



Call Me MiSTER

A Black Male Grow Your Own Program

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Abstract

The primary mission of the Call Me MiSTER (CMM) program, founded in 2000 and headquartered at Clemson University, was originally developed in collaboration with three private historically Black institutions to address the significant shortage of African American men teaching in K–8 public elementary school classrooms. In this article, we describe the historical context of the program’s origin and framework and explain program strategies and experiences in the execution of the CMM model that has led to its sustained success in recruiting, developing, and retaining African American men who have become effective teachers in multiple public elementary and middle schools in the state and beyond.

Introduction

The primary mission of the Call Me MiSTER (CMM) program, founded in 2000 and headquartered at Clemson University, was originally developed in collaboration with three private historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to address

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the significant shortage of African American men teaching in K–8 public elementary school classrooms. The successful collaboration of these entities developed into an unprecedented expansion of formally licensed host colleges numbering 23 in the state of South Carolina and 9 in other states across the United States. The desire and goal to grow our own African American male elementary-level teachers is inherent in the fiber of the CMM program. Thus 90% of all CMM teachers come from our state, and we promote and expect the same commitment to a “home-grown” approach within our other state partners. The program incentivizes prospective teacher candidates by offering partial tuition assistance scholarships, loan forgiveness options, book allowances, and other student support services. Subsequently, successful graduates upon completion are expected to give back by serving as teachers in public elementary or middle schools for a minimum of one year for each year they received financial support from the CMM program. It is particularly important to note that the program does not cherry-pick by intentionally aiming for the so-called best and brightest as measured by limited preassessment admission criteria. Our program student participants are largely, but not exclusively, selected from among underserved, socioeconomically disadvantaged and educationally at-risk communities. On all collaborating campuses, the program is governed by its overarching purpose of diversifying the teaching workforce by specifically addressing the severe absence of African American male teachers in our public elementary schools, while influencing and developing young African American men toward becoming professional educators under the guiding principles of servant leadership.

The purpose of this article is to describe the historical context of the program’s origin and framework and explain program strategies and experiences in the execution of the CMM model that has led to its sustained success in recruiting, developing, and retaining African American men who have become effective teachers in multiple public elementary and middle schools in the state and beyond.

The Challenge

Demographic shifts across the United States are rapidly transforming our public school classrooms. Students of color represent approximately 50% of the national K–12 population, with that percentage expected to grow to 56% by 2024 (National Center for Children in Poverty, [NCCP], 2017). Furthermore, low-income students now make up 51% of the children attending the nation’s public schools, with half or more of these students in 21 states eligible to receive free or reduced lunch (NCCP, 2017). High-poverty neighborhoods largely comprise children of color, and these children are much more likely to attend a poorly funded school where more than 75% of all students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (NCCP, 2017).

Though changing demographics among the nation’s school-aged population persist, the teaching force remains 80% White (Taie & Goldring, 2017). In more than 40% of our nation’s public schools, there is not one teacher of color (Policy and

Program Studies Service, 2016). African American teachers represent approximately 7% of the U.S. teaching workforce, while Latinx teachers represent close to 9% (Taie & Goldring, 2017). African American men represent roughly 2% of the U.S. teaching population, while Latino men represent less than 2% (Policy and Program Studies Service, 2016). While the percentage of African American male teachers across the United States remains low, that percentage has grown to 2.7% within our southern state. We attribute much of this positive gain at the elementary level to the CMM program, which now produces a majority of the African American men who become K–8 public classroom teachers in the state.

In South Carolina, the state demographic and educational challenges are particularly acute and are exacerbated by the state’s rural character. Of every 100 students in the state, 40 attend school in a rural district. Overall, childhood poverty levels are among the highest in the nation. And poverty is concentrated in rural areas, with 43% of African American children and 45% of Latino children living in low-income communities (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014). The state also faces an overall teacher shortage that is growing every year. In fall 2015, 449 teaching positions went unfilled, with nearly two-thirds occurring in three particular geographic areas where the poverty index for the school districts averages 90% (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement [CERRA], 2016). Twenty percent of all those vacancies represent teaching positions that require early childhood/elementary certification (CERRA, 2016). Notably, 75% of the CMM graduates choose to teach and serve in these rural state schools (Jones & Jenkins, 2012).

