Accountability and brotherhood promoted at Georgia Highlands

BY MARK ANDREWS
mark.andrews@daily-tribune.com

African-American and Latino male students at the Georgia Highlands College Cartersville campus are working to improve graduation and retention rates through local and national initiatives that put an emphasis on accountability and serving one's community.

"In 2008 we received a grant from the University System of Georgia to become part of their statewide initiative, which is called the African-American Male Initiative," said Jon Hershey, associate professor of English on the Floyd Campus and director of the Georgia Highlands African-American and Minority Male Excellence and Brother 2 Brother initiatives.

"And the purpose of the initiative was to increase the numbers of African-American males attending college and improve their retention rates and graduation rates because, statewide, the numbers of African-American males attending college and graduating college was very low and underrepresented as a group."

Hershey explained the school adopted the Georgia Highlands African-American and Minority Male Excellence, or GHAME, and members can join their campus' chapter of Brother 2 Brother, a national organization dedicated to improving the retention and graduation rates of African-American and Latino male students.

Members must sign a contract stating they will, for example, participate in GHAME activities and meet with advisors to discuss academic progress. Recent community ventures of the program include a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Bartow County, participating in a local habitat for Humanity project and assisting with the groundbreaking at the new GHC student center.

"We initially started with a focus solely on African-American men, but we expanded to include Latino men because their numbers are also low," Hershey said. "The response has been really good. We still have a long way to go, but our recruiting numbers have improved significantly, and the numbers that have really surprised us has been retention numbers."

According to a GHC newsletter released in March, "From fall 2009 to fall 2010 student retention rates for all students were at 45 percent. Men overall were retained at 44 percent, African-American males at 43 percent and Latino men at 49 percent. During that time period, students involved in GHAME or Brother 2 Brother were retained at an 85 percent rate. And 100 percent of Latino males returned to college."

Hershey said the initiatives provide help for minority men to maneuver through the college system.

"Many of these students are first-time, first-generation college students in their family. Often they do not have the kind of support at home. They are often less likely to seek help, which is something I don't really have an explanation for except minority women going to college and succeeding at much higher numbers, so for whatever reason, minority women have decided to help another with getting through but minority men are not succeeding at that level," Hershey said. "So we try to provide sources of information for them, helping getting things like financial aid, which can be very complex, we provide tutoring when it's necessary, we offer study skills. Through

---

Brotherhood

FROM PAGE 1A

Brother 2 Brother we provide leadership training and just try and provide as many different avenues for success as we can."

Chris Carter, 20, is the president of Brother 2 Brother on the Cartersville campus and is responsible for organizing meet-

ings and helping to make sure members are on track academically.

He said the program has helped provide motivation to continue his academic career.

"One thing [Brother 2 Brother] has done for me, it has motivated me to study more," Carter said. "It has given me a greater reason to get through school because when you're involved in something it makes it a lot easier to get through school. Plus, we have a great network of people within the organization to encourage each other and help each other... It has really enhanced my outlook as far as going through college and the whole college experience in general."

Isaac Watters, 32, is a non-traditional student and is in his second semester at GHC studying Information Systems. He said the organizations have helped him earn a 3.25 grade point average.

"I think Brother 2 Brother was an excellent factor for me," Watters said. "I had run out of options and I thought it was time to go back to school and do something positive. [Brother 2 Brother] has helped teach study habits, which instructors to take, and to carry yourself like a man and be a more productive man while bettering yourself."

---