Chapter 8
The Mentoring and Connectivism of African American Male Students Who Participate in Recreational Sports Programs

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this chapter was to examine the factors influencing the mentoring and connectivism of retaining African American male students through participation in recreational sports programs. It is being reported that improvements in participation and success for African Americans are encouraging, particularly among males, but there is more to be done. The study was conducted at one regional university within the state of Texas that has an established recreational sports facility and programs. There were a total of six African American male participants chosen for this study. Findings from this study affirm that recreational sports provide opportunities for students to be connected, feel comfortable, and build relationships with their faculty as well as the staff.

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INTRODUCTION

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2015) allocated over $28 million in state and federal funding over the last few years for programs to providing direct services to disadvantaged students. The majority of the funding was targeted toward institutions of higher education with large numbers of African American and Hispanic students as a part of the Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015. As part of this plan, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) launched the African American Male Initiative in 2009 to provide targeted funding to help improve historically low African American male participation and success rates in Texas Higher Education. It was reported that improvements in participation and success for African Americans are encouraging, particularly among males, but there is more to be done (THECB, 2015). Although improved, persistence and completion rates for African American students, particularly African American males, continue to trail other groups, and the THECB has identified several programs that have demonstrated a positive impact on the success of minority students and is funding projects to strengthen mentoring, academic support, and other services as at minority students in the higher education pipeline (THECB, 2015).

The objective of the chapter to provide a scholarly background through research studies covering the influence of recreational sports programs on retention, the relatability of recreational sports activities and connectivism, and how faculty and staff engagement in recreational sports influence student’s retention and connectivism. C.O.N.N.E.C.T describes factors that recreational sports increases retention of African American male students through mentoring and connectivism.

- Comfort is increased
- Opportunities to Meet Culturally Diverse Students
- Named as a Stress Relief Agent
- Network of Campus Support
- Encourages a Sense of Purpose
- Channels an Avenue of Connectivity
- Teaches about the Influences of Faculty and Staff Engagement

BACKGROUND

Hundreds of thousands of new students will begin college this fall, and most colleges and universities have designed elaborate orientation activities to induct beginning students into the academic and social cultures of their campuses. These orientation activities are usually crammed with advising and registration information, academic
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