DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING SUCCESSFUL PATHWAYS FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

A Project

Submitted to Tennessee Board of Regents

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the

Maxine Smith Fellow Program

Jonell Hinsey 2013 Maxine Smith Fellow

INTRODUCTION

Student retention continues to be a high priority for higher education institutions. Many institutions invest large amount of resources in programs to increase student persistence, which will ultimately lead to higher retention and graduation rates. According to Vincent Tinto, there are five conditions supportive to retention, they are, expectation, advice, support, involvement and learning (Tinto, 2002). This project will focus on the fourth condition which Tinto listed as involvement. Austin defines student involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience (Austin, 1999). Tinto states that, students are more likely to persist and graduate in settings that involve them as valued members of the institution. This value of belonging is significantly greater within the first year of college when students are familiarizing themselves with a new environment, making academic adjustments between high school and college and developing new relationships. It is therefore critical that institutions develop highly competent programs within the first year. In fact, Tinto (1987 p.49) believes that the first six-to-eight weeks of a student's orientation on campus are so critical as to determine eventual retention or attrition for that student. The more students are academically and socially engaged with other people on campus, especially with faculty and student peers, the more likely (other things being equal) they will stay and graduate from college (Austin 1984 1993; Borglum and Kubala 2000; Braxton and McClendon 2001; Carini, Kuh and Klein 2006; Kuh et al 2005; Pascarella 1980; Pascarella and Chapman 1983; Terenzini, Lorang and Pascarella 1981; Tinto 1975, 1989, 1993).

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Middle Tennessee State University was established in 1911 as a Normal School for one of the three teacher preparatory schools in the state of Tennessee. Today the university is a Carnegie Doctoral Research Intensive University. Middle Tennessee State University states as its mission to be a comprehensive university that embraces its role as the destination of choice for Tennessee undergraduates while expanding its reach nationally and internationally through signature programs and select masters and doctoral program. The University generates, preserves, and disseminates knowledge and innovation and uses scholarship to enhance teaching and public service. The University is committed to preparing students to thrive in their chosen professions and a changing global society. One of the purposes stated under its mission is to foster a studentcentered environment conducive to lifelong learning, personal development, and success. In a recent commitment the university unveiled reformed efforts geared towards improving student success by targeting processes and practices that create barriers. In a letter to the campus community, President McPhee summarized the plan as helping to focus university efforts on just one question: "How can we help more students learn more? President McPhee stated that the plan is designed "to make sure that every student who comes to MTSU with the drive to achieve will be met with the best instruction from excellent professors who care for their success." The university also appointed two administrators to interim roles to oversee the reforms. The plan calls the university to:

> Underscore the role of quality advising in student success. Champion other innovations to further support student success. Examine process and practices to eliminate barriers to student success.

MTSU continues to take bold steps towards transforming its role as a leading institution of higher learning and improving its efforts towards student success.

THE CONNECTION POINT PROGRAM

Understanding the importance of making connections and helping students engage in new activities which will ultimately result in fostering students into the culture of the university, MTSU established a program entitled the Connection Point. The program was developed for first-time freshmen enrolled during the 2013-2014 year. The program was developed under the premise that students who are involved with campus life tend to perform better academically and are more likely to graduate than those that don't. The following prescriptions were created to help first time students connect with the True Blue Community and navigate their way through the experience.

- At MTSU we expect every freshman to connect to at least six activities during the first six weeks of the fall semester.
- In addition to attending the University Convocation, choose five other events from the connection point list.
- When arriving to any of the events, look for the Connection Point table to swipe your MTSU ID card so that we will know you attended.
- Once you swipe in six times, we'll be confident that you are on our way to finding your own connecting points for the rest of your freshman year.

The Sixteen Connection Point

- 1. August 24 Week of Welcome: Carnival
- 2. August 25 Convocation

- 3. August 27 Week of Welcome Fight Song Competition
- 4. August 28 Week of Welcome Comedian
- 5. September 3 Week of Welcome Volunteer/Community Service Opportunities/Fair
- 6. September 4 Week of Welcome Student Organization Fair
- 7. September 5 Crash the Commons Field Day Fun Fest
- 8. September 7 Student Success Summit
- 9. September 13 Freshman Day of Service
- 10. September 13 MT After Dark: Bash the Rec Carnival
- 11. September 14 Freshman Walk/Football Game
- 12. September 26 MT After Dark: Go USA Go, Go Cart Fun
- 13. October 2 Homecoming: Freshman Treasure Walk (Cake Walk)
- 14. By September 20 Meet with your Academic Advisor
- 15. By September 30 Join a Student Organization
- 16. By October 2 Join an Intramural Sports Team

THE STUDENT SUCCESS SUMMIT

PURPOSE

The Student Success Summit is a collaborative event focusing on capturing and connecting firstyear students enrolled at MTSU. The goal of the Summit is to provide a forum to empower excellence through academic success and improve retention.

