

# **Evaluation Report for Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB)**

**By the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning**

**September 2011**

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## Executive Summary

The Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) was founded by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe in 1990 to address the academic and social challenges of African American male college students. The organization was established in response to research on the dismal outcomes—and underrepresentation in higher education—of African American males across the country. SAAB assists men of color to excel academically, socially, culturally, professionally, and in the community through the formation of SAAB chapters on college campuses as well as middle and high schools. Over the 21 years since its founding, SAAB has grown to more than 200 chapters in 39 states, with a national office at the University of Toledo.

The number one goal in SAAB's most recent strategic plan was to set the standard for organizational impact. SAAB's leadership recognizes the need for data to both demonstrate organizational effectiveness and inform decision-making. To support the goal of becoming more data-driven, in 2008, with support from the Lumina Foundation for Education, SAAB hired the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning (OMG) to conduct an evaluation project focusing on the organization's college chapters. The project had two over-arching goals: to increase SAAB's capacity for evaluation, and, to provide preliminary evaluation findings concerning SAAB's effectiveness. This final report presents our methodology for both goals, as well as findings from the preliminary evaluation.

OMG's work with SAAB was designed around the following key evaluation questions:

- Who are SAAB members (i.e., what are their characteristics)?
- What activities are being offered by SAAB chapters to meet members' needs?
- Does participation in SAAB lead to changes in members' enrollment (i.e., persistence) in college, academic progress, aspirations, self-esteem, sense of attachment to college, ability to navigate institutional processes and systems, sense of social responsibility, and/or satisfaction with SAAB?

OMG developed two data collection systems to gather information from SAAB chapters. The first system, called the SAAB Data System (SDS), is a web-based data tracking system designed to collect information on members' academic progress, membership status in SAAB, and participation in SAAB activities. To complement the data tracking system and collect data from students themselves, an online survey was developed to measure changes in SAAB members' aspirations, feelings about college and themselves (e.g., their self-esteem and identity), and satisfaction with their SAAB experience.

These systems were piloted with a group of 18 SAAB chapters during the 2010-11 academic year. Pilot chapters were selected to represent a variety of institutional characteristics including the age of the SAAB chapter, 2-year and 4-year colleges, predominantly white institutions as well as historically black colleges and universities, and geographic location. The pilot chapters reported having a total of 457 SAAB members during Fall Semester 2010, and 450 members during Spring Semester 2011.

The data collected by these pilot chapters were the basis of the evaluation findings described in this report. The findings are organized to respond to the three key questions above.

### ***Who Are SAAB Members?***

Based on data from the Fall 2010 student survey, to which 242 SAAB members responded, most members are African American males approximately 21 years old, and have a 50/50 chance of being a first-generation college student. Two-thirds attend 4-year institutions, and no matter what type of institution they attend, most are enrolled on a full-time basis.

### ***What Activities Are Offered by SAAB Chapters?***

SAAB chapters organize and participate in a variety of activities throughout the school year. Based on an analysis of SDS data for 293 students in Fall 2010 and 232 students in Spring 2011, SAAB chapter meetings were the most common and most popular activity across chapters. These regular (i.e. weekly) meetings are considered by the national office to be a core element of the SAAB model. Aside from chapter meetings, there was considerable variation across chapters and across semesters in the types of activities offered. Examples of the activities offered by chapters include community service, academic support, and career development.

### ***What Changes Occurred between Fall 2010 and Spring 2011?***

SDS data concerning enrollment (n=84) and academics (n=54) show that SAAB members appear to be persisting and progressing well through college. In terms of academics, students fared slightly better during Fall 2010 than they did in Spring 2011, meaning that improvement was not evident over the 2010-11 academic year. In terms of self-esteem, attachment to college, aspirations, and other key constructs measured by the student survey, the analysis (n=27) found that most of these measures increased slightly between Fall 2010 and Spring 2011, suggesting that students' self-esteem, attachment, aspirations, etc., which were already quite high, improved over the course of the year.

There are several caveats to the results concerning changes between Fall and Spring. Due to data collection challenges, these analyses are based on very small groups of students. The small sample size means that one student doing (or feeling) remarkably well during one semester could have influenced the findings. Consequently, these results cannot be considered representative of the pilot chapters or SAAB chapters nationally; rather, they are most helpful when viewed as examples of the types of analyses that SAAB will be able to perform in the future, when data collection results are strengthened and chapters are more consistently collecting and inputting data into the new systems. In addition, all of the changes described in this section were small in scale, and it is unclear whether fluctuations from one semester to another signify permanent changes. SAAB should continue to collect and analyze these data until consistent patterns of improvement over longer periods of time can be established.

If, in the future, the patterns described in this report persist, they would suggest that SAAB's key benefits to students are: boosting their self-esteem and pride at being men of color in college, increasing their sense of attachment to college and abilities to navigate institutional systems and processes, and empowering them to establish the supports they need while they are students. It will be critical for SAAB to continue to analyze the academic progress of members until a clearer pattern of improvement, decline, or stability emerges. In the meantime, there may be opportunities for chapters, under the guidance of SAAB National, to bolster academic supports for students.

## 1. Introduction to SAAB

The Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) was founded by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe in 1990 to address the academic and social challenges of African American male college students. The organization was established in response to research on the dismal outcomes—and underrepresentation in higher education—of African American males across the country. SAAB’s goal is for men of color to take full advantage of their academic years and better understand and practice their responsibilities, rights, and privileges as citizens of this country.

SAAB assists men of color to excel academically, socially, culturally, professionally, and in the community through the formation of SAAB chapters on college campuses as well as middle and high schools. Aspects of the SAAB model include:

- Development of a 15-member student leadership steering committee at each chapter.
- Appointment of one or more SAAB advisors—usually faculty or staff members—per chapter.
- Membership dues paid to the national office.
- Ongoing chapter activities including weekly chapter meetings and other activities developed by chapter members and advisors, for example, academic support activities (e.g., tutoring), community service, and mentoring.
- Development of a Personal Development Plan (PDP) by each SAAB member. The PDP encourages members to articulate a roadmap for their career and/or continued education and to consider and plan for the supports they will need in order to be successful.

