

Striving to Transform, Enrich Empower and Reward (STEER)

Representatives of the University of Cincinnati, Procter and Gamble, and the National Underground Railroad Center will gather May 10 to announce an emerging partnership to improve college retention and graduation rates of African American students at the University of Cincinnati.

This initiative represents a community effort Striving to Transform, Enrich Empower and Reward, hence the name STEER. "UC students who have both the desire and the need have been paired with mentors to help them navigate the obstacles that so often impede the progress of minority students navigating their way through a university setting," said Mitchel D. Livingston, vice president for Student Affairs and chief diversity officer.

Planners of the STEER initiative will engage UC students in their second year of studies, a point at which services traditionally available to first-year students begin to wane. It is certainly desirable, however, that these same services can be expanded and offered to other students as well. Partners in this new initiative hope to develop strong mentoring relationships that increase the retention, and ultimately the graduation rates, of African American students. The role of the mentors is to provide nurturing experiences to support and motivate mentees; help them achieve academic excellence; broaden their career exposure; and facilitate relevant on-the-job experience. Most of the students in the STEER program will be from the Greater Cincinnati region.

"I know from personal experience that it only takes one person to make a life-changing impact in a student's life," said University of Cincinnati President Greg Williams. "That is exactly what STEER is all about - matching mentors who are willing to make that difference to students who may not have other role models, guiding them through a successful college experience to graduation. This program will create a better future, one person at a time."

Second-year African American students at UC's Uptown campus in the Colleges of Arts & Science and Business, as well as those with majors in Criminal Justice are eligible for the STEER program. Currently, that would include more than 100 UC students.

In keeping with its strong commitment to giving back to the community, Cincinnati's P&G has coordinated members of the corporation's management to serve as mentors to the students of STEER. More than 52 P&G personnel have agreed to serve as mentors to the 50 students already committed to the STEER program.

The Strive Partnership served in the planning of the new STEER initiative. Strive is a cradle-to-career education partnership focused on improving the student achievement and success, from kindergarten preparedness to postsecondary completion, in the urban core of Cincinnati, Covington and Newport.