

Signing Ceremony Formalizes Long History of Grassroots Work at City College of San Francisco

By Sarah Walsh

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Top educational officials gathered in Washington D.C. this month, in an effort to formalize the National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN), designed to increase educational opportunities for traditionally under represented populations, and create a formal partnership between urban based Community Colleges, Historic Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

City College Chancellor Philip R. Day Jr. and Howard University President H. Patrick Swygert hosted the event on March 15.

At the ceremony, officials signed a cooperative agreement in support of the NATN. Signers of the agreement included: Dr. George R. Boggs, president of the American Association of Community Colleges, Dr. Stanley O. Ikenberry, president of the American Council on Education, Dr. Michael D. Casserly, Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, The Honorable William H. Gray III, president and CEO of the United Negro College Fund, and Dr. Henry Ponder, president and CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education.

"It is the first time that these two- and four- year educational sectors have dedicated themselves to working together for these purposes. Given a chance, my gut tells me it will produce the desired results," said Day. "It is a thrill, personally, to be involved in something with so much potential to make a real difference for students across the country."

Over the past year, due in large part to the impetus created at City College of San Francisco, representatives from over 100 community college's and Universities nation wide have joined forces to develop this national partnership. The first of its kind, NATN would standardize articulation requirements, allowing students who receive an Associate of Arts degrees from a participating urban based community college to easily transfer to a four-year HBCU or HSI.

At press time the chancellor was planning to meet with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACUs) to formalize agreements with HSIs for the first time. Plans also include new web-based technology to support relationships between the two and four- year



Dr. Henry Ponder (Lft.), President/CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education and Dr. Philip R. Day Jr. (Center) sign the cooperative agreement in support of the NATN. (Far Rt.) Dr. Michael Casserly, Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, looks on. Filming the event is former City College student

institutions and a tracking system that would provide insight into minority student achievement.

Considering the changes in affirmative action laws in California, the Network seems to be coming at just the right time, though it has been in the works for over a decade.

Since 1991, Dr. Henry L. Augustine, director of the African American Scholastic Programs at City College, has provided an environment of support and guidance for African American students in pursuit of higher education. The successful work that he has done over the past decade at City College is in essence the model for NATN.

Concerned about high drop out rates among African American high school males and their absence on City College campus, Dr. Augustine decided to do something about it. He brought 25 young men from inner-city high schools around San Francisco, to City College, where they took college level courses. Today, there are 150 students in this program, which is just one of the many services provided by Dr. Augustine and his staff.

Often on their own time and with their own money, Dr. Augustine, with counselors Brenda Brown, Deborah Stewart, and a team of others, take groups of 50 to 80 students on annual tours of HBCUs across the country, over spring break. There are also mentoring programs which provide jobs for students over the summer, summer bridge programs for recent high school graduates, and general academic counseling provided for students.

Since the program's inception,

approximately 240 students have gone through the African American Scholastic Programs and graduated from City College. At least 120 have gone on to a four-year school, and at least 100 have gone on to HBCUs.

Corwin Cooley, in attendance at the March 15 signing, was one of those students.

As a teenager growing up in San Francisco's inner-city neighborhood, Bayview/Hunter's Point, Corwin never would have imagined that he would graduate from Clark Atlanta University, majoring in Mass Media Art, and go on to have a successful career as a camera operator. Since graduating less than a year ago, he has already filmed Super Bowl XXXIV, World Series 2000, and currently works as a camera operator at KTSF-TV 26 in Brisbane California.

The odds were not in Corwin's favor. When he attended Balboa High School, approximately 60% of African American males did not graduate from high school. When he became involved in the African American Retention Program at City College his life changed.

"At Balboa, there were often riots and violence. I was getting into some trouble. Getting out of that environment and going to City College was a tremendous leap for me," said Corwin

His classes were taught by African American men, which allowed Corwin to find role models in an academic environment. Among his courses at City College, Corwin took African American History, and for the first time was able to learn an alternative history, one that was not told from a European perspective.

"I hadn't thought about college before the program. The college tours and the way the program was taught, teaching us how to respect each other opened my mind to going to college.

He added, "They imbedded it into my head, making every effort to let us know about college, whether it was taking us to a football game at Berkeley or a baseball game at Stanford. They said, "Look you're here now, and you can do this too."

After seeing the success of Augustine's program, and that of students like Corwin, former City College Trustee James Haskell Mayo Sr., first encouraged the college to play a more active role in building relationships with HBCUs. With his 1996 resolution, Mayo first proposed formalizing articulation agreements. It was not until Dr. Day became Chancellor and got wind of Mayo's resolution, that it was pushed to the forefront of the college's agenda.

In October 1999, within Day's first year as chancellor of City College, the first articulation agreements were developed between City College and 15 HBCUs, with an official signing ceremony with Mayor Willie Brown at City Hall. From there, the push to take the articulation agreements to a broader, national level began.

The recent signing ceremony was an important step in the realization of the NATN's goals. The next step-- to find the funding necessary for such a program.

"This is the neglected majority we're targeting here," said Day. "Too many African American students don't see going on to a four-year school as part of their dream. We're telling them, We can make that happen for you."

For over a decade, and often with limited resources, Dr. Henry L. Augustine has been committed to doing exactly that at City College. When asked about the proposed National Network, Dr. Augustine said, "It was important for Dr. Day to push it to a national level. Hopefully with the national signing and the national support the whole project can receive some financial support. It also helps our colleagues. When you help our colleagues you also help our students."

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