

Academic Affairs

Office of Enrollment Support Services and Student Retention

-Partners In Academic Success-

“Comprehensive Program for Strengthening Student Engagement and Enrichment at Clark Atlanta University (CAU)”

Clark Atlanta University received funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to establish a student support system centered on faculty engagement with students based on advisement, mentoring, and out-of-class interactions.

WHO WAS DUBOIS, AND WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CAU DUBOIS FELLOWS TO THE CAU DUBOIS SCHOLARS AND VICE VERSA?



W. E. B. DuBois was foremost a scholar and thinker of the 20th century. He was also a Civil rights activist and founder of the NAACP. Important to Clark Atlanta University he was a professor at Atlanta University (**one of our parent Institutions**). He is the author of the widely read “Souls of Black Folk”; he was an eminent historian, sociologist and social science researcher. Lastly, he was a leading Pan-Africanist in addition to being the founding editor of the *Crisis Magazine* and *Phylon: the Review of Race and Culture*.

In summer 2006 Clark Atlanta established a first-year program that brings together first-year scholars with selected faculty fellows for the purpose of advising, mentoring and engaging in out-of-class interaction. Faculty fellows are selected for their willingness to work closely with entering scholars in the transition year. Faculty fellows are selected from the scholar’s identified field of study or a related area.

Fellows engage Scholars via advising, mentoring and out-of class interactions. Scholars are expected to provide contact information to their Faculty Fellows; to secure office location and schedule of their Faculty Fellows; attend planned meetings and activities and to seek and follow advisement as provided. **Scholars are strongly encouraged not to attempt to “go it alone”; and to use the life line offered by the W. E. B. DuBois Scholars and Fellows Program.** Lastly, Scholars are expected and encouraged to be open to the mentoring process; and schedule time for out-of-class interactions.

Strengthening Student Engagement and Retention at CAU

By Susan Gibson
Director, Enrollment Support Services and
Student Retention



The *“Comprehensive Program for Strengthening Student Engagement and Retention at Clark Atlanta University”* was “established as a student support system centered on faculty engagement with students through advisement, mentoring, and out-of-class interactions.” W. E. B. DuBois once stated: *“Education is that whole system of human training within and without the school house walls, which molds and develops men.”* Not only is the essence of this quote embedded in the goals and objectives of the grant, it is in keeping with the spirit of CAU’s mission, which is to “focus on the intellectual and personal development of each student.”

During the earlier phases of the grant, the faculty and students became known as the **“W. E. B. DuBois Fellows and Scholars.”** Many Fellows engaged their scholars in activities both in and out of class, while others found it difficult to connect with their scholars. Through workshops, discussions, information sessions, and reports, faculty fellows were able to honestly assess the outcomes of each endeavor.

In 2008, a proposal for a continuation of the grant was submitted and approved. Major emphasis was placed on the following specific objectives:

- to strengthen and improve academic advising effectiveness for first-year students;
- to provide cohesive and integrated first-year experiences that emphasize faculty-student mentoring and enhanced out-of-class interactions;
- to continue to increase retention rates that will lead to increased persistence and graduation rates.

The following enhancements were made as a result of earlier grant assessment:

- The Program was successfully integrated into the CAU Experience.
- Faculty Fellows were more closely matched with students within their academic disciplines which resulted in a tremendous increase of engagement activities.
- First-year Seminar, an existing program at CAU, served as a major platform for connecting and engaging with students.

During a period of national economic crisis, unemployment, and decreased educational funding, enrollment declined not only at CAU but nationally. With these obstacles, however, the retention rate of Clark Atlanta University did not suffer; it remained steady. One could surmise the W. E. B. DuBois Fellows and Scholars Program played an important role in providing an educational climate conducive to success; thereby contributing to the stabilization of the University’s retention rate.

What being a W. E. B. DuBois Fellow means to me

By Christopher Bass



I have been a W. E. B. DuBois Fellow for 3 years now and I can say that it is truly one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional life. As an alumnus of CAU ('92) I have served the students of this wonderful campus since I was a student. I was a Freshman Orientation guide (89-91), campus community service coordinator (91-92). I currently serve as the Sgt. at Arms for the Clark Atlanta University Alumni Association (Atlanta Chapter) and assistant professor of psychology. I have always enjoyed serving the students of CAU in any manner that I can.