

Parents' 411

THE OFFICE OF STUDENT RETENTION



The Office of Student Retention
1700 East Cold Spring Lane
McKeldin Center, suite 318
Baltimore, MD 21251

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MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
THE OFFICE OF STUDENT RETENTION

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GREETINGS FROM THE RETENTION STAFF



As we welcome the class of 2011, Morgan State University is beginning a broad assessment of all components of our approach to the first year experience. Over the past 25 years, many colleges and universities have acknowledged the importance of the first year of college to student persistence. We are excited that the

University is participating in the Foundations of Excellence process which will help us develop a more comprehensive approach to the Morgan student's first year.

What does this mean for your sons and daughters? It means that Morgan State University is committed to providing Morgan students with a first year experience that will provide a foundation for their academic excellence and persistence to their ultimate goal of earning an undergraduate degree. We hope the Foundations process will be a springboard for a more effective Morgan freshman/sophomore experience. This issue

will highlight the Foundations of Excellence process and some of our student first-year experiences that have already been successful.

Our staff, Dr. Tiffany Beth McMillan, Director, Ms. Sarah D. Adams, Retention Specialist, Dr. Denicia Fowler, Retention Specialist, Ms. Diane Wise, Administrative Assistant, and the retention specialists in each of the schools and colleges continue to strive to provide you with the information that you need to support and assist your student from matriculation to graduation. As always, we look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions!

FOUNDATIONS OF EXCELLENCE

Foundations of Excellence is a comprehensive, externally guided self-study and improvement process for the first year that enhances an institution's ability to realize its goals for student learning, success, and persistence. The centerpiece of Foundations of Excellence is a model for first-year excellence comprised of a set of principles, Foundational Dimensions, developed by the Policy Center on the First Year of College and vetted by over 300 four- and two-year institutions. These principles will guide the measurement of Morgan's efforts and provide a model for the entirety of the beginning college experience from initial contact with potential students through admissions, orientation, and all first year curricular and co-curricular experiences.

The engine of the Foundations of Excellence process is a campus-based task force or committee – a group with broad representation from across the campus. Morgan has established a broad-based Steering Committee to oversee the implementation and execution of the Foundations process. **The members of the Steering Committee are: Dr. Nathaniel Knox, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Kara Turner, Assistant Dean, College of Liberal Arts; Dr. Tiffany McMillan, Director, Office of Student Retention; Dr. Brenda James, Director, Academic Development Center; Dr. Linda Mehlinger, Assistant Vice President for Planning and Information Technology; and Ms. Khadijah Ali-Coleman, Assistant Director, Office**



Morgan Foundations of Excellence Steering Committee. Seated from left to right: Dr. Brenda James, Director, Academic Development Center; Dr. Nathaniel Knox, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Tiffany McMillan, Director, Office of Student Retention. Standing from left to right: Dr. Kara Turner, Assistant Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Ms. Khadijah Ali-Coleman, Assistant Director, Office of Residence Life.

of Residence Life. Others representing all aspects of campus life will provide input to the members of the Steering Committee. The work of our

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Committee has begun with a campus audit of the first year (the Current Practices Inventory), will continue with a nine- to twelve-month process of evaluation using the Foundational Dimensions and related performance indicators, and culminate in the development of an action plan for campus improvement.

The benefits of Morgan’s participation in Foundations of Excellence include:

- undertaking a broad assessment of all components of our campus’s approach to the first year of college
- experiencing the benefits of “task-force\committee-based assessment” which uses a variety of data sources including the professional judgment of task force members
- building a comprehensive improvement and action plan for the first year that acknowledges both institutional strengths and weaknesses
- working directly with leading experts in the field of student success and student retention
- having the opportunity for networking with other participating campuses

The campus environment – how an institution structures the new student experience – plays an important role in determining how students spend their time, how they engage in learning, and whether they decide to return for the second year or even the next semester. The first year of college for students is critical to persistence to graduation. The Foundations of Excellence process will enable Morgan to thoroughly examine our campus environment and to connect findings to student-level input and outcomes data. By focusing on what we control, we can

take immediate steps to build on our strengths and improve upon our weaknesses. As a comprehensive process, Foundations of Excellence goes beyond limited analysis of discrete components of the first year; instead it acknowledges the interconnected nature of many components of the student experience.