PARTNERSHIPS

Intercultural and Diversity Affairs partnered with the June Anderson Center for Women and Non-Traditional Students to carry out the mission and purpose of the Summit. Both areas understood the dynamic of inclusion and the importance of reaching out to other departments on campus. University studies, Resident Life, and TRIO were invited to join in the collaboration. The committee met weekly to discuss the development and implementation of the project. The committee outlined the program and identified key components essential to creating a successful program.

PRESENTATIONS

The program consisted of two special presentations. Dr. Sidney McPhee, President of Middle Tennessee State University addressed students on the importance of investing in opportunities such as the Success Summit and shared his personal success story. In addition to Dr. McPhee's presentation Dr. Robert "Bud" Fisher (Dean of the College of Basis & Applied Sciences), delivered a dynamic presentation on "First in my family", the journey of a first-generation student.

PANEL

A panel discussion was developed comprising of MTSU Health Services, MTSU Residential Life, Youth Minister (Rutherford Community), and MTSU Alumni. The panel addressed the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, how to handle/manage conflict, the connection of mind, body and spirit, connecting with your professor and the impact of involvement and graduation. The panel was facilitated by Dr. Gloria Bonner, Assistant to the President.

KEYNOYE SPEAKER

The keynote speaker delivered an interactive session on the importance of "Branding" and how your branding statement impacts your success as a college student and your future career. Sheila Coates is the president and founder of BYOB (Build Your Own Brand) a company she established after working numerous years in the music industry as a marketing executive. Ms. Coates shared her college experience and career journey. She established the core components of successful branding and assisted students in developing their very own personal branding statements. (Ms. Coates biography is found in the appendix).

PRESENTATIONS

The summit comprised of six presentations. Students were able to select two out of the six presentations to attend. The presentations were:

"R U In It to WIN It? How Showing Up Makes All the Difference": But it's COLLEGE! No more hall passes, attendance notes, or detentions. So why even bother showing up to class? In this session, learn all about the hidden connections between being in class and being successful! Also, learn how to decide when it IS okay to miss class, and the best way to handle a necessary absence.

Who's on your Team? Graduating form MTSU is a great accomplishment, but one no does it alone. There are lots of people wanting you to succeed. There are people that want to be on "team you". Do you know who they are? What good are great support

services, if you don't know how to use them? Come to this session to learn how to put your team to work for you.

You're the First to go to College – Now What? Being the first to go to college carries a mixture of emotions. Students are excited about the opportunity and hopeful about the potential difference that earning a degree can make in their lives. Participants in this session will examine scenarios involving first-year students during their initial semester in college. Scrutiny in these cases will enable participants, under guided discussion, to individually and collectively identify strategies to enhance their chances for academic success.

The Importance of Connection during this session students will learn the importance the right affiliation and association can take you places! Come learn how the affiliation and association can help build your brand.

"I woke up to a new Bugatti" - Vision, Goals and Getting there. Your goals are only as big as your dreams. What are you waking up to? This session is designed to develop your vision, goals and a road map to successfully get you there. Why not wake up to a New Bugatti? Join us and learn how to maximize your potential by zoning in on your dreams.

RESULTS FROM THE STUDENT SUCCESS SUMMIT

There were 150 students registered for the event, 58 students attended. The charts and table below represents the gender and ethnicity represented at the event followed by the feedback on the evaluation form.

Demographic Data



Of the total number of participants, 31% were male and 69% were female.



Gender Representation within the Total Sample

n	%
18	31%
40	69%
58	100
	18 40



Table 2

Variables	n	%
African Americans	37	64%
Asian	1	2%
Hispanic	2	3%
White	4	7%
No Response	14	24%
Total	58	100

Ethnic Representation

Table 2 depicts the distribution of the ethnicities represented at the Success Summit. African-Americans represented 64% of the total participants. Asians made up 2% of the total participants. Hispanic Americans made up 3% of the total participants. Whites made up 7% and 24% of the participants selected not to identify their ethnic background.

EVALUATION

An evaluation was created to be completed at the end of the summit. Students were asked the following

questions:

- What are some of the tools you will take? The importance of networking
- Branding Myself
- Attending class
- Work Hard
- Get Involved in college activities
- Find my purpose, use my resources
- What specifically did you find most valuable about the summit?
 - The importance of networking
 - Branding Myself

- o Attending class
- Work Hard
- Get Involved in college activities
- Find my purpose, use my resources
- What specifically did you find least valuable about the summit?
 - The Length
 - Too many Lectures
- What are some of the topics you would like to see at a future summit?
 - More Time Management
 - Getting Involved
 - Preparation for graduation
 - Internship Opportunities
 - o Defeating college
 - o Financial Aid
 - o Balancing study skills and work ethnics
- Additional Comments
 - Thanks for everything. I really learned a lot and enjoyed my time here.
 - I'm glad I came. This experience was very meaningful
 - The speakers were fantastic!
 - I loved it, great use of my regularly boring Saturday

CONCLUSION

The Student Success Summit will continue to carry out the purpose of capturing and connecting firstyear student at Middle Tennessee State University. The committee will continue to meet and evaluate the use of best practices for student success. Dr. McPhee requested the committee to formulate another Student Success Summit before the end of the fall committee, stating that more students need to engage and receive the valuable information delivered through this summit. The second Student Success Summit is scheduled for November 23rd, 2013. The focus is on "Finishing Strong", providing students with successful tools such as handling stress, time management, preparing for finals and identifying tutoring services on campus.

REFERENCES

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Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving College: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition (2nd Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press

APPENDIX

Success Summit

Agenda

Keynote Speaker

Presenters Bio/Presentations

Evaluation

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"Speak Volumes Without Saying A Word..."

SHEILA P. COATES Founder & President



Be Your Own Brand (BYOB) is the culmination of Sheila Coates' two decades of experience as a marketing executive specializing in artist development, branding and imaging. Coates understands the importance of creating and maintaining a consistent visual presentation that is authentic and generates a sense of confidence and character in order to succeed in today's competitive marketplace. She has the background and expertise to help people to "**Be Their Own Brand**" by combining the power of words and images to develop memorable first impressions that "**Speak Volumes Without Saying A Word...**"

During her tenure in the music industry, Coates worked with some of the most recognizable names in the business. She inspired, cultivated, and provided guidance to many artists who went on to achieve platinum-selling status. Her client list reads like a "Who's Who" in popular music —Mary J. Blige, Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, Toni Braxton, Lenny Kravitz, Barry White, Jill Scott, Babyface, Monica, Faith Evans, Kindred, The Family Soul, Angie Stone, Q-Tip, Lalah Hathaway, and many others. She's created images for more than 100 videos, red-carpets events and television programs such as: The GRAMMY® Awards, American Music Awards, MTV Video Music Awards, BET Awards, *Good Morning America, The Today Show, Oprah, The Tonight Show* and *Late Night With David Letterman*.

Coates held SVP positions with Sony/BMG, Arista Records, EMI/Capitol, Virgin Records, MCA Records, Perspective Records and Hidden Beach Recordings, where she managed budgets exceeding \$50 million and developed successful cross-promotional initiatives such as the soundtrack for the Academy Award-winning film "Training Day."

Through BYOB, Coates has consulted with executives at Fortune 500 companies, media organizations, and entertainment and lifestyle industries, including Fox Films, Macy's, Neutrogena, Coca-Cola, Beaman Public Relations Inc. to name a few. She is a frequent speaker at non-profit organizations such as: Dress for Success, The Kanye West Foundation, the Coalition for At-Risk Youth Foster program and various high schools.

Coates is a contributor for the national women's site Chat, Chew and Chocolate. Her first book; *"Mama Used to Say: Be Your Own Brand*!" will be published this fall by Our Little Books.

A former resident of Oakland, California and New York City, she currently lives in Los Angeles, California.

www.BYOBUnlimited.com



Echell Eady is the Adult Student Coordinator for Graduate Tennessee - West Tennessee Consortium which includes Middle Tennessee State University, Motlow College, and the Tennessee College of Applied Technology at Murfreesboro. In this role, Ms. Eady is responsible for reducing barriers and increasing adult student attainment of post-secondary certificates and degrees.

Prior to leading Graduate Tennessee, Ms. Eady served as Director of Career Services for Fisk University. Major accomplishments in that role included developing internship agreements with corporations such as Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Nationwide Insurance and Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Throughout her career, Echell Eady has served in a variety of higher education and workforce development roles. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from DePaul University and a Master's degree in Educational Administration from Governor's State University. In addition to work with Graduate Tennessee, Ms. Eady is a certified career coach to transitioning adults and first-time job seekers.

Ms. Eady's awards include one for Outstanding Professional Service to the Career Guidance Center (Region 8), Illinois State Board of Education - Adult Vocational and Technical Education. Appointed to the Tennessee State Workforce Development Board by former Governor Phil Bredesen, Ms. Eady is also a 2013 graduate of Leadership Rutherford.

Success Summit Topic: "R U In It to WIN It? How Showing Up Makes All the Difference: But it's COLLEGE! No more hall passes, attendance notes, or detentions. So why even bother showing up to class? In this session, learn all about the hidden connections between being in class and being successful! Also, learn how to decide when it IS okay to miss class, and the best way to handle a necessary absence.





Presenter: Laurie Witherow is the Associate Vice Provost for Admissions and Enrollment Services. Dr. Witherow is a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Middle Tennessee State University and Tennessee State University. She has worked with college students for 25 years. While she has taught and presented to thousands of students, she still prefers to help them one at a time. While she absolutely loves all of the MTSU students here at MTSU; she's about to love one more than the rest, when her daughter becomes a Blue Raider next year. True Blue!

Success Summit Topic: Who's on your Team?

Graduating form MTSU is a great accomplishment, but one no does it alone. There are lots of people wanting you to succeed. There are people that want to be on "team you". Do you know who they are? What good are great support services, if you don't know how to use them? Come to this session to learn how to put your team to work for you.





Presenter: Marva Sullivan Lucas serves as the Chair of University Studies. She holds the rank of Associate Professor, Mathematics. She has been with Middle Tennessee State University since 1993.

Lucas' formal education includes an Ed.D. from Tennessee State University; an Ed.S. and a M.S.T. from Middle Tennessee State

University; and a B.A. from Fisk University where she graduated summa cum laude and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. She also received certification as a Developmental Education Specialist from the Kellogg Institute at Appalachian State University.

Her professional passion involves working to enhance the chances of academic success for students that need extra support and direction as they strive to earn college diplomas. Focus in this area guides her research interests and has led to publications in journals such as Current Issues in Education, The NADE Digest, and The Journal of Effective Teaching. She has had the pleasure of sharing her research with national and international audiences.

Success Summit Topic: You're the First to go to College - Now What?

Being the first to go to college carries a mixture of emotions. Students are excited about the opportunity and hopeful about the potential difference that earning a degree can make in their lives. Participants in this session will examine scenarios involving first-year students during their initial semester in college. Scrutiny in these cases will enable participants, under guided discussion, to individually and collectively identify strategies to enhance their chances for academic success.





Vincent Windrow believes that "success is not a one night stand." In other words, he believes and has demonstrated that the only boundaries to success that exist do so in our own minds. From being the vice president of a \$19 million technology firm for fourteen years to being the pastor of the 1800 member Olive Branch Church with two locations and four worship services to now also being the director of Intercultural and Diversity Affairs here at MTSU, Mr. Windrow continues to prove that "as a man thinketh, so is he."

In addition to his working here, Mr. Windrow is an alumnus of this university. While a student, he was a columnist for Sidelines, co-founded the NAACP Collegiate Chapter, pledged Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and met his wife, Stacy. During his time

as a campus leader, the NAACP Collegiate Chapter won a national civil rights award and the Omegas won awards for leadership and scholarship.

Mr. Windrow is also an alumnus of American Baptist College and is presently pursuing his doctor's degree in education at Tennessee State University. He has served as Black Alumni President and as board member of MTSU's Honors College, the United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties and the Regional Planning Commission. Further, he has served on many committees including the President's Task Force on Non-violence and Conflict Resolution. It was while serving on that committee that he wrote the rough draft of our True Blue Pledge.

A much sought out conference speaker and workshop facilitator, his leadership exploits have been featured in the USA Today, The Tennessean, Inspired Living, Teachers of Color magazine, Culture magazine, the Nashville Business Journal and other regional and local newspapers and periodicals. He also the author of *The Fox Traps for Teachers*, a motivational book for educators.





Presenter: Barbara Scales has 16 years of social welfare and adult learning experience; currently, Barbara is the Director of the June Anderson Center at Middle Tennessee State University. Barbara holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology/Sociology and a Master of Arts in Education and Counseling.

Barbara is a devoted wife to her husband of 10 years and loving mother to her 6-year-old son, Isaiah. Her first passion is bringing awareness and educating others on Social Welfare; secondly, is helping people "define their destiny and develop their purpose", and discovery their potential.

Barbara's motto in life is, "Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny."

Success Summit Topic: "I woke up to a new Bugatti" - Vision, Goals and Getting there.

Your goals are only as big as your dreams. What are you waking up to? This session is designed to develop your vision, goals and a road map to successfully get you there. Why not wake up to a New Bugatti? Join us and learn how to maximize your potential by zoning in on your dreams.





Presenter: Jonell Hinsey

Jonell Hinsey is currently the Assistant Director of Intercultural and Diversity Affairs at Middle Tennessee State University. She received her undergraduate degree from American Baptist College in Theology, Bible, and Psychology. Jonell obtained a Master's Degree from Tennessee State University in Curriculum

and Instruction and is currently completing her Doctoral Degree at Tennessee State University in Education.

She has worked in the Metro Davidson Public School and Higher Education systems. Jonell believes that "education creates a pathway for self-discovery that leads to lifelong learning." It is through this selfdiscovery that we find purpose, we establish our position, and we serve as productive citizens.

Jonell believes that success is planted in the mind, developed in the heart, and produced by determination. Winston Churchill stated that "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." Success is therefore the ability to persevere.



MTSU's Student Success Summit ENSURING COLLEGE SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS

September 4, 2013

SUMMIT EVALUATION FORM

Using the scale below, please evaluate each session, conference facilities, and future plans. Feel free to comment extensively on each, using the back if more space is needed.

Scale for evaluation	Poor		Excellent		llent	Did not attend	
		1	2	3	4	5	N/A

CONFERENCE FACILITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS

Summit Promotion	
Registration Process	
Keynote Luncheon	
Meeting rooms	

CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Student Success Panel

•	Panelists were well informed	
•	Provided Useful Information	
•	Length was appropriate	

Good opportunity for discussion

Luncheon Keynote Speaker – Ms. Shelia Coates - Build Your Own Brand "Speak Volumes without Saying a Word.

•	Provided useful information
•	Speaker well-informed and organized
•	Length was appropriate
•	Good opportunity for discussion

Own your Attitude...Increase your Altitude – Mr. Vincent Windrow

•	Provided useful information	
•	Speaker well-informed and organized	
•	Length was appropriate	
•	Good opportunity for discussion	

I Woke Up to a New Buggati – Vision, Goals, and Getting There – Ms. Jonell Hinsey & Mrs. Barbara Scales

- Provided useful information
 Speaker well informed and ergenized
- Speaker well-informed and organized
- Length was appropriate
- Good opportunity for discussion

Th	e Importance of Connection – Ms. Tonika Jordan	
٠	Provided useful information	
٠	Speaker well-informed and organized	
٠	Length was appropriate	
٠	Good opportunity for discussion	

PLEASE TURN OVER TO COMPLETE THE BACK!

Are you in it to win it the importance of Attendance Ma Ech	all Eader
Are you in it to win itthe importance of Attendance – Ms. Ech	еп сацу
Provided useful information	_
Speaker well-informed and organized	_
Length was appropriate	_
Good opportunity for discussion	
Who's on Your Team – Dr. Laurie Witherow	
Provided useful information	_
Speaker well-informed and organized	_
Length was appropriate	_
Good opportunity for discussion	
You're the First to Go to College Now What - Dr. Marva Lucas	
Provided useful information	_
Speaker well-informed and organized	_
Length was appropriate	_
Good opportunity for discussion	-

OVERALL CONFERENCE EVALUATION

What are some of the tools you will take and utilize?

What <u>specifically</u> did you find <u>most valuable</u> about the Summit?

What <u>specifically</u> did you find <u>least valuable</u> about the Summit?

What are some of the topics you would like to see at a future Summit?

What would help to increase the student participation?

Other Comments or Suggestions: