etc.)
- Opportunities (jobs and involvement on campus)

#### COMMON FIRST-YEAR STUDENT CHALLENGES

- Homesickness
- Feeling disconnected
- Difficulty developing habits for success (prioritization, time management, and physical wellness)
- Acclimation to greater academic expectations
- Trouble maintaining relationships
- Handling a level of social and cultural diversity different from communities they are most familiar
- Difficulty staying healthy

As a mentor, the expectation is for you to support your students while still allowing them the chance to work through and grow with college experiences. Reminding them of their values, interests, and goals while also providing support is imperative to helping first-year participants navigate the first year. Remember, depending on the degree of the situation, connect students to campus resources as appropriate.



### TYPICAL CONCERNS & CHALLENGES UNIQUE TO URM STUDENTS

As discussed previously, transitioning from high school to college has traditionally produced challenges for students in their first year, and failure to acclimate to the college environment can negatively impact their success. For underrepresented minority students (URM) attending predominately White institutions (PWI), where more than 50% of the student population is White, URM students experience challenges uniquely associated with being an URM student. This presents additional barriers to success which many of their counterparts do not have to experience.

The DREAMS program is an institutional program to assist in the retention of URM students at Morehead State University, but open to any student at the institution. As a result, majority of DREAMS students identify as members of URM groups and it is imperative mentors are aware of the unique factors below that may impede URM student's ability to persist at a PWI.

#### ***I. Adverse Institutional Climate***

URM students' experience unique stresses attending a PWI contributing to their perception of a hostile environment such as prejudice, stereotyping, racism, academic inferiority, and discrimination (Lee, 2018). These experiences can contribute to a feeling of not belonging.

- Familiarize yourself with Morehead State's Bias Incident Reporting
  - Bias Incident report form can be found at <https://www.moreheadstate.edu/Leadership/Diversity-Inclusion-Initiative>
- Find ways to increase your own cultural competency
- Operate as an advocate for your mentees when necessary

#### ***II. Social Isolation and Alienation***

Due to the lack of critical mass of URM students traditionally found in the student population at PWIs, URM students tend to have a difficulty developing supportive relationships and interactions. You can:

- Identify multicultural student groups through EagleLink, the platform to find information on registered student organizations at Morehead State <https://moreheadstate.campuslabs.com/engage/>
- Encourage your mentees to get involved in extracurricular activities (student groups, academic clubs, intramurals, Greek life, campus rec, and student housing)
- Refer mentees to the Eagle Diversity Education Center (EDEC) to socialize
- Encourage attendance at all DREAMS workshops and social functions



### ***III. Sense of Belonging***

Literature (Thomas et al., 2014; Okeefe, 2013) demonstrates racial and ethnic minority students were less likely to report a lower sense of belonging than majority students at PWIs. Factors that have a profound effect on an URM student's sense of belonging are as follows: interaction with faculty and peers, co-curricular involvement, perception of hostile campus climate and living on campus.

#### **WHAT DOES THE LITERATURE SAY?**

- Tinto (1993), a recognized theorist on retention, believed students of color experience challenges academically and socially integrating into PWIs because their norms and value are incongruent with the majority
- The inability to develop a sense of belonging within higher education is a key factor in students' decision to drop out of college (Okeefe, 2013)
- Sense of belonging is tied to a student's opinions on them being welcomed and respected member of the campus community (Thomas et al., 2014)
- For students of color at PWIs, Tinto (1993) believed that social integration was influenced more by systems of associations, such as involvement in student organizations
- Developing a personal connection with peers, faculty and staff separate from the classroom is what social integration looks like for students (Tinto, 1993)
- Students who feel a sense of belonging to the institution are associated with higher grades, higher academic motivation, higher completion rates, and student's intent to persist (Thomas et al., 2014)
- "Treating students as persons first and students second acknowledges their rich cultural backgrounds and creates an environment where students can share their capital as well as acquire additional forms of capital" (Luedke, 2017, p. 50)
- Luedke's (2017) findings suggest students of color stressed the importance of their mentors acknowledging, and not evading, their background characteristics as a contributor to their success



# Getting Started



### INITIAL MEETING

The expectation is for mentors to have at least one face-face meeting with mentees every month during the academic year. The first meeting is important because it sets the tone for the mentoring relationship as you learn about your mentee, their expectations, aspirations, and how you can support them throughout year. Do not worry, it is not unusual for you to feel uncertain about meeting your mentees for the first time. Below are some suggestions of topics to be discussed and questions to be asked during your initial meeting with your mentee:

- ***Share your background & experience:*** Share your personal background and interests (where you are from, clubs and organizations you are involved with, etc.), incorporate information about how and why you selected your major, why you choose your career? What are some things you struggled with in your first year and how did you overcome them?
- ***Explain why you were interested in becoming a mentor:*** This would be a good time to ask your mentees what he or she is looking for in a mentor.
- ***Ask questions about your mentee's current experience:*** Why did they choose the major they have selected? What skills do they want to develop? Short terms goals? Are there facets of the university they do not understand or would like to know more about? Have they encountered any issues thus far?
- ***Complete the ground rule questions (below)***

### ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES

After getting acquainted, mentors and mentees need to agree on ground rules for the mentoring relationship. Forming ground rules establishes a foundation for building and strengthening the mentoring relationship. Also, ground rules are good for managing expectations and accountability. Consider the following:

- How often will you try to communicate and will it be done in person, over the phone, social media, email?
- What days and times are best?
- Each person's role
- Expectations about the way you will communicate to each other
- What each person is hoping to gain from the mentoring relationship



## MENTORING TIMELINE

### **First Month (August/January)**

- Two weeks before the semester you will receive your mentee's contact information
- Attend and encourage your mentees to attend the DREAMS Network Mixer and Program Orientation
- Encourage your mentees to participate in MSU Welcome Week activities
- By the end of August/ January mentors should have already emailed, texted, or called mentee to introduce themselves and schedule first face to face meeting with each mentee.
- Remind your mentee to complete the financial agreement
- Complete Monthly Report

### **Second Month (September/February)**

- Work on building a positive rapport. In the second month your mentees may be experiencing issues and concerns with adjusting to college life and a new environment (homesickness, finding friends, academic support, etc). Check in and share resources.
- Show your mentee how to use Mymoreheadstate self-service, blackboard, access syllabi, check grades and how to use a planner
- If you have an unresponsive mentee whom you have yet to meet, continue to reach out and contact the DREAMS Program Director for additional support
- Encourage mentees to attend DREAMS monthly social events
- Continue to connect with your mentees
- Complete Monthly Report

### **Third Month (October/April)**

- How is your mentee doing academically? Are they overwhelmed?
- Refer to campus academic support services and student involvement offices
- Does your mentee need to schedule a meeting with an instructor(s)
- If you have an unresponsive mentee whom you have yet to meet, continue to reach out and contact the program director for additional support
- Help your mentee balance schoolwork, extracurricular activities and work
- Encourage mentees to attend DREAMS monthly social
- Complete Monthly Report

### **Fourth Month (November/April)**

- During this time of the year mentees may feel stressed about upcoming final exams
- Registration happens during this time. Check in to make sure your mentees has met with their academic advisor and understands not only how to register for classes but when to register
- Encourage mentees to attend DREAMS monthly social
- Complete Monthly Report



# Campus Resources



**MSU CAMPUS RESOURCES**

<p><b>Academic Advising &amp; Retention</b> 321 Allie Young Hall 606-783-2084 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/advising">Moreheadstate.edu/advising</a></p>	<p><b>Eagle Essentials</b> 251 Adron Doran University Center 606-783-5152 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/dreams">Moreheadstate.edu/dreams</a></p>	<p><b>Eagle Diversity Education Center</b> 207 Adron Doran University Center 606-783-9569 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/dreams">Moreheadstate.edu/dreams</a></p>
<p><b>Accounting and Financial Services</b> 207 Howell-McDowell Admin. Bldg 606-783-2019 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/aafs">Moreheadstate.edu/aafs</a></p>	<p><b>Enrollment Services-Admissions</b> 121 E. Second St 606-783-2000 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/admissions">Moreheadstate.edu/admissions</a></p>	<p><b>Student Activities</b> 217 Adron Doran University 606-783-2071 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/activities">Moreheadstate.edu/activities</a></p>
<p><b>Alumni Relations</b> 606-783-2080 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/alumni">Moreheadstate.edu/alumni</a></p>	<p><b>Financial Aid</b> 121 E. Second St. 606-783-2011 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/affordingcollege">Moreheadstate.edu/affordingcollege</a></p>	<p><b>Student Support Services</b> 205 Allie Young Hall 606-783-2614 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu">Moreheadstate.edu</a></p>
<p><b>Camden-Carroll Library</b> 606-783-2200 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/library">Moreheadstate.edu/library</a></p>	<p><b>First-Year Programs</b> 217 Adron Doran University 606-783-5208 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/firstyear">Moreheadstate.edu/firstyear</a></p>	<p><b>Student Housing</b> Alumni Tower West 606-783-2060 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/housing">Moreheadstate.edu/housing</a></p>
<p><b>Career Services</b> 606-783-2233 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/career">Moreheadstate.edu/career</a></p>	<p><b>Police Department</b> 100 Laughlin Health Building 606-783-2035 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/police">Moreheadstate.edu/police</a></p>	<p><b>Technology Services Center</b> 211 Ginger Hall 606-783-4357 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/tsc">Moreheadstate.edu/tsc</a></p>
<p><b>Counseling &amp; Health Services</b> 112 Allie Young Hall 606-783-2123 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/chc">Moreheadstate.edu/chc</a></p>	<p><b>Recreation and Wellness</b> Recreation and Wellness Center 606-783-2083 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/campusrec">Moreheadstate.edu/campusrec</a></p>	<p><b>Testing Center</b> 501 Ginger Hall 606-783-2526 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/testing">Moreheadstate.edu/testing</a></p>
<p><b>Disability Services</b> 202 Adron Doran University Center 606-783-5188 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/disability">Moreheadstate.edu/disability</a></p>	<p><b>Registrar</b> 201 Ginger Hall 606-783-2008 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/registrar">Moreheadstate.edu/registrar</a></p>	<p><b>Tutoring &amp; Learning Center</b> 1<sup>st</sup> floor Camden-Carroll Library 606-783-5105 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/tutoring">Moreheadstate.edu/tutoring</a></p>
<p><b>EagleCard Office</b> 127 Adron Doran University Center 606-783-2701 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/eaglecard">Moreheadstate.edu/eaglecard</a></p>	<p><b>Police Department</b> 100 Laughlin Health Building 606-783-2035 <a href="http://Moreheadstate.edu/police">Moreheadstate.edu/police</a></p>	