Historical Context of Call Me MiSTER in South Carolina

The CMM program was founded in a southern state where its lawmakers once made the education of African Americans forbidden in fear such development would only lead to slave rebellions. Black people made up about 54% of the state’s population in 1860 (US Census, 1860). In 1895, the state ratified its constitution mandating and institutionalizing racial separation. The U. S. Supreme Court firmly established the practice of racial separation for the nation with its 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision declaring a principle of “separate but equal,” in effect, upholding Jim Crow laws and other policies that disenfranchised and stripped Black Americans of common citizenship rights enjoyed by their White counterparts (Kauper, 1953). The high court emboldened the southern states to conduct their discriminatory and often violent practices under the protection of law. Among many such ordinances, the state’s legal Act of Separation made it a crime for Black and White children to attend the same school (Gona, 2011).

School attendance was not made compulsory in the state until 1921, but no effort was made to enforce the law for Black children. Black children in many rural communities in this southern state and others did not even begin school until they were old enough and strong enough to walk for miles to attend. Children often

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missed days due to bad weather or had their farmwork to do. Being behind in attendance meant many Black children were teenagers in the first grade (Gona, 2011).

To stress the point, during the first half of the 20th century, the southern state firmly established a racial caste system that completely denied any semblance of equality by any measure between its Black and White citizens. A combination of factors, hardships, and challenges facing the state's Black communities in their efforts to provide an education for their children ultimately led to a legal fight in the state to confront the Jim Crow system by declaring the segregation of schools unconstitutional. Their unprecedented case was consolidated in the landmark 1954 *Brown v Board of Education*. It is not hard to imagine why the achievement gap between White and Black children still exists to this day when you examine the origins of the educational history in the southern state.

In addition, when the state's schools were consolidated and beginning to integrate 20 years after the *Brown* decision, the process resulted in many Black teachers previously assigned to all-Black segregated schools losing their teaching jobs (Fairclough, 2007). Unable to teach in the newly formed integrated school, their roles were reduced to more menial labor.

In 1900, according to a U.S. Commissioner of Education Report, there was one black teacher for every ninety-three black children of school age, while the white ratio was one teacher per fifty-seven pupils. The standard at the time was one teacher per every thirty pupils. To meet the standard while enrolling three-quarters of the black school-age population would have required an additional 53,373 teachers. This teacher shortage continued into the 1930's. (Fairclough, 2007)

In *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935*, author James Anderson (1988) described two “crusades” that Black southerners had to wage in support of education for their children. Briefly, the first crusade was to establish state school systems in the South. The second crusade was to establish common schools for their children, which led to the development of the Rosenwald building project throughout the southern states.

As described in their book, following Anderson's timeline, the writers of this article felt one could make the case for marking the period beginning in the 1940s of a “third crusade” for equalization of Black schools, which opened the door for challenging the inherently discriminatory nature of segregated schools as unconstitutional and successfully argued in the *Brown* case:

Despite the inherent injustice of segregation, African Americans had no problems managing their schools and teaching their children. . . . With integration and school consolidation, the dynamic changed, and entire communities began to lose those bonds that made them creative and industrious. We assert that what was lost along with integration and consolidation connects to many of today's issues and challenges faced by African American communities in the south. Facing those persistent challenges is the goal of the Call Me MiSTER, which we view is on the “cutting edge” of what may be considered a “fourth crusade” in advancing African

American education through its mission “by creating a pool of talented teachers, who are loyal to their communities.” (Jones & Jenkins, 2012)

Their willingness to rise to the challenge “embod[ies] the spirit of hope for change” (Jones & Jenkins, 2012) that the CMM program embraces.

Call Me MiSTER (CMM) Conceptual Framework

Our vision for the development of a CMM graduate is conceptualized according to the following tenets: *ambassadorship*, *brother’s keeper*, *personal growth*, *teacher efficacy*, and *servant leadership*. CMM participants come into the program with a wide range of educational experiences, economic backgrounds, sociocultural mentalities, family and peer influences, and belief systems. Some of these factors serve as empowering assets, while others are diametrically opposed to the philosophical values orientation of the program. *Ambassadorship*, then, from a CMM standpoint, refers to an individual’s ability to articulate and represent the mission and vision of the program. In so doing, one becomes an ambassador for himself and his family, for the profession of education, and for our program. Being your *brother’s keeper*—a term that transcends gender and race—reflects an awareness of intra- and interpersonal dynamics that allows the participant to respect and empower individuals, while galvanizing the collective strength of the entire team for the purpose of advancing individual, group, and organizational objectives. No participant enters the program embodying all the dispositional traits consistent with accomplishing these lofty goals; therefore a commitment to *personal growth* is critical to the process. Closely unpacking their personal stories, under the guidance of program mentors and alumni, allows the participants to work through areas of misperception, faulty reasoning, blind spots in thinking, and other misunderstandings that arrest development and challenge healthy maturation. And as new perspectives are formed, their understanding of their story—irrespective of their nature—is enhanced, reframed, and transformed into an empowering autobiography that fuels the author and inspires empathy and growth in others. While these aspirations of mentorship and community engagement are critical to the CMM program, their greater value is in supporting the fundamental vocational objective of becoming an effective teacher.

