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Project M.O.S.T. Reaches First Year Anniversary with New Staff and Steady Progress



Director of Financial Aid LeChelle Davenport (standing center) discusses federal regulations.

Keeping with its vision to be among the leading programs in the U.S. to help our African-American male students with self-awareness, persistence, retention, and graduation efforts, Project M.O.S.T. (Men of Southwest) continued during the Spring 2013 semester to offer Success Seminars that provided awareness, encouragement and information to its 170-plus active members. In addition, to reach other benchmarks, the department also acquired new staff, participated in staff development, visited high schools as well as conducted an internal appraisal of the program.

During the course of the spring semester, three staff members were added; M. Lynn Jenkins, program evaluator; Marissa Whitley, mathematics tutor; and Joelyn Drennan, English, writing and literature tutor. In addition, Emilio Norman joined Sabir Muhammad as the program's work-study assistants.

The spring 2013 Success Meeting Series opened on February 8 with an address given by M.O.S.T. member, Phillip Warren, who described his rewarding experience during the Student Services summer 2012 leadership

institute. Kariem-Abdul Salaam, M.O.S.T. director, followed with a presentation on “Change, Attitude and Gratitude,” uncovering the power of gratitude to turn what may appear to be life’s deficiencies into abundances. On February 14, M.O.S.T. opened the annual Carter G. Woodson Awards Day program with a processional symbolizing the historic march on Washington during the Civil Rights Movement. And Christopher Spivey, a graduate of both Southwest and Morehouse College, who is visually impaired and assisted by a guide dog as well as a personal assistant, spoke to the men about his challenges as well as his accomplishments on February 22.



Executive Director of Human Resources Paul Thomas (standing left) makes an inspiring presentation.

During the March Success meetings, Case Manager Angelo Williams led the students in a newly created inspirational M.O.S.T. chant. Salaam expounded on topics “Leading a Powerful Life” and “Done with Excuses.” Jenkins provided guidance as the men created “vision boards” to emphasize the importance of having a vision. Guest speakers, Matthew and Maria Hampton, related the purpose for the upcoming Elevate Entrepreneurship Program planned as part of the summer activities for M.O.S.T. members.

Project M.O.S.T. expanded its recruitment efforts by visiting Memphis area high schools and speaking to their senior classes of African-American males. Representatives from M.O.S.T. and Southwest’s Recruitment Office visited Whitehaven High School and Northeast Prep Academy. Also, Salaam participated in a panel discussion for male students at Fairley High School on April 26. Our goal is to expand our partnerships with other schools and create a pipeline of African-American male students to Southwest and Project M.O.S.T.

Also, a partnership was established with Libra Jones, district manager for O'Reilly Auto Parts, for hiring qualified M.O.S.T. participants and Associate Professor Brenda A.B. Smith led an interactive presentation on Ethical Literacy. In addition, the M.O.S.T. staff visited Dr. Joan McGrory's Intro to Business classes and encouraged male students to apply for M.O.S.T. membership. A week later, M.O.S.T. participated in the annual "Outnumbered Male Project," a program that brings prospective African-American high school students for an on-campus visit, and more importantly, an opportunity to meet and be mentored by successful African-American males from Southwest and the community.

The semester activities culminated with M.O.S.T. sponsoring a talent show on April 26 for our program participants to showcase their talents and skills. This outstanding event was held in the Verties Sails Theatre on the Union Avenue Campus and was open to the general public. Look for more information and pictures from this evening of fun

Written by the Project M.O.S.T. staff

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