Over the 21 years since its founding, SAAB has grown to more than 200 chapters in 39 states with a national office at the University of Toledo. The national office, established in 2005, provides training and start-up assistance to new chapters, and supports active chapters with resources such as the SAAB website. The national office also organizes regional and national conferences that incorporate a message of empowerment and success to young men throughout the United States. SAAB’s national office is staffed by the founder-and-executive-director, a full-time office manager, a part-time technical support staff member who designed and maintains the website and also works on special projects, and office assistants (University of Toledo students). In addition, SAAB has approximately six associate consultants, or SAAB alumni who are continuing their involvement with the organization by assisting the national office in various capacities.

SAAB is a nonprofit organization supported mainly through grants and other private donations. Additional sources of support include corporate and individual giving, school and/or institutional dues, and consultation fees. SAAB’s Board of Directors is composed of SAAB alumni and operates as an advisory board.

In 2008, SAAB articulated a theory of change and desired outcomes for its work. Short-term desired outcomes include improvement in members’ educational aspirations, self-esteem and identity, sense of social responsibility, academic progress, sense of belonging to their school, and ability to navigate college processes and systems. In the longer term, SAAB hopes to increase members’ graduation rates and preparation for entry into the workforce, and to improve the climate on college campuses so that they are supportive of the success of students of color.

## 2. Project Overview and Methodology in Brief

The number one goal in SAAB's most recent strategic plan was to set the standard for organizational impact. SAAB's leadership recognizes the need for data to both demonstrate organizational effectiveness and inform decision-making. The organization is interested in using data to inform and improve chapter-level activities as well as national-level supports, and also plans to share results of data analyses with stakeholders, funders, universities, and other key partners.

To support the goal of becoming more data-driven, in 2008, with support from the Lumina Foundation for Education, SAAB hired the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning (OMG) to conduct a three-year evaluation project focusing on the organization's college chapters. The project had two overarching goals: to increase SAAB's capacity for evaluation, and to provide preliminary evaluation findings concerning SAAB's effectiveness.

### 2.1 Methodology

The project was conducted in two phases, each of which corresponded to one of the overarching goals noted above. A brief description of each phase is below. A fuller description of the project methodology is included in Appendix A.

#### ***Phase I: Building Capacity for Evaluation***

During the first phase of the project, OMG's activities were designed to document the program model and expected outcomes of SAAB; see how SAAB is implemented on different campuses; and determine the current and potential capacity of chapters to collect and utilize data. Early Phase I activities included:

- Case studies of three SAAB chapters (attached as Appendix B)
- Development of a program-wide theory of change (attached as Appendix C)
- Online survey of chapter advisors

Based on the information gathered through these early Phase I activities, OMG recommended—and SAAB approved—the development of two data collection systems to gather information from chapters for evaluation purposes. The first system, called the SAAB Data System (SDS), is a web-based data tracking system designed to collect information from SAAB advisors on: members' academic progress, membership status in SAAB, and participation in SAAB activities. To complement the data tracking system and collect data from students themselves, an online survey was developed to measure changes in SAAB members' aspirations, feelings about college and themselves (e.g., their self-esteem and identity), and satisfaction with their SAAB experience.

#### ***Phase II: Providing Initial Evaluation Findings***

Following the development of the data systems, a one-year pilot of the new tools was conducted. The pilot was designed as a way to both test the new data systems and collect initial data to form the basis of an evaluation report.

A group of 18 chapters was identified by SAAB National to collect data using the systems throughout the 2010-11 academic year. Chapters were selected to represent a variety of

institutional characteristics (see Table 1) including the age of the SAAB chapter, 2-year and 4-year colleges, predominantly white institutions as well as historically black colleges or universities, and geographic location. In addition, SAAB felt that it would be important to include eight new chapters affiliated with the University System of Georgia's African American Male Initiative.

OMG provided webcast training to the advisors of these 18 pilot chapters concerning how to use the new data systems. Following training, advisors were asked to collect and input data to SDS for Fall Semester 2010 and Spring Semester 2011. Specifically, they were asked to input four types of data:

1. *Student data* – student contact information and demographics;
2. *Academic data* – information on credits earned, GPA, etc.;
3. *Membership data* – information on whether the student was an active, inactive, or prospective SAAB member, whether the student was employed, etc.; and
4. *Activity data* – the types of activities organized by the SAAB chapter during the semester, and which SAAB members attended.

Advisors were also asked to administer the online student survey to SAAB members in their chapter using a standardized schedule. Members were to take surveys immediately upon joining SAAB, and every April and October thereafter.

**Table 1: Characteristics of SAAB Chapters Participating in the Pilot**

Characteristic	SAAB Pilot Sample
2-year institutions:	7 (39%)
4-year institutions:	11 (61%)
Age of SAAB chapter:	1 – 15 years (most were 1 – 6)
Predominantly white institutions:	15 (83%)
Historically black college/university:	3 (17%)
Region of the U.S.	
Midwest:	4 (22%)
Northeast:	2 (11%)
Southeast:	8 (44%)
Southwest:	4 (22%)

### Chapters' Response to Data Collection

#### **SAAB advisors were asked to enter data to the SAAB Data System for Fall and Spring Semesters.**

- *Fall Semester results*
  - 13 of the 18 pilot chapters entered basic Student data (contact information and demographics) for a total 306 students, or 66% of those from the pilot chapters.
  - Five chapters entered a full set of Fall Semester data including Academic, Membership, and Activity data, which are the data needed to conduct analyses of student progression through school. These five chapters entered data for a total of 80 students, or 17% of those from pilot chapters.
- *Spring Semester results*
  - 15 of the 18 pilot chapters entered basic Student data for a total 395 students, or 88% of those from the pilot chapters.
  - Four chapters entered a full set of Spring Semester data including Academic, Membership, and Activity data. These four chapters entered data for a total of 55 students, or 12% of those from pilot chapters.