Thus *teacher efficacy* is at the heart of the program. All participants must meet the same standards, benchmarks, and measures of any teacher education candidate. Navigating the formal education program forms the baseline of expectation for matriculants. Beyond the formal curriculum, participants are provided opportunities to expand pedagogical and content knowledge through program offerings such as statewide summits, annual leadership institutes, and residential summer internships. Additionally, participants shadow CMM graduates, who are teaching in area schools, and observe the skilled artisans in action. These observations are always followed up with some form of guided reflection, led by the CMM graduate or a CMM coordinator.

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Finally, all of the aforementioned tenets come together to undergird a foundational principle of the CMM—servant leadership. Servant leaders sacrifice personal wants for group needs and commit to a level of stewardship of one's community by elevating the functioning and experiences of its denizens through the implementation of prescriptive intervention strategies. More than just a mere teacher, the servant leader is a prescient architect who envisions the ideal where others only see a distressed facade and then utilizes his skills, influence, and community assets to bring that greater vision to fruition.

In view of nationwide teacher shortages and staggering statistics about the persistent lack of minority teachers in the schools, the program distinguishes itself by developing young African American men into servant leaders, a concept that drives each facet of the students' experiences in the program. Throughout their entire time in the program, CMM teachers are expected to exhibit the characteristics of a servant leader, while increasing their understanding that great leadership within the classroom is grounded in a deep commitment to recognize and serve the needs of students. The program's cocurricular approach pairs a rigorous, traditional educational curriculum with supplemental seminars in such topics as character development, community service, and teacher efficacy. The students who emerge from the program as CMM teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills not only to be effective teachers but also to be a compelling role model for students of all backgrounds. The program's emphasis on developing each young man as an individual, with his own story, living with a particular set of circumstances, and trying to balance his strengths and weaknesses, in turn allows the CMM teachers to embrace, and even celebrate, the differences among the students who enter their classrooms.

Critical Role of Mentorship

These tenets are also guided by a philosophy of peer leadership and support that is essential for the development of CMM teachers. For instance, one prong of the trilateral mentoring intervention (TMI) model advantages community experts who serve as mentors to participants (expert to participant). While some are education professionals, many are not; the connective tissue between them all is demonstrated success in their fields of practice and a commitment to community. Perhaps more instrumental to the developmental process are the other two prongs, which position the participant as lead mentor, either to peers (participant to participant) or to young persons in the community (participant to youth). This is crucial, as it situates all the learning occurring in the formal education curriculum and the cocurricular activities of the program within a very real, very relevant context. It is the essence of converting theory to practice, with the by-product being the development of a sense of purpose. Matriculation benchmarks such as passing courses and certification exams cease to be goals in and of themselves and are seen as means to the very specific ends of becoming a teacher, change agent, and servant leader. Moreover,

the participant-to-youth mentoring relationships are longitudinal in scope and are maintained during the participants' entire undergraduate experience.

The CMM model is intentionally nonpunitive but developmental in its nature; this is what makes the work countercultural and provides a paradigm shift for how Black males are viewed in society. At every opportunity, the process stops to recognize and reinforce the strengths and inherent genius of CMM men. The program creates a safe environment that serves as an ongoing laboratory for CMM men to learn how to improve upon developing interpersonal relationships and to grapple with and resolve personal struggles without fear of not recovering from making mistakes. Many CMM teachers come to us needing to develop new coping skills and to learn how to trust their ability to resolve conflicts and engage in new relationships with their peers and adults in authoritative roles.

