

January 14, 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 (USHE) 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 has been hosted in subsequent years by Weber State University and the University of Utah.

Issue

At the request of Regent Davis, Salt Lake Community College was asked to host the fourth annual "Expect the Great" event which was a two day gathering on November 7-8, 2014. President Huftalin asked Jill Kemerer, Director of School Relations, 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 number of Wasatch front school districts. This effort was a USHE state-wide effort targeting African/African American/Black continuing college students and high school students throughout the state. In total, there were approximately 200 participants, including current college students, high school students and their parents and families, community members, K-12 educators, Black Student Union/clubs and student services staff members. Each participating institution contributed \$2,000 toward expenses for this event. Additionally, SLCC was awarded a \$6,600 internal grant from the Community Partnership Council to fund expenses related to the Leadership Retreat, with \$300 of additional financial assistance from the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs.

This year's conference had the following goals:

- Develop a two day program with the primary focus on the student retention and college completion of our currently enrolled African/African American/Black college students.
- Build upon the efforts of last year and host a Friday evening leadership workshop and networking social for Black Student Union clubs in a supportive environment.
- Provide a two track program on Saturday; one for college students and the other for high school students and families on college readiness which both culminated with a college and career fair in the afternoon where employers and higher education professionals provided information.

In order to encourage participation, postcard invitations were created and distributed throughout the church congregations in Salt Lake City and throughout Ogden/Weber area. Wasatch Front area school districts were also supportive and sent targeted mailings through the Alpine, Canyons, Davis, Granite, Jordan, Ogden, and Salt Lake districts. USHE college students were contacted through their Black Student Union clubs. Salt Lake Community College created an on-line registration site, and together with the Office of the Commissioner utilized social media outlets.

The event commenced with a Leadership Retreat on Friday evening for over 80 self-identifying African-American/African/Black currently enrolled college students from all USHE colleges and universities as well as our private partners BYU and Westminster College. Dr. Bryan Hotchkins, a postdoctoral Research Associate in the Political Science Department at the University of Utah, provided an interactive, soul-searching leadership development workshop designed to engage student leaders in intellectual and emotional exploration. The following student learning outcomes were developed for the student leadership retreat:

- Recognize how personal biases can limit the ability to lead peers who are different;
- Determine organizational climate in order to develop a plan for leadership effectiveness;
- Proactively respond to follower resistance;
- Evaluate leadership styles, strengths, and follower cues of support.

The Saturday session began with a welcome from Regent France Davis and Commissioner David L. Buhler. President Deneece Huftalin of Salt Lake Community College gave an opening address. The luncheon speaker was Adrienne Andrews, Special Assistant to the President for Diversity from Weber State University. Our currently enrolled college students attended workshops on college completion pathways and campus climate and support. Precollege participants learned about developing college plans for success and parents received information about "*What parents need to know and do about college—while your student is still in high school.*" The morning concluded with a currently enrolled college student panel and the event concluded with a college and career fair. The college student participants indicated that the most valuable part of the event was the opportunity to connect with their peers. And prospective students indicated they valued learning about how to navigate the college planning process.

Next Steps

The planning committee will meet the end of January to review this year's budget and begin planning for the 2015 event to be held at Weber State University (WSU) in Ogden. The addition of the student leadership retreat for currently enrolled college students is such an important addition to this effort.

However, it is costly, especially when residence hall space on campus is not available. However, because of the additional \$1000 contribution by each institution just over \$11,000 will be passed onto Weber to execute the event. Additionally, this year each of the sessions were also led by African/African American/Black USHE college and university professionals. This is so crucial in building community and strengthening college success identity. The planning committee should continue this intention and strive to bring in these critical leaders from the WSU community. The college and career fair continues to be a highlight of the offerings, however in the past has distracted students from attending workshops. This year its time slot at the end of the day and its location in another part of the student service building helped participants to be engaged in other aspects of the program. Finally, an ongoing concern is sustainability; this event has been organized the past four 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 due to the Friday evening leadership retreat, consideration needs to be given to determine how best to financially support this event.

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