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## Appendix A

### Confidentiality Agreement & Statement

As part of my participation in the DREAMS First Year Mentoring Program at Morehead State University, I, the mentor, hereby enter into this Agreement with the student(s), the mentee, participating in the DREAMS Mentoring and Leadership Program and as such agree as follows:

**I shall not, except as authorized by my assigned student(s), at any time during or after our participation in the DREAMS First Year Mentoring Program disclose to any other person or entity other than the DREAMS staff any proprietary, confidential, or sensitive information of or pertaining to them (collectively called “Confidential Information”), which has to come into my possession, custody or knowledge during the course of the mentoring and other program activities; nor shall I use any such Confidential Information for my personal use or advantage or make it available to others. I will not disclose or use, directly or indirectly, any Confidential Information, or make such Confidential Information available to others for use in any way.**

**There are four conditions under which DREAMS mentors may breach confidentiality:**

1. Student poses an imminent risk of doing serious harm to self;
2. Student poses an imminent risk of doing harm to others;
3. Student is a victim of physical or sexual abuse;
4. Mandated by a judge in a court of law;

*Confidential Information includes: information related to a student’s disability, academic performance, and/or family information.*

By checking this box, I agree to the terms of confidentiality explained above: \*

Type your full name to act as a digital signature: \*



## Appendix B Mentor & Mentee Agreement

### **Relationship**

We have voluntarily entered into a mentoring relationship. As a mentee I will openly discuss my career goals and experiences for the purpose of shared learning and career enhancement. As a mentor, I agree to respect my mentee in regards to their independent goals. We agree to attempt to work through any communication challenges or relationship conflicts that may arise during the relationship, but understand that we can terminate this relationship at any time by contacting the mentoring program coordinator. We may or may not be matched with a different mentor/mentee.

### **Confidentiality**

We understand that confidentiality is critical to developing a trusting mentoring relationship. Consequently, we agree to maintain the confidentiality of the person and business experiences that we share with each other. Furthermore, we understand that we will both uphold the same standard of confidentiality.

### **Time Commitment**

We commit to working together at least 4 hours each month. As a mentee, I am expected to attend ALL workshops associated with DREAMS. As a mentor, I am encouraged to attend these workshops with my mentee to further develop our mentoring relationship.

### **Expectations**

We will hold ourselves to the expectations as outlined in the initial orientation session. Together we will create long term and short- term objectives to make our time together meaningful and productive.

By checking this box, I, AS MENTOR, agree to the terms of confidentiality explained above: \*

Type your full name to act as a digital signature: \*

By checking this box, I, AS MENTEE, agree to the terms of confidentiality explained above: \*

Type your full name to act as a digital signature: \*



**Appendix C**  
**Monthly Report**

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# MONTHLY REPORT

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**Name:\***

**Mentee Name:\***

**How many times have you met with your mentee this month?:\***

- 1-2 times
- 3-5 times
- 5 or more times
- I have not met with my mentee this month

**How often do you meet with your mentee face to face.?:\***

- Once a week
- More than once a week
- Every other week
- Once a month

**How do you communicate with your mentee? Check all that apply:\***

- Email
- Phone/Text
- Face to Face
- Social Media

**Explain any issues or concerns that we should be made aware of:**

**Additional Comments:**

**Submit**

## VITA

CORY M. CLARK

EDUCATION

May, 2010	Bachelor of Science Eastern Kentucky University Richmond, Kentucky
December, 2012	Master of Arts Eastern Kentucky University Richmond, Kentucky
Pending	Doctor of Education Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

2020 - Present	Assistant Director of the Eagle Diversity Education Center Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
2015 - 2020	Minority Academic Services Coordinator Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
2013 - 2015	Admissions Counselor for Multicultural Recruitment Northern Kentucky University Highland Heights, Kentucky

HONORS

October, 2019	Outstanding Commitment to the Profession Division of Student Affairs-Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
April, 2019	President's Award Kentucky Association of Blacks in Higher Education Louisville, Kentucky

- April, 2019 Wendall Thomas Award Winner  
Kentucky Association of Blacks in Higher Education  
Louisville, Kentucky
- April, 2017 New Professional of the Year  
Kentucky Association of Blacks in Higher Education  
Berea, Kentucky
- November, 2016 Diffrence Maker Gold Pin Recipient  
Morehead State University  
Morehead, Kentucky