Some of the **expected outcomes** of the process for Morgan are.....

- revitalization of our approach to the first year of college
- movement away from a piecemeal approach to the first year toward an intentional comprehensive approach
- increased involvement of faculty, in addition to other constituent groups, in first-year reform efforts
- a plan for change leading to significant first-year improvements
- and, ultimately and most importantly, an increase in the retention of Morgan State University students to graduation.

Yes, we are excited about our participation in the Foundations of Excellence process! It is part of our continuing efforts to make Morgan State University, Maryland’s premiere Public Urban University. We hope you will be excited also!

OFFICE OF RESIDENCE LIFE (ORL) ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAM (AEP) -STUDENT SUCCESS IS OUR GOAL!!

The Office of Residence Life (ORL) Academic Enrichment Program (AEP) makes services and support available for students to build and maintain their academic

standing and progress. The AEP provides free tutoring, computer labs, academic workshops and events especially for the students residing in the residence halls. Students may visit computer labs in O’Connell Hall, Cummings House, Blount Towers and Harper-Tubman House to use a computer, find quiet study space or receive tutoring on a drop-in basis. Regular computer lab hours for tutoring in all subjects are:

**Sunday-Thursday, 12 noon to 12 midnight
Friday and Saturday, 12 noon to 3pm**

From 8am to 10am in Blount Towers and O’Connell Hall, students can have an AEP tutor proofread their papers and print them.

This support is especially helpful to first-year students who often live away from home for the first time. The experience of adjusting to new classes, new professors, new roommates, new responsibilities, etc. can be overwhelming. Having upper-class students, as well as University staff, available in the residence halls to advise, assist and tutor them is invaluable to their acculturation.

AEP tracks the grades of residential students in order to respond to student needs. New and returning residential students who earn GPA’s below 2.0 are mandated to receive tutoring services from AEP staff during the Spring semester. This help is in place to ensure that students are eligible to reapply for housing the following Fall semester. (Applying for campus housing does not guarantee placement. Housing is extremely limited.)

AEP SCHOLARS GROUP

The AEP Scholars Group is a program that begins in the summer for students who are ineligible to reapply for housing due to a GPA that is below a 2.0. This group will be eligible to receive housing assistance

STRAIGHT FROM THE STUDENTS

GIVING BACK!

My Experience as an ACCESS-SUCCESS Tutor

**By Rebecca Cunningham
Senior, MSU**

Upon entering Morgan State University as a Freshman, I had the opportunity to participate in the Access-Success Program in the summer of 2004. The program helped me with the transition from high school to college. I became familiar with the campus and the different facilities. During the course of six weeks, I took college courses and attended several enrichment activities. The Access-Success Program gave me a head start in college. My matriculation at

Morgan State University was made easier as a result of being a participant in the Access-Success Program.

In the spring of 2005, Ms. Sarah Adams, Coordinator of the Access-Success Program, offered me a position as a peer tutor and counselor to the incoming Freshmen. I felt that I would be a great peer tutor and counselor because I was a participant in the program and could relate well with the students. I have been a peer tutor and counselor for three consecutive summers. Each summer I have experienced something different and realized that each group of students has something special to offer.

The typical summer for the peer tutor begins one week before the students arrive. The first week is reserved for rigorous training and preparation. Training is necessary to make sure that the tutors understand their job purpose and duties. During training we review proper approaches to students, how to

deal with uncomfortable situations with students, and how to accommodate each student’s needs.

The first summer I tutored a large group of students in Developmental Reading. The following summers I tutored students in Health. During the tutoring sessions, we reviewed homework and proper study skills. I would often give my testimony of my transition from high school to college and how it was made easier because of the Access-Success Program.

To me being a peer tutor means more than aiding students in their studies. A peer tutor serves as a role model and, in some cases, a friend. To be a successful tutor, you have to be personable, make yourself approachable, and understand that each student requires a different level of attention. As a peer tutor I was able to reach out to each student individually and make a positive impact on his or her initial college experience.



2007 ACCESS-SUCCESS Program Tutors and Freshman Participants.

First row right Rebecca Cunningham, senior and second row center Tashawna Miller, senior – Tutors. All other students are freshmen who participated in the program and the closing celebration fashion extravaganza.