

To Increase the Retention Rate Among African American Men at Greenville Technical

College by 15%

Real-World Project Submitted by Raymond L. James

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Introduction

In today's society, many technical and community colleges are facing the challenge of retaining African American men. I began my educational journey at a technical college, and I can recall various challenges. Those ongoing challenges involved: questioning my sense of belonging, support, and how to reach graduation. When I began teaching as an adjunct instructor, I vowed to make a difference and give back. In 2019, I became a full-time instructor at Greenville Technical College. I was also allowed to become involved with a new organization on campus called the African American Male Scholar Initiative (AAMSI). This specific program consists of African American male students and provides support from a holistic approach to assist them on the road to graduation. Data collected at Greenville Technical College revealed that African American male students appeared at the bottom of every category for retention, persistence, and completion. Representation matters and I decided to focus on implementing a professional mentoring program within AAMSI, to increase the retention rate of African American men by 15%.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to increase the retention rate of African American male students at Greenville Technical College. Increasing the retention rate would have a lasting impact on the student community by sharing their knowledge, becoming employable, and encouraging others to continue their education. This project will have an impact on Greenville Technical College which serves the Greenville County area in South Carolina. The college is also surrounded by low-income communities, which mostly housed African Americans. Focusing on this student population will have a major impact on the success of African American male students. These students are at the bottom of every category when we look at persistence, retention, and graduation rates. If we can find a way to encourage, motivate, and support these students then we can make a difference in their lives and help them to achieve their educational goals.

Background

When I was researching what area of the college I wanted to improve I was presented with data concerning the African American male population. The data revealed that African American male students appeared at the bottom of every category for retention, persistence, and completion. Being an African American man, I wanted to specifically focus on the students who are enrolled at Greenville Technical College and are active participants in the (AAMSI) program. My project is imperative to understand the impact of African American representation in this specific population. I wanted to incorporate a mentoring program within AAMSI to assist these students in reaching their goals. I am in support of our students achieving their educational goals, obtaining a job in their field, and also giving back to the community.

Method of Evaluation

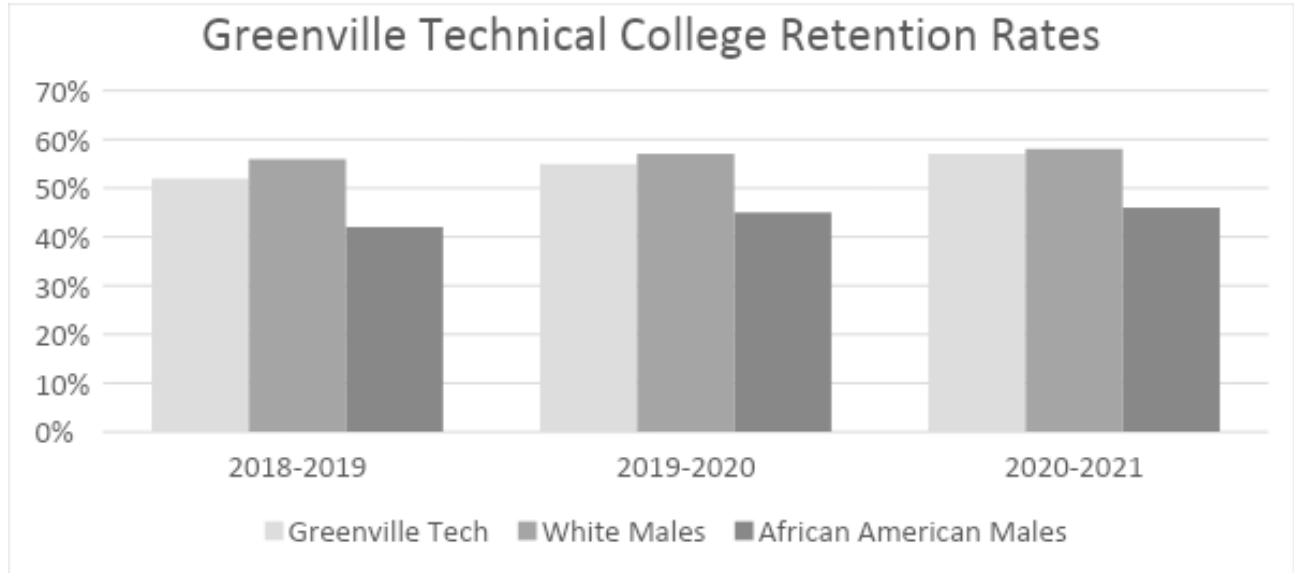
To evaluate this project, I will be utilizing the outcome-based evaluation method. The objective of this project is to increase retention among African American students participating in the AAMSI program by 15%. Utilizing the outcome-based evaluation will reveal the effectiveness of professional mentoring by increasing retention amongst this population. This project will be composed of 10 mentees and their assigned mentors. The interaction between the two parties will be monitored through participation in workshops and other hosted events. Students will also be monitored for retention purposes which will be evaluated through the student's academics. Connecting and tracking mentors and mentees throughout the school term will help assess the effectiveness of the mentorship program as it relates to retention. Table 1 shows the mentees and their majors at Greenville Technical College along with their assigned mentor and their profession.