CMM Collaborative: Sustained Executive Leadership

The CMM Collaborative was initially established by agreement at the highest level when our university president reached out to the presidents of HBCUs to formally partner on a new initiative to recruit, retain, and place African American male elementary teachers in the state. It was significant that the program was immediately embraced and made an institutional priority at the highest level of higher education administration. The CMM Collaborative has established a strong interinstitutional bond for almost two decades. This sustained executive leadership laid the foundation and is a key factor for the healthy development of the CMM program over time. CMM was celebrated statewide and nationally for its goal and continued to expand by establishing its student cohort recruitment and retention model on each of its partner colleges in compliance with its license agreement. On every partner campus, the program has an advisor serving as its site coordinator and liaison responsible for reporting and maintaining lines of communication internally and externally on student and program issues.

CMM Recruitment and Selection

The development of the program recruitment pool relies on both formal and informal networks to reach potential African American males. However, it is very important to note that prospective CMM teachers must first and foremost apply and be accepted into one of the program's official licensed partners. A prospect may choose to apply to as many colleges as he chooses, which allows him to assess multiple factors to determine the best possible fit. Although program personnel may encourage students to apply to a college on the front end, the selection process into a partner's program cohort begins only after a student has applied and been accepted for admission.

Prospective CMM participants have typically been identified through traditional

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recruitment activities between high schools and the colleges, which identify students who have expressed interest in pursuing a teaching career or have displayed a particular disposition, quality, or talent that a school referral source believes would make them good candidates for the program. On the other hand, the program has greatly benefited from community-based, culturally oriented, informal or nontraditional network referral sources throughout the state. For example, the local barber, church mom, sorority sister, fraternity brother, pastor, nonprofit community organizer, and boys' club supporter are just a few community-based sources who have recognized the CMM brand and the value added by the program and its contribution to the schools in the community.

The program places a high premium on networking within local communities to help the CMM recruit stay connected to their story. Although the program has experienced tremendous marketing success due largely to the accomplishments of the CMM graduates, it has never had to advertise to attract prospects. Instead, the program depends on the culture of the very community in which a CMM candidate is rooted. We believe there are caring, sensitive, and aware people in every community who believe in young men and simply want to see them, if given the right opportunity, do something positive with their lives. Young men, due to a myriad of extenuating circumstances, who have few options and limited choices but show potential, are easily identified by involved community members, who want to see them avoid going down the wrong path. Many have found fulfillment in the program. For example, several of our young men have self-reported and identified coming out of bleak family, school, or community circumstances. They needed someone to recognize the challenges they faced and help them find part-time jobs or lead them to potential resources. HBCUs and junior colleges created viable bridges to universities to which these young men would not have had access otherwise.

The program commitment to accept a prospective CMM teacher is a mutual pledge that sets an expectation for the student and his family that the program will provide the expressed financial and academic support within its resources to help ensure his successful matriculation, in exchange for the student's commitment to trust and fully engage in the CMM process throughout his college experience. The program model is structured and relies heavily on TMIs that involve the program staff, the CMM teacher candidates, and the school-age students being served among the program's community partners. Thus CMM teachers learn both the process and roles of active involvement in being mentored and becoming mentors.

CMM Program Components

The four components of the CMM program that anchor the teaching and learning experiences of future CMM teachers are living in community, leadership development and mentoring, summer internships and workforce development, and community engagement.

Living learning community. Program participants are recruited in cohorts of at least three to five beginning with their freshman year. Importantly, CMM teacher candidates are expected to participate in a living learning community in residence on each 4-year campus with housing and to participate fully in the program's co-curriculum throughout the academic year. This program provides spaces to grapple with each other socially through challenges that are connected to the CMM conceptual framework. In addition, it is expected that a CMM teacher candidate will experience at least one summer internship as well as the annual summer Leadership Institute.

Leadership development and mentoring. The program offers various opportunities for students to develop and exercise their leadership skills, including through individualized empowerment plans (IEPs), field experiences, lectures, workshops, and seminars. On an annual basis, CMM organizes a national Leadership Institute where CMM teacher candidates participate in education presentations by master educators, team-building activities, professional development activities, and public-speaking events. In addition, mandatory statewide program summits are sponsored annually at rotating campus sites in the state.

