

January 15, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: "Expect the Great" African/African American Leadership and College Fair Event

Background

In 2011, President Matthew Holland and some key Utah Valley University administrators visited Regent France A. Davis and his congregation at the Calvary Baptist Church. During this visit, Regent Davis expressed his desire to have the Utah System of Higher Education host a college and career fair targeting his congregation and other members of the African/African American/Black communities with the purpose of providing information, resources, and support to prepare for postsecondary education and careers. President Holland reached out to former president of Salt Lake Community, Cynthia Bioteau and asked for her support and willingness to host the first event. Together, they asked their fellow presidents to support this endeavor through a financial commitment and staff resources. With this support, along with a commitment from Westminster College, a planning team was assembled and the event was executed later that fall with around 300 participants. Building on the momentum of the first year success, this event was hosted the following fall at Weber State University.

Issue

At the request of Regent Davis, the University of Utah graciously agreed to host this year's two day gathering, held November 15-16, 2013. President Pershing asked Aretha M. Minor, Senior Associate Director of Admissions to chair the event under the direction of Regent Davis with planning and implementation support from the Office of the Commissioner's Outreach and Access department, USHE institutions, Westminster College, and Salt Lake and Davis School Districts. This event was funded by carryover support from the 2012 event, a \$1,000 commitment from each of the President's Offices, as well as a generous \$5,000 contribution from the University of Utah's Office of Admissions.

Postcard invitations were created and distributed throughout the predominately African American/Black church congregations in Salt Lake City and throughout the Ogden/Weber area. A targeted mailing was sent to self-identified students in Alpine, Canyons, Davis, Granite, Ogden and Salt Lake School Districts. The University of Utah created and supported online registration, and the Office of the Commissioner promoted the event through their Twitter and Facebook outlets.

The planning committee made two significant changes to the event this year as a result of our experiences with past events. First, a Friday evening Black Student Union (BSU) networking dinner and Leadership in

Action workshop, with an optional overnight stay in the University of Utah Guest House was added. We have learned that an important outgrowth of this effort has been the opportunity for our Black and African American student leaders to come together with their peers from across the state and share and learn from one another. This addressed a past problem of feeling that their time together was rushed, and letting them to know we have a vested interest in their development and success. Second, we focused the Information Fair on our colleges and universities and their educational, financial support, co-curricular and leadership opportunities. Overall the planning committee was pleased with these changes and hopes to improve these enhancements next year.

Approximately 250 prospective students, parents, families, community members, K-12 educators, Black Student Union/clubs members, admissions, recruitment, financial aid, human resources, and student services staff were in attendance. President Pershing welcomed the group, followed by opening remarks from Regent France A. Davis, Commissioner David L. Buhler, and President Charles A. Wight of Weber State University. Betty Sawyer, GEAR UP Director at Weber State University, was the luncheon speaker and Ed Buendía, Acting Associate Vice President, Office for Equity and Diversity at the University of Utah provided closing remarks. An optional campus tour was offered.

Participants were able to attend workshops on: Making sense of the admissions process, Utah Scholars, Paying for College, Packaging Yourself as a Job Candidate, Sharing Your Story. The final session attendees chose between two panels, one given by leaders from the Black Student Union, the other by employment specialists. Colleges and universities set up information booths during lunch and provided participants with general information on admissions and financial aid, as well as information on multicultural student support including: student organizations, leadership opportunities, tutoring and mentoring resources. Additionally, StepUP, UHEAA and UESP also participated in the information fair. This was also a great opportunity for representatives to answer questions one-on-one, and distribute materials for the upcoming academic year.

Next Steps

The planning committee met with Regent Davis in mid-December and a number of issues and recommendations were put forth. It was determined that the 2014 event will be hosted by Salt Lake Community College.

- This year we intentionally brought the event back to the Salt Lake Valley in hopes of reaching a higher number of prospective students and community members. Though our numbers were strong, we had 79 pre-registrants not show the day of the event. Vibrant participation from these communities is often a concern, however this year the fact it was snowy weather could have played a factor, and Saturday event programming can be difficult given so much other competition for family time on the weekends. Thus, the committee believes that a core group of folks should meet with appropriate designated personnel in Alpine, Canyons, Davis, Granite, Jordan, Ogden and Salt Lake School Districts to see if they would support a full day Friday program, by providing transportation and release time for our targeted student populations to participate in this event, similar to the High School Conference the Black Student Union from the University of Utah hosted in previous years. Members of the College Access Network and the SLCC Expect the Great chair will further these discussions and share outcomes with the planning committee.
- Providing relevant and appropriate programming for such a wide audience, including families, junior high and high school students, college student leaders, as well as providing information on retooling for more employment opportunities, continues to be challenging. Each group has

specific needs; if this event is refocused towards junior high and high school students with district support for a school day event, the programming will need to be altered to resonate with that audience.

- The information fair continues to be a highlight of the offerings, however, in many cases it distracts students from attending workshops where the discussion and presentation is vital to their educational path. The location of the fair and workshop schedule needs to be considered to allow for better transition between offerings and to maximize attendance in the workshops.
- This year the registration process was seamless. Though we had 157 walk-ins the University of Utah captured adequate demographic and contact information and have shared these names with each of our institutions to add to their inquiry databases.
- The committee unanimously supported the programs enhancement of adding the Friday evening leadership opportunity for our current African American and African student leaders. This networking time with peers, learning from their advisors in an off-campus environment, as well as providing dedicated time to talk about leading change, is vital in the development of these student leaders. President Wyatt was struck by the enthusiasm of these students and extended the opportunity for Snow College to host a similar gathering dedicated to the support and advancement of college students from these communities. Advisors from the Black Student Union will look into the feasibility of transportation and housing for this type of gathering and we will explore with Interim President Carlston and his administration.
- An ongoing concern is sustainability; this event has been organized the past three years with an ad hoc planning committee from the colleges and universities with some K-12 representation, led by a chair from the host institution with support from USHE Outreach and Access Department. As this event has increased in popularity and grown in size, and with the addition of the overnight BSU leadership experience, we need to determine how best to finance this event which could include additional institutional contributions.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only, no formal action by the Board is required. However, the Board is encouraged to read and take note of the information memorandum, and note that further follow-up will be handled by the Commissioner's Office as part of the Board's Participation strategic objective.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/MMK