Mentees	Major	Mentors	Profession
Student 1	Mechatronics Technology	Mentor 1	Mechatronics Professor
Student 2	Business Management	Mentor 2	Entrepreneur (Business Owner)
Student 3	Mechatronics Technology	Mentor 3	Mechatronics Professor
Student 4	Computer Technology	Mentor 4	Computer Science Engineer
Student 5	Mechatronics Technology	Mentor 5	Technician
Student 6	Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC) & Refrigeration	Mentor 6	Business Owner (HVAC)
Student 7	Nursing	Mentor 7	Nurse
Student 8	Business Management	Mentor 8	Plant Manager
Student 9	University Transfer	Mentor 9	Associate Dean
Student 10	Electrical Engineering Technology	Mentor 10	Electrical Engineer

Table 1

I was also able to obtain the retention data for the college. These data will help me evaluate the African American male students and see the improvement at the end of the study. Below in Figure 1 is a chart with the retention data.

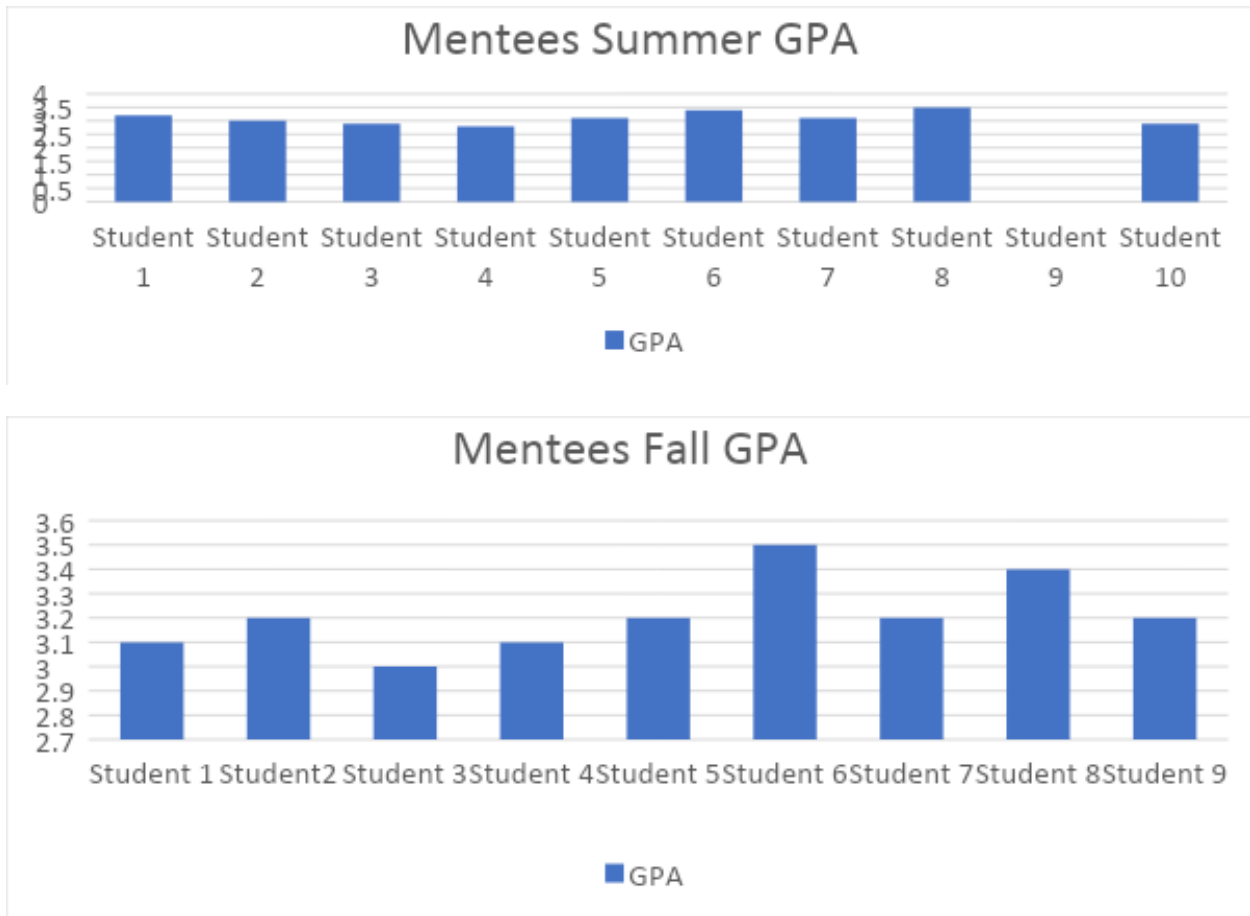
Figure 1



Summary of Findings

My expectation from this project was to see the impact of professional mentoring and engagement from the summer semester of 2022 to the fall semester of 2022 and the fall semester of 2022 to the spring semester of 2023. The first evaluation of my project exhibited some great results. We had 10 mentees and 10 mentors who started in summer 2022. Each person signed a waiver to participate in this research and went through an initial meeting to begin the program. At the end of the summer semester, nine