



African-American Male Initiative

"Creating A More Educated Georgia"

NEWS

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FIVE LEADERS RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENHANCING BLACK MALE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Saluted by the University System of Georgia's African-American Male Initiative (AAMI)

KENNESAW, Ga. (April 15, 2011) — Five leading educators who have demonstrated unwavering commitment to educating African-American males were saluted this evening at a major statewide conference sponsored by the University System of Georgia African-American Male Initiative (AAMI), on the campus of Macon State College.

The Awards and Recognition Banquet at which the leaders were recognized served as the kickoff event for the AAMI 2011 Best Practices Conference, which runs through Saturday at 5:30 p.m. The two-day conference is aimed at sharing outcomes and best practices resulting from the USG's eight-year-long initiative aimed at increasing the recruitment, retention and graduation of Black males from the state's 35 public colleges and universities.

One honoree was presented with the "AAMI Best Practices Leadership Award" for his development, implementation and operation of a highly successful program AAMI within the USG that has significantly enhanced educational outcomes for Black males attending Georgia Highlands College campuses. Four other honorees were presented with awards that saluted their unique contributions in support of the USG's efforts and the mission of the AAMI project.

"These honorees are representative of the essence of AAMI's success," said AAMI Project Director Arlethia Perry-Johnson. "They have contributed their time, talent, expertise, organizational influence and funding support to ensure that AAMI not only remained viable, but they enabled it to expand and have even greater impact. The work of AAMI is conducted on a daily basis by legions of supporters, advocates and volunteers, and this group of most deserving award recipients epitomize how this program accomplishes its mission."

The following honorees received awards at the AAMI 2011 Best Practices Conference:

- **Dr. Jonathan Hershey**, chair of the Humanities Division at Georgia Highlands College, received the AAMI 2011 Best Practices Leadership Award for serving as the creator and faculty advisor of the institution's "GHAME" (Georgia Highlands' African-American and Minority Male Excellence) and Brother 2 Brother programs. In just three years, Dr. Hershey has shaped a multi-campus AAMI program that is data-driven and focused on outcomes. "GHAME" has increased its enrollment from seven students on one campus in 2008, to 91 students on five campuses in spring 2011. In addition, the retention rate of African-American males at Georgia Highlands College has risen from 43% between fall 2009-2010, to 76% between fall 2010 and spring 2011.

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- **Mr. Thomas W. Dortch**, chairman emeritus of 100 Black Men of America, Inc., received the “**AAMI Best Practices Legacy Award**” for his leadership role in AAMI's creation. While serving as Chairman of 100 Black Men of America, Inc. Mr. Dortch was consulted by Board of Regents' officials at the program's inception regarding the identification of community leaders and 100 Black Men of America board leaders who could be counted upon to participate in and contribute to the University System of Georgia's AAMI Task Force and research efforts. As a result, 100 Black Men chapters throughout the state have served as partners to various campus-based AAMI programs. Mr. Dortch has remained strongly committed to the program, providing personal funding support, leveraging local and national resources to support the program, and serving as one of its staunchest advocates.
- **The Lumina Foundation for Education** was presented with the “**AAMI Best Practices Advocacy Award**,” saluting the organization's efforts in funding programs that enhance the college matriculation of Black males and raising visibility about the challenges faced by this population of students. Particular appreciation was expressed to Lumina's Senior Program Officer Tina Gridiron Smith for her advocacy of this issue at the national level, and for her support in directing funding to AAMI. Lumina has provided two grants to the USG's AAMI program: the first in 2006, for \$100,000; and the second in 2009, for \$500,000. Lumina's support has helped the University System of Georgia experience an impressive surge in Black male enrollment and graduation, and enhanced AAMI's evaluation and reporting capacities. Ms. Smith accepted the award on behalf of the Lumina Foundation.
- **Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe**, founder and executive director of the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB), received the “**AAMI Best Practices Impact Award**” for his leadership in creating SAAB, and for working directly with the USG's AAMI program to launch an expanded, eight-campus SAAB project within the USG. The implementation of the USG's AAMI/SAAB project was based on an analysis of the Black male retention and graduation rates of USG institutions against national benchmarks to determine which campuses might best benefit from implementation of a SAAB chapter.
- **Mr. Erroll B. Davis**, chancellor of the University System of Georgia, was presented with the “**AAMI Best Practices Sustainability Award**.” The chancellor was recognized for providing funding support to the AAMI project during his five-year tenure as chancellor, encouraging USG presidents to participate in the program, serving as an advocate and spokesperson for the program in the community, and conveying the impact of the program to the Board of Regents. AAMI has made considerable strides during Davis' tenure. He has announced that he will step down as chancellor on June 30, 2011.

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AAMI ONLINE PRESS KIT:

SAVE THE DATE: A “save-the-date” card, featuring key highlights of the conference, is available at:

<http://www.usg.edu/aami/bestpractices11/date-saver.pdf>

CONFERENCE WEBSITE: For more information on the upcoming AAMI Best Practices conference, please visit the conference website at: www.usg.edu/aami/bestpractices11/

GO IN-DEPTH: An in-depth article about the University System of Georgia's African-American Male Initiative (AAMI) can be accessed at: http://www.kennesaw.edu/ur/pdf/aami_program.pdf

MORE ON AAMI: For more information, on the USG'S AAMI, please visit the project's website at:

<http://www.usg.edu/aami>

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