Summer internships and workforce development. The program is dedicated to providing valuable, hands-on, professional development opportunities that prepare CMM teacher candidates for the classroom. Through summer internships at schools, community centers, housing projects, and churches located in nearby college campus sites, CMM men observe and obtain early practical teaching skills and experience, allowing them to glean from veteran teachers the methods and attributes of effective teaching. The program invests heavily in each CMM teacher candidate by making concerted efforts to ensure each MiSTER secures a suitable placement in a teaching position upon graduation. In fact, since 2004, the program can boast having a high success rate, with CMM graduates receiving teaching positions immediately upon graduation and over 90% of those CMM graduates remaining in the classroom as teachers or serving as principals, assistant principals, supervisors, or other leadership positions within public education.

Community engagement and after-school programs. The program is actively engaged in local communities through various partnerships that serve the dual purpose of furthering the learning opportunities of CMM teacher candidates while simultaneously meeting community needs. The programs are examples of this work:

Brother's Keeper Leadership Summit. This program endeavors to improve and increase retention and academic success of young males in education, especially those of color.

Junior CMM Program. This is a middle school-based program that targets academically low-performing, behaviorally at risk, and/or otherwise underperforming middle school males and implements an intervention strategy modeled on TMI (correct) but modified for developmental appropriateness.

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Razor Readers. This is an initiative that creates mini-libraries in local barbershops, and aims to increase children's access to reading materials and individuals who can serve as educational role models.

Camp iRock. This is an innovative summer camp with the goal of minimizing summer learning loss, promoting literacy, and improving attitudes about learning.

YMentor. This program was founded on the belief that everyone, regardless of age, benefits from having positive one-on-one relationships with others. This YMCA initiative initially pairs mentors with local students for weekly 30-min sessions during the school day. As mentoring relationships mature, participants can take part in mentoring sessions outside of the school setting.

CMM Placement and Retention

Since CMM's inception, its graduates have been aggressively sought after by superintendents, principals, and district human resource recruiters. The CMM program mission to address the shortage of African American males teaching in the K–8 grade levels met a need recognized throughout the state. During the tenure of the program, several superintendents have made pledges to hire CMM teachers during their freshmen year. This emphasizes how dire is the need for such teachers, and school leaders often jump on the opportunity to attract promising CMM teachers to their school districts. The pledges have turned into job offers and teacher contracts for qualified CMM teachers beginning with the first graduating class in 2004 and have continued annually through the current 2018 class. Most CMM teachers have benefited from receiving multiple offers to fill teaching positions in the state at the completion of their senior year for the ensuing fall school year.

During the screening and interviewing phase of the process, the CMM program coordinators and mentors serve as advisors, providing guidance in assisting the CMM teacher in making the transition from student to professional. Fortunately, the process is often made smoother due to the positive and familiar relationships previously established among schools and districts by either the CMM program and/or the CMM teacher. The credibility, reputation, and sustainability of the CMM program have grown progressively stronger over the course of nearly two decades.

With few exceptions, the vast majority of CMM teachers seek and secure teaching positions in high-poverty, academically challenged or Title I school populations struggling against low expectations and a myriad of other social environmental obstacles. Although the CMM teacher's personal and academic experience is often very similar to the school environment in which they find themselves, it is important for the CMM program to know enough about the school leadership and environment to assess whether it is a good fit for the CMM teacher. The CMM program cohort model is designed to supplement the CMM teacher's content knowledge and pedagogy with the effective dispositional development necessary to create an environment where children can succeed and parents are a welcome part of

that process. During their matriculation in the CMM program, CMM teachers are challenged to learn how to overcome their own regressive, often self-destructive behaviors and attitudes toward authority figures and others. The consistent feedback from cohort members and program coordinators, and self-assessment protocols, are supports and tools that allow CMM teachers to confront these challenges and increase the likelihood of success during the first couple years of teaching.

The retention of CMM teachers over time has resulted in graduates pursuing master's or doctoral degrees to assume educational leadership roles at the K–12 or university level. Several CMM teachers have become principals or assistant principals to influence district policy, change school climate, hire CMM graduates, and/or elevate the outcomes of a formally low-performing school. One CMM teacher who began his career teaching English language arts (ELA) at a middle school 5 years ago was named teacher of the year, appointed the school's ELA coach, and assisted with the hiring of 10 CMM teachers at K–8 grade levels.