mentees had completed their academic requirements and registered for the next semester. An evaluation form was given to each mentee to hear the feedback concerning the mentorship and how effective it was in continuing their post-secondary education. During the fall semester, the nine mentees were actively engaged and completed the fall semester with a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) or higher. The survey from the fall semester showed what the mentees liked or disliked about the program. Overall, the mentoring component was a success.

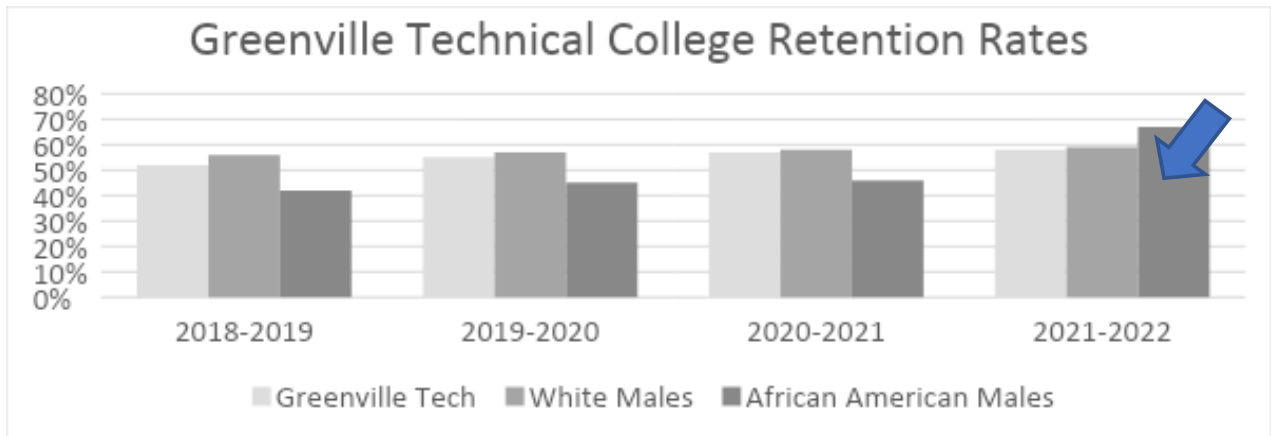
Figure 2



Recommendations

We saw the impact of professional mentoring with African American students at Greenville Technical College and how it affects the overall retention rate. Ten students started the program and nine were able to complete the summer and fall semesters. After the program, we saw a 21% increase in African American men compared to the previous three years that were reported. My recommendation would be to implement a mentoring program to help the African American student population. We saw the impact that it had on our students and the increase in persistence and retention of these students. This project helped me to see the challenges with this specific population and how I can address those challenges as a future postsecondary leader.

Figure 3



References

Greenville Technical College. (n.d.). *Greenville Technical College*. <https://www.gvltec.edu>