

USC Upstate Men's Service Club

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I. Description

The Men's Service Club was established at USC Upstate in the 2003-04 academic year as a means to promote the educational and career success of African American male students.

II. Need

Educators and many other public officials have been perplexed by the disturbing statistics which characterize the status of the African American male student in higher education. According to a number of scholars, the rate of attrition among African American males as a group is disproportionately high. Degree completion is disproportionately low. This has been true at USC Upstate as it is at many other institutions across the nation.

Need cont'd..

Outside of the classroom, in larger society, African American males have the lowest life expectancy and highest mortality rate of all gender and ethnic groups. For the highschool to college age population (15 to 24 years old), five out of six deaths are African American males. The suicide rate for African American males (15 to 24) has tripled. While representing only 6% of the national population, African American men represent 49% of the prison population.

III. Purpose

The overriding purpose of the USC Men's Service Club is to create an open forum for African-American male students to interact with their peers and mentors in a safe, supportive and facilitating environment in order to promote the academic and social wellbeing of the participating students.

IV. Objectives

There are four primary objectives of the Men's Service Club. They are:

- Empower participating students in order to enable them to successfully negotiate the higher education environment.
- Enhance the academic and career success of the participating students.
- Promote the establishment of a supportive peer network.

- Involve participants more actively in shaping the direction and quality of their educational experience.

V. Recruitment

All African American male students were invited to participate in the Men's Service Club. Each student was sent a letter of invitation from the vice chancellor for student & diversity affairs to attend a kick-off open forum. Several student leaders were assigned leadership roles to assist with the planning and implementation of the initial forum. The letter of invitation conveyed that the Men's Service Club would be used to help students gain access to greek letter organizations.

VI. Participation Level

There are 15 – 20 students who participate in weekly meetings. On occasion, as many as 30 – 40 male students participate in sponsored activities. Selected programs have attracted as many as 80 male students. The group has established student officers who are largely responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing the activities sponsored by the organization.

An assistant professor serves as advisor to the group.

VII. Activities

Conduct 2-3 roundtable discussions a month.

Sponsored 3 poetry nights.

Sponsored Black History program.

Co-sponsored the biggest voter registration drive on campus in August.

Co-sponsored a clothing drive in October.

Co-sponsored a thanksgiving program with the other African American student organizations.

Activities cont'd..

- Service

*Mentoring Program entitled "Brothers at Breakfast"

VIII. Impact

What has the Men's Service Club meant to me and how has it impacted me personally, academically and socially?

Future Events

Presenters at the National Black Graduate Student Conference in March.

We will be presenting on the topic of Retention, Recruitment and involvement of African American males on various college campuses.

To host a relationship seminar in April.