As of the time of writing, four CMM teachers have received their doctorates, which represents an extension, or continuation, of their commitment to K–12 public education rather than a departure from it. Two of the CMM teachers are serving in significant leadership roles in education departments at two HBCUs. One is chair of early childhood education, and the other is leading the CMM program for the entire college. Another CMM doctoral graduate is an accomplished science educator and is serving as the lead faculty science coordinator in the Education Department at a large, predominately White institution. The fourth CMM teacher just completed his doctorate and expects to continue his service in preparing preservice teachers in college in a college of education. All four of these CMM teachers are extraordinary and continue to give back to the CMM program by involving themselves in program activities that support the development of undergraduates enrolled in the CMM program.

CMM Educational Impact

Since 2004, in its second decade, over 90% of the 221 fully certified graduates completing the CMM program have either remained as teachers in a public school classroom, serve as administrative leaders in schools, or work at the university level. To date, all CMM teachers have gone beyond fulfilling their commitment to service in a public school in exchange for the support they received from the program. Notably, 35 CMM teachers have achieved school-level teacher of the year distinctions, and 3 CMM teachers have received district teacher of the year distinctions. Dozens of CMM teachers have continued on their educational journey by earning a master's degree or adding to their certification endorsement. All eligible CMM graduates have fulfilled their obligation to give back by meeting or exceeding their service requirements in a public elementary or middle school.

Future research is needed to examine the educational impact of CMM teach-

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ers on student achievement. The CMM program, since its inception, was designed with a narrow albeit important focus in mind: to recruit, retain, develop, and place African American male teachers in public elementary school classrooms. The current program outcomes are limited to that objective, which it has met with remarkable success. The next level of scholarship must entail a more longitudinal study that analyzes the multidimensional ways in which CMM teachers have improved student success. Within that lens, it is necessary to apply new measures to assess the effectiveness of a CMM classroom teacher as well as understand how they influence the entire school culture.

The CMM program has been working diligently and successfully to address the state's social and educational shortcomings through a model teacher preparation leadership program that helps young African American men grow as individuals, prepare for teaching, and aspire to servant leadership, while developing the dispositions, self-efficacy, and confidence necessary to serve as positive role models and empowering mentors for the most vulnerable youth in our communities. As ambassadors of change, CMM teachers have a charge that is demanding, comprehensive, and even daunting. It not only requires that they mentor and teach this population but also demands that they create effective learning environments for all students—whether Black, Brown, or White—in an educational and societal system that very frequently discourages our hardest-to-reach students. South Carolina was the natural birthplace of the CMM program because it seeks to make change in a state with a growing teacher workforce shortage and rural districts characterized by poverty, high teacher turnover, high dropout rates, and an educational system that was founded in a context of segregation and discrimination. And though the educational context may appear insurmountable at times, the CMM program requires the MiSTER to answer the call and moral imperative by working to confront challenges in school systems.

Lessons Learned

The 18-year legacy of the CMM program's successful journey has been featured in several media outlets and received numerous awards (e.g., the C. Peter Magrath University Community Engagement Award, Exemplary Program Award, and Upstate Diversity Leadership Award). Recognized for its sustained success, the program annually receives requests to expand nationally into other states desiring to become CMM sites. The CMM program has formally established official sites on nine campuses in other states across the United States. Based on our development and growth over the years, there are a few key lessons we have learned from the success of the program:

- ◆ the importance of understanding the social, cultural, racial, and gender nuances involved in working with African American males within a southern context

- ◆ the necessity of seeing beyond standard, quantitative assessments related to evaluating potential in African American males
- ◆ the ways in which generational gaps often surface within the program delivery system when interacting with African American male participants
- ◆ the challenge to stay abreast of best practice approaches and strategies in assisting African American males with overcoming academic deficiencies
- ◆ the essential need to recognize both the personal and educational contexts of every African American male participant in the program and have an IEP
- ◆ that the real work is not for the faint of heart, and all those engaged in the process of developing African American males must believe in the strength of their convictions and face the fear, or face failure
- ◆ the need to recognize early that preparing and passing Praxis 1 core, or any of the mandated rites of passage, is not the biggest hurdle in working with African American males
- ◆ that the African American male educator is on the cutting edge of transformation in our country

In closing, the desire to grow our own African American male teachers is inherent in the fiber of the CMM program. The components, strategies, and experiences described in our CMM model, as a type of home-grown program, have led to its sustained success in recruiting, developing, and retaining African American men who have gone on to become effective teachers in public elementary and middle schools. We believe there is much to learn from our model for people interested in the development and advancement of Grow Your Own programs designed to prepare and retain future African American male teachers.

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