

Bowie State University Expands Its Community Reach

Male Initiative Supports Community Youth

Youth enrolled in the Woodland Job Corps in Laurel can now receive life skills training from Bowie State University staff and students through the BSU Male Initiative, a campus-based mentoring program that recently expanded its reach to include youth in the local community.

The Male Initiative has added an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer to help build and develop partnerships between the university and community groups, thanks to a grant that the Maryland-D.C. Campus Compact awarded to Bowie State. AmeriCorps VISTA is a federally funded service program, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

“We’re very excited about this partnership. It affirms our commitment to the success of the young men at Bowie State University and in our surrounding communities,” said Tammi Thomas, chief of staff to Bowie State President Mickey L. Burnim and Male Initiative program supervisor. “We look forward to even greater expansion and growth.”

Since President Burnim started the program in 2009, the Male Initiative has guided male students with one-to-one campus mentors to reach their full potential through the development of their academic, personal and social skills. With this new focus on community partnerships, the Male Initiative is poised to make a difference in the lives of young people throughout Prince George’s County.

BUILDING COMMUNITY IMPACT

Through the AmeriCorps VISTA project, staff from the Bowie State Career Development Center have begun workshops for students at the Woodland Job Corps and other programs and classes are planned.

Starting in December 2015, Bowie State students will work with the “I Belong Here” truancy reduction program, sponsored by the county Office of the State’s Attorney. Once a month, BSU students will visit five schools with a high number of students who are chronically absent to encourage the children to stay in school and aim for college. The participating schools are Andrew Jackson Academy, Samuel P. Massey Academy Middle School, William Wirt Middle School, Hyattsville Middle School and Thurgood Marshall Middle School.

MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION

AmeriCorps VISTA member Robert Fronta also leads activities to empower Bowie State students to take on leadership roles in their communities. In October, he organized a group of Bowie State students to attend the Million Man March 2015 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Students with a year or more of experience in the Male Initiative work with Fronta to plan discussions to engage their peers on issues such as social justice campaigns and police brutality and encourage them to become more active citizens.

“With the help of its community partners, the Male Initiative will continue to empower the next generation of leaders at Bowie State and beyond,” said President Burnim.



EMPOWERING LEADERS:
Bowie State students attend the Million Man March 2015 with the BSU Male Initiative.

Photograph by James Copeland IV

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