#### **Advisors were also asked to administer the online survey to SAAB members in their chapter, both immediately upon joining SAAB and every April and October thereafter.**

- *Between September and December 2010, the survey was completed by 242 SAAB members, or 53% of SAAB members from the pilot chapters. All 18 pilot chapters had at least one student who took the survey.*
- *Between January and June 2011, the survey was completed by 137 members, or 30% of all members from the pilot chapters. These respondents were from 14 of the 18 pilot chapters.*

## 2.2 Key Evaluation Questions and Data Sources

OMG's analysis of the SAAB data collected during the 2010-11 academic year was designed to answer the following evaluation questions:

- Who are SAAB members (i.e., what are their characteristics)?
- What activities are being offered by SAAB chapters to meet members' needs?
- Does participation in SAAB lead to changes in members' enrollment (i.e., persistence), academic progress, aspirations, self-esteem, sense of attachment to college, ability to navigate institutional processes and systems, sense of social responsibility, and satisfaction with SAAB?

The first question, *who are SAAB members*, was addressed by analyzing data from the Fall 2010 administration of the student survey (n=242, or 53% of SAAB members in the pilot chapters). These data were selected because more students completed the survey during Fall 2010 than in Spring 2011 (242 versus 137), thus the results provide a better representation of the pilot chapters. Results from the two survey administrations were compared to ensure consistency among member characteristics, and both administrations yielded similar findings.

The second question, *what activities are being offered by SAAB chapters*, was answered through an analysis of SDS Activity data. This analysis included data entered for 293 students in Fall 2010 (or 64% of the pilot chapter members), and 232 students for Spring 2011 (or 52% of the pilot chapter members).

The third question, *does participation in SAAB lead to change*, was examined using data from both SDS and the student survey. The analysis of change (i.e., longitudinal analysis) required having SDS data on the same group of students for *both* Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 Semesters, and also required that students take surveys both semesters. In particular:

- Changes in enrollment and academics were analyzed using data from SDS. Based on the data entered into SDS during 2010-11, Academic data for 54 students (or 12% of pilot chapter members) was used in the analysis, as well as Membership data for 84 students (or 19% of pilot chapter members). These were the students for whom Academic and/or Membership data were entered for *both* Fall and Spring Semesters.
- Changes in aspirations, self-esteem, attachment to college, ability to navigate institutional processes and systems, sense of social responsibility, and satisfaction with SAAB were analyzed using student survey data. Longitudinal survey analysis was based on 27 students (or 6% of pilot chapter members) who took the survey during both the Fall and Spring Semesters. As a group, these students were slightly different than the overall group of survey respondents. They were more likely to attend 4-year institutions (81%, versus 68% of all Fall 2010 survey respondents) and to live off-campus with non-family members (48%, versus 18% of all Fall survey respondents). They were *less* likely to be in their first year of college (18%, versus 32% of all Fall respondents) and more likely to be in their second year.

Overall, the number of students for whom data could be analyzed longitudinally was low in comparison to the total number of members in the pilot chapters. The analysis of enrollment and academics was based on approximately 12% - 19% of students in the pilot chapters, and survey analysis was based on approximately 6% of students in the pilot chapters. Due to these limited



numbers, the results of longitudinal analyses herein should not be considered representative of either the pilot chapters or of SAAB members nationally. Rather, the results are most helpful when viewed as examples of the types of analyses that SAAB will be able to perform in the future, when data collection results are strengthened and chapters are more consistently collecting and inputting data into the new systems.

## 3. Findings

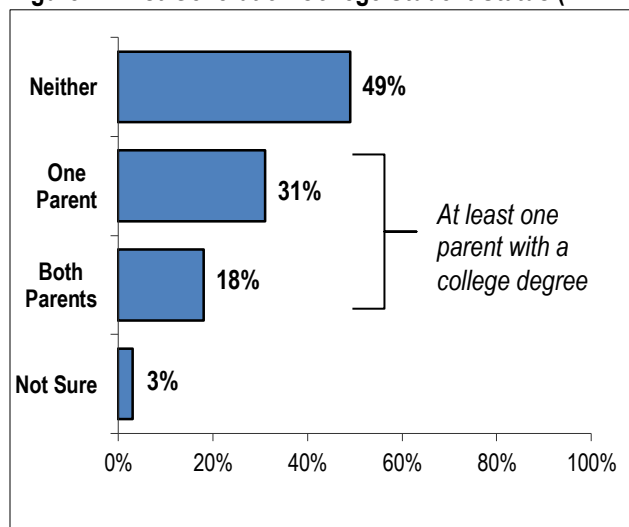
### 3.1 Who Are SAAB Members?

*Based on data from the Fall 2010 student survey, to which 242 SAAB members (or 53% of members from the pilot chapters) responded, most members are African American males approximately 21 years old, and have a 50/50 chance of being a first-generation college student. Two-thirds attend 4-year institutions, and no matter what type of institution they attend, most are enrolled on a full-time basis.*

#### Demographics

SAAB members who participated in the Fall survey were predominantly African American (92%). Six percent self-identified as Latino/Hispanic, followed by a handful of Asian/Pacific Islanders (1%), and Caucasian or “other” students (less than 1% each). On average, SAAB members were 21 years old. Most (96%) had never been married, and most (92%) had no children. Only 3% of students reported being international students on their campuses (an additional 2% were not sure of their international status).

Figure 1: First-Generation College Student Status (n=242)



\*Total percentages exceed 100% due to rounding.

Members were evenly split in terms of their status as a first-generation college student, defined as having a parent with a college degree. As shown in Figure 1, 49% were first-generation students, not having a parent or guardian with a college degree. The same percentage, 49%, had at least one parent/guardian with a degree.

#### Length of Time in SAAB

Most students who completed the survey were new to SAAB. Almost half (47%) reported that the current academic period was their first with SAAB, and another 38% were in either their second or third academic period with their chapter (18% and 20%, respectively).

#### Enrollment and Progression through College

The majority (68%) of SAAB members who completed the online survey attended 4-year institutions, with the other 32% attending 2-year institutions. Almost all students (93%) were enrolled on a full-time basis. Students reported doing well academically—about half (53%) said that their grades have been mostly A’s, B’s, or a combination of A’s and B’s; another one-third (32%) said they have received mostly B’s and C’s.

In terms of their progression through school, Figure 2 shows that the majority of students were in their first or second year at their institution, with approximately one-third of members (32%) in their first year, and another one-third (31%) in their second year. Students in their third year

accounted for a slightly smaller percentage of the whole (23%), and fourth- and fifth-year students comprised the remaining 14% of members. However, the high percentage of first- and second-year students is reflective of the fact that one-third of students who completed the survey attended 2-year institutions, as mentioned above. When looking *only* at students who attended 4-year institutions, SAAB members were more evenly distributed across first-year students (27%), second-year students (27%), and third-year students (26%), with the remaining 20% in their fourth or fifth years.

The majority of SAAB members (73%) took a traditional path to college, reporting that they went directly from high school to college without taking any time off since first enrolling. Some students (15%) did, however, take some time off between high school and college. An additional 5% took time off after enrolling in college, and another 7% reported taking time off *both* between high school and college *and* after enrolling in college.

Members' paths to/through college varied in terms of the type of institution they attended. Almost one-half (45%) of students attending 2-year institutions took time off (either between high school and college or since enrolling), while only 18% of students at 4-year institutions took time off. In addition, first-generation college students were slightly more likely to have taken time off, particularly between high school and college (22% of first-generation students compared to 9% among students who have a parent/guardian with a college degree).

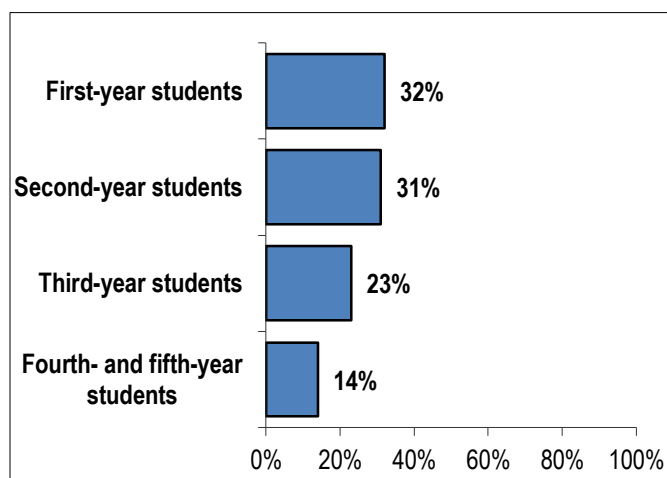
In order to gauge the degree to which finances may challenge their progression through college, SAAB members were asked whether they had any concern about their ability to pay for their college education. Most students (69%) had at least some concern about their ability to pay for college. Specifically, 55% indicated “*some*” concern, and 15% reported “*A lot, I am not sure I have enough funds to complete college.*”

### **Employment and Living Situation**

The majority (62%) of SAAB members reported having some type of employment, in the form of a part-time job (33%), work study or internship (30%), or full-time employment (4%).<sup>1</sup>

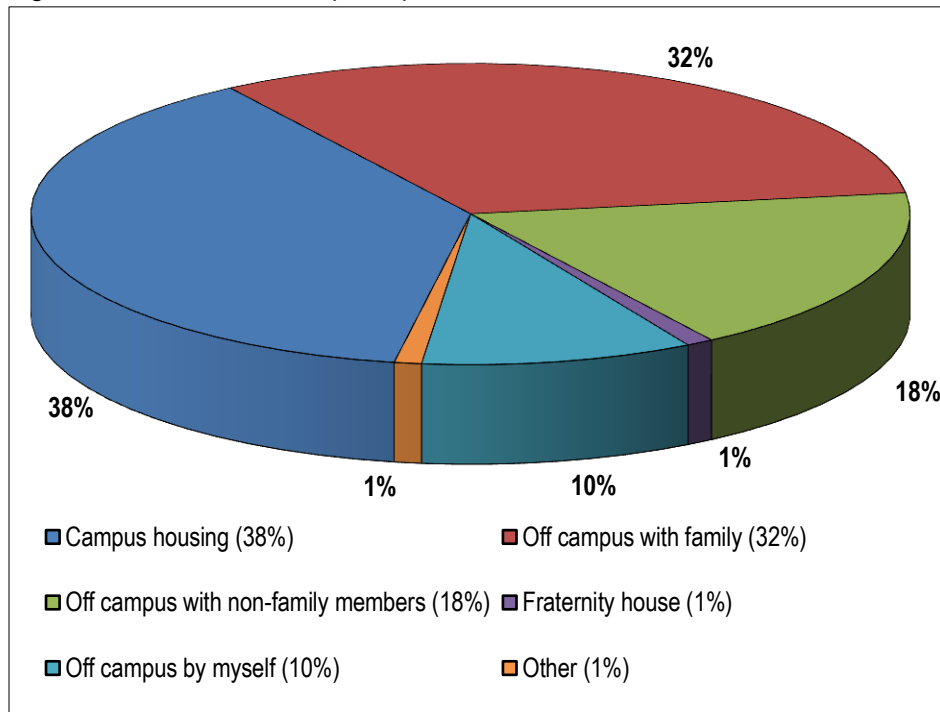
As shown in Figure 3, the most commonly reported living situation was for members to be living on campus (38%), followed closely by living off campus with family members (32%). However, this result varied by institution type. Among students at 2-year institutions, the majority (61%) reported living off campus with family members. Among students at 4-year institutions, living situations varied: almost one-half (47%) lived on campus, 23% lived off campus with non-family members, and 18% lived off campus with family.

**Figure 2: Length of Time Attending Institution (n=242)**



<sup>1</sup> Students could select more than one employment option, so the total percentage is greater than 62%.

Figure 3: Place of Residence (n=242)



### **Support for College Completion**

Family and friends can play a critical role in college students' persistence, particularly when times become challenging. SAAB members overwhelmingly reported that their parents and friends are supportive of their college attendance. Specifically:

- 92% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their family is supportive of them attending college.
- 85% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their close friends encourage them to continue attending college.

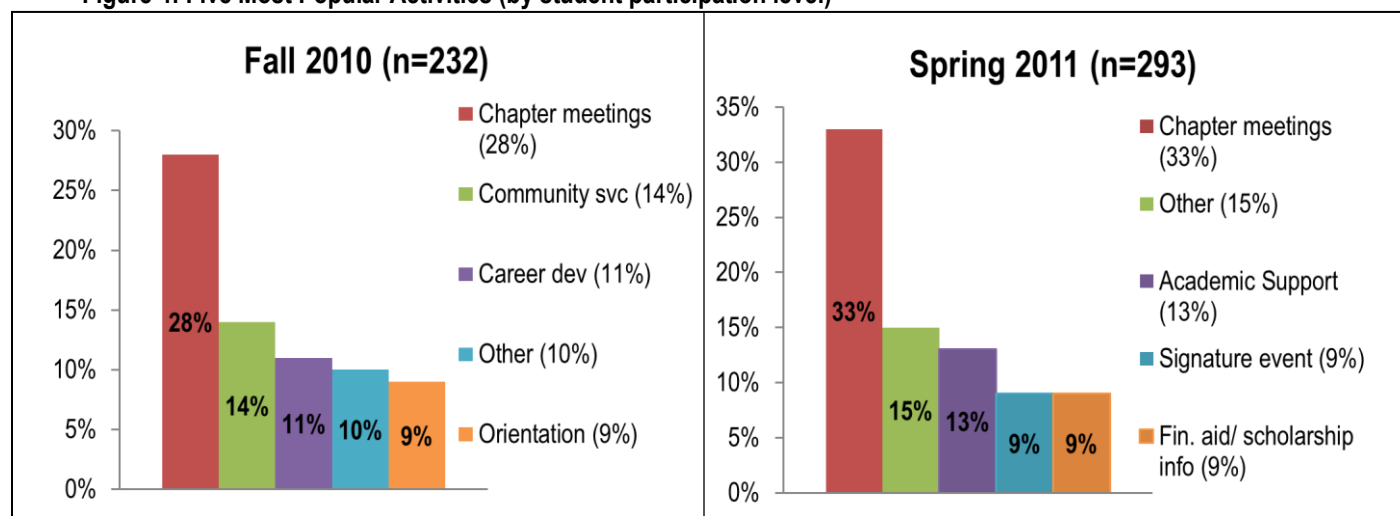
### 3.2 What Activities Are Offered by SAAB Chapters?

*Based on an analysis of SDS data for 293 students in Fall 2010 (64% of pilot chapter members) and 232 students in Spring 2011 (52%), SAAB chapter meetings were the most common and most popular activity across chapters. Aside from chapter meetings, there was considerable variation across chapters and across semesters in the types of activities offered. Examples of the activities offered by chapters include community service, academic support, and career development.*

SAAB chapters organize and participate in a variety of activities throughout the school year. SDS tracks the types of activities offered and the number of *unique* SAAB members who participate in each.<sup>2</sup> As shown in Figure 4 below, the most popular activity across chapters during the 2010-11 school year was SAAB chapter meetings. These regular (i.e. weekly) meetings are considered by the national office to be a core element of the SAAB model, and participation in 50% of chapter meetings per semester is required in order for a student to be considered “active” in his membership.

Aside from chapter meetings, the most popular activities varied considerably from semester to semester. For example, during Fall 2010, Community Service and Career Development activities were the second and third most popular activities. During Spring 2011, Other activities (those that didn’t meet any of the standard activity types) and Academic Support were the most popular. There appear to be seasonal patterns in the types of activities offered by chapters. Orientation activities (to orient new students to campus life) tended to be offered in the Fall, while Academic Support (including tutoring, study sessions, etc.) and the provision of Financial Aid and Scholarship Information were more prevalent in the Spring. In addition to varying by semester, activity offerings varied widely across chapters. Activities offered by some chapters (that are not represented in Figure 4 because they were not one of the five most popular) included: attendance at conferences, religious or spiritual activities/events, and social events.

**Figure 4: Five Most Popular Activities (by student participation level)**



\*Percentages do not add up to 100 because figure shows the five most popular activities only.

<sup>2</sup> For example, if a student participated in academic enrichment activities *twice* during a semester, they would be counted as *one* unique student.

### 3.3 Changes from Fall 2010 to Spring 2011

*SDS data concerning enrollment (n=84, or 19% of members from the pilot chapters) and academics (n=54, or 12%) show that SAAB members appear to be persisting and progressing well through college. In terms of academics, students fared slightly better during Fall 2010 than they did in Spring 2011, meaning that improvement was not evident over the 2010-11 academic year. In terms of self-esteem, attachment to college, aspirations, and other key constructs measured by the student survey, our analysis (n=27, or 6%) found that most of these measures increased slightly between Fall 2010 and Spring 2011, suggesting that students' self-esteem, attachment, aspirations, etc., which were already quite high, improved over this time period.*

There are several caveats to the results presented in this section. As noted in Section 2.2 (Key Evaluation Questions and Data Sources), these analyses are based on a small group of students. The small sample size means that one student doing (or feeling) remarkably well during one semester could have influenced the findings. As a result, these results cannot be considered representative of the pilot chapters or of SAAB chapters nationally, and are most helpful when viewed as examples of the types of analyses that SAAB will be able to perform in the future, when data collection results are strengthened and chapters are more consistently collecting and inputting data into the new systems. In addition, all of the changes described in this section were small in scale, and it is unclear whether fluctuations from one semester to another signify permanent changes. SAAB should continue to collect and analyze these data until consistent patterns of improvement over longer periods of time can be established.

If, in the future, the patterns described in this report persist, they would suggest that SAAB's key benefits to students are: boosting their self-esteem and pride at being men of color in college, increasing their sense of attachment to college and abilities to navigate institutional systems and processes, and empowering them to establish the supports they need while they are students. It will be critical for SAAB to continue to analyze the academic progress of members until a clearer pattern of improvement, decline, or stability emerges. In the meantime, there may be opportunities for chapters, under the guidance of SAAB National, to bolster academic supports for students.

#### **Enrollment Status<sup>3</sup>**

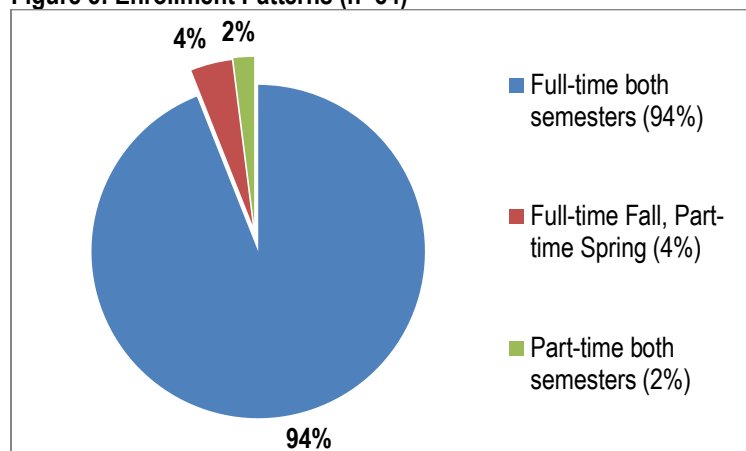
Research has found that students who are continuously enrolled on a full-time basis are more likely to maintain satisfactory academic achievement than those enrolled on a part-time or intermittent basis (Stoutland and Coles 2009). Figure 5 shows that the vast majority (94%) of SAAB students for whom data were available were enrolled as full-time students continuously

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<sup>3</sup> Much of the research that has been conducted on college success focuses on degree attainment as the main goal and desired outcome. The timeframe of this research—one academic year—necessitated that we look at students' enrollment and academic progression as indicators of success for the 2010-11 year. Guided by literature on persistence during the early years of college, we analyzed students' enrollment status—whether they remained enrolled throughout each semester *and* whether enrollment was full-time or part-time—as well as academic data including their grade point average (GPA), credit accumulation, on-track to graduate status, and the number of credits that students attempted but did not earn. In the future, once SAAB has collected several years' worth of data, the organization will be better prepared to report on graduation and degree attainment.

throughout the 2010-11 school year. Only a few students went from full-time to part-time enrollment, and even fewer were consistently enrolled on a part-time basis.

**Figure 5: Enrollment Patterns (n=84)**



In addition, although it is not a longitudinal analysis of the *same* students at both points in time, Table 2 is useful in showing students' enrollment status at the end of each semester during 2010-11. Almost all students (94% in Fall, and 95% in Spring) who enrolled at the beginning of each academic period remained enrolled through the end. This is important because remaining enrolled means that students have the opportunity to accumulate credits for the semester.

**Table 2: End-of-Semester Enrollment Status**

Status	Fall 2010 (n=165)	Spring 2011 (n=72)
Enrolled	94%	95%
Suspended	3%	3%
Dropped out	2%	0%
Transferred	1%	1%
On leave	1%	0%

### Academics

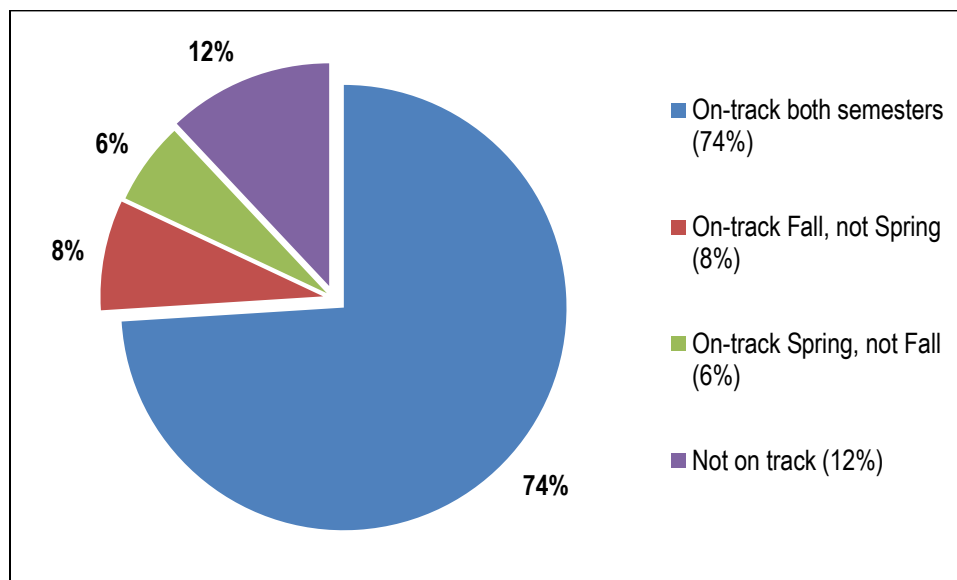
SAAB members performed *slightly* better during Fall Semester 2010 than they did in Spring 2011 (Table 3). They accumulated more credits during the Fall (11.47, compared to 11.12 during Spring), and also earned a higher *semester* GPA (2.42, compared to 2.30 during the Spring). Their *cumulative* GPA was also higher during the Fall, by .04 points.

**Table 3: Credit Accumulation and GPA**

Academic Outcomes	Fall '10	Spring '11	Change (+ or -)
Mean semester credits earned (n=50)	11.47	11.12	-0.35
Mean semester GPA (n=48)	2.42	2.30	-0.12
Mean cumulative GPA (n=53)	2.66	2.62	-0.04

As shown in Figure 6, approximately three-quarters of SAAB students (74%) made sufficient academic progress during both semesters of 2010-11 to be considered on-track to graduate,<sup>4</sup> meaning that a full-time student at a 4-year institution would graduate in four years, and a full-time student at a 2-year institution would graduate in two years. However, there were some students (slightly less than one-tenth) who went from being on-track in the Fall to off-track in the Spring, and some (slightly more than one-tenth) who were not on-track either semester.

**Figure 6: On-Track to Graduate Status (n=51)**



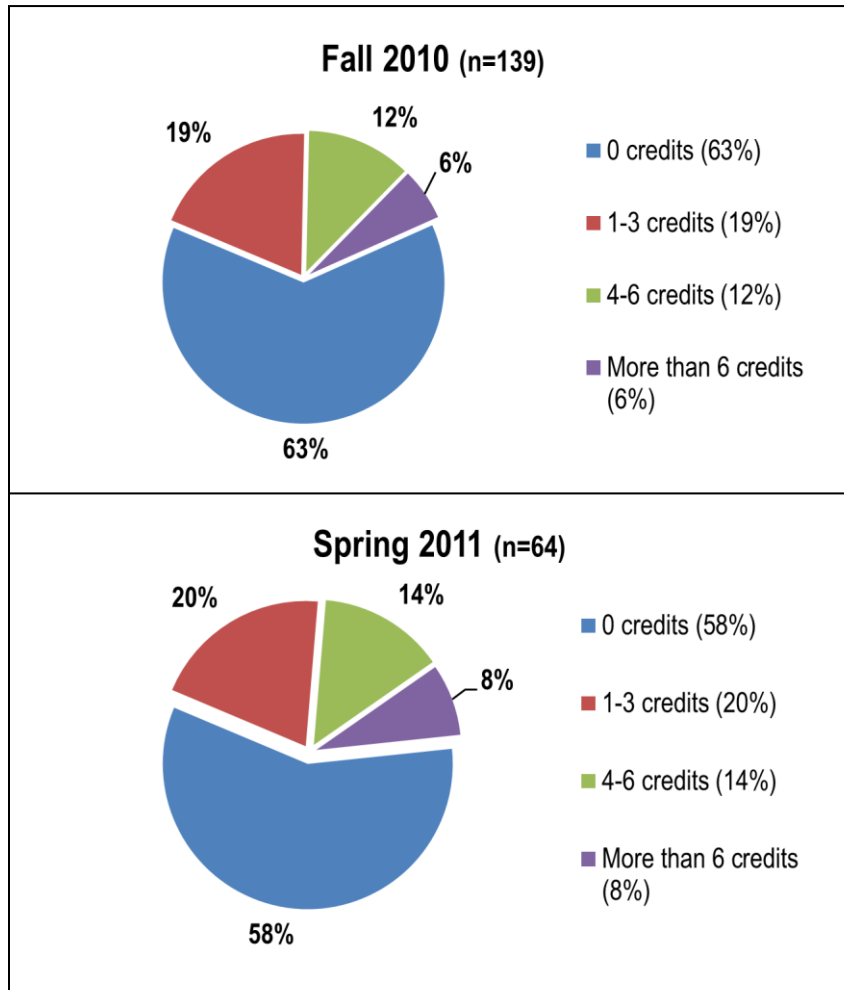
Although not a longitudinal analysis, Figure 7 shows that more than half of SAAB students accumulated all of the credits that they attempted during both semesters of 2010-11.<sup>5</sup> Those who failed to earn credits generally lost 1 to 6 credits; however, a small proportion (6% in Fall, 8% in Spring) lost more than 6 credits. Students may have lost credits due to having dropped a course after the add/drop period had passed, or due to having failed courses. Overall, the average number of credits attempted but not earned was 1.69 in Fall 2010, and 2.50 in Spring 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Advisors reported using different methods to determine whether students were on-track. Many based these data on students' academic records provided by the institution; however, a few relied on students' reports, or their own understanding of student progress.

<sup>5</sup> Credits attempted was defined as the number of credits the student was registered for *after* the official period for adding or dropping courses had passed.



Figure 7: Credits Attempted Not Earned



**Self-Esteem/Pride**

The student survey includes questions about students’ self-esteem, as well as the extent to which they feel proud of being a man of color in college. Using a 5-point scale ranging from *strong disagreement* [1] to *strong agreement* [5], members were asked how they felt about the statements listed in Table 4. As is evident in the table, members reported high levels of self-esteem and pride at both survey administrations. In addition, the mean rating increased slightly between Fall and Spring, suggesting that students’ self-esteem and pride grew stronger.

Table 4: Self-Esteem and Pride

Survey Statements	Mean Rating Fall '10	Mean Rating Spring '11	Change (+ or -)
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on the same level with others (n=24)	4.5	4.8	+3
On the whole I am satisfied with myself (n=26)	4.2	4.4	+2
I am proud to be a man of color in college (n=25)	4.5	4.9	+4

### **Educational Aspirations**

SAAB members that participated in the student survey had high educational aspirations. During Fall 2010, when asked about the highest degree they hoped to obtain, 98% of all respondents had their sights set on a bachelor's degree or higher. Forty percent (40%) aspired to a master's degree and 41% aspired to a doctorate-level degree (MD, PhD, JD, etc.).

Among students who completed surveys in both the Fall and Spring, degree aspirations were generally consistent over time. The majority (72%) of students' aspirations for degree attainment stayed the same over the course of the two survey administrations (n=25). The aspirations of 20% declined. Some, who had originally reported desiring a doctorate degree, reported intending to complete a master's or bachelor's degree by Spring 2011. Others, who had initially reported wanting a master's degree, reported wanting a bachelor's degree by Spring 2011. Among the final 8% of members, aspirations increased.

While aspirations about the *type* of degree that students intended to receive remained fairly consistent, their feelings about the importance of completing a degree *at their current institution* increased slightly between Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 (see Table 5). When rating the importance of completing a college degree at their current school, students' average rating (on a scale from *strong disagreement* [1] to *strong agreement* [5]) increased from 4.2 to 4.6.

**Table 5: Aspirations for Degree Completion at Current Institution**

Survey Statements	Mean Rating Fall '10	Mean Rating Spring '11	Change (+ or -)
It is important to me to complete a college degree at this school (n=24)	4.2	4.6	+4

### **Feelings of Belonging and Ability to Navigate College**

Two key goals of SAAB are to increase students' sense of belonging to the schools they attend, and to provide members with resources and supports to help them navigate institutional processes and systems. Helping students navigate their schools and connecting them to others on campus (e.g., peers, faculty, and staff) increases the likelihood that students will persist in and complete college.

On both survey administrations, SAAB members reported feeling a strong sense of belonging to their institutions, and a high level of support from others on campus. In addition, the data indicate a slight increase in students' sense of belonging and connectedness to their school communities between Fall 2010 and Spring 2011. Key survey results, illustrated in Table 6, demonstrate an increase in attachment and familiarity with on-campus resources over time.

**Table 6: Attachment and Campus Support**

Survey Statements	Mean Rating Fall '10	Mean Rating Spring '11	Change (+ or -)
I feel a sense of belonging to this school (n=26)	4.0	4.3	+.3
I see myself as part of the school community (n=25)	4.1	4.4	+.3
I am able to find the resources and information that I need in order to succeed here (n=26)	4.2	4.4	+.2
There are faculty or here who care about me (n=25)	4.1	4.5	+.4

**Social Responsibility**

Promoting social responsibility and instilling a sense of commitment toward the larger community is a key goal of SAAB. SAAB students demonstrated a strong sense of social responsibility during the first survey administration in 2010, and longitudinal data show an increase among the 26 students who completed the survey again in Spring 2011. In Fall 2010, 96% of students agreed on the importance of helping others outside the school community; this number increased to 100% among the same students by Spring 2011. Mean scores from these two surveys, as well as the increase, can be seen in Table 7.

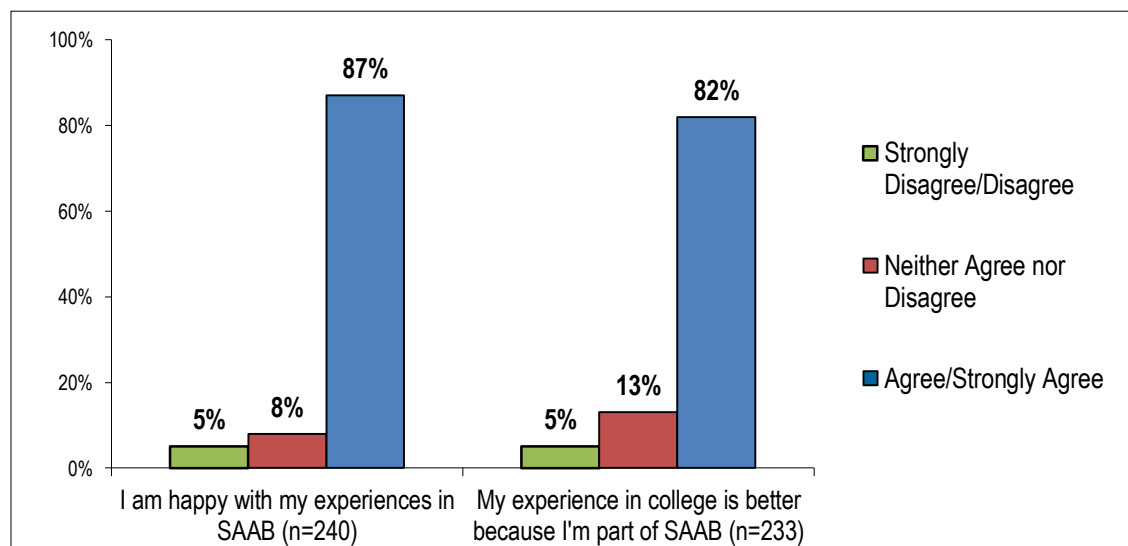
**Table 7: Social Responsibility**

Survey Statements	Mean Rating Fall '10	Mean Rating Spring '11	Change (+ or -)
It's important to help others outside of the school community (n=26)	4.6	4.8	+.2

**Satisfaction with SAAB**

The vast majority of SAAB members reported high satisfaction with SAAB on both survey administrations. Figure 8, from the Fall 2010 survey administration, shows that most respondents (87%) reported being happy with their experiences with their chapter. A high percentage (82%) also credited SAAB with making college a better experience.

**Figure 8: Satisfaction with SAAB (Fall 2010)**



When looking only at the students who completed surveys both in Fall 2010 and Spring 2011, the data show that members' satisfaction with SAAB, which was already very high, increased slightly. This can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8: Satisfaction with SAAB**

Survey Statements	Mean Rating Fall '10	Mean Rating Spring '11	Change (+ or -)
I am happy with my experiences in SAAB (n=26)	4.3	4.4	+1
My experience in college is better because I'm part of SAAB (n=23)	4.2	4.4	+2

Members' comments to open-ended survey questions also indicated satisfaction with SAAB. Their responses to questions about what they like most about the organization, as well as what they would change, provided more detail about why they feel satisfied.

***What members like most about SAAB.*** Members overwhelmingly reported feeling a close bond or sense of community with other SAAB members, and also mentioned the amount of support that others in SAAB offer them. Words like “brotherhood,” “connection,” and “community” were often used to describe students' experiences. One student summarized this sentiment well, stating, “I enjoy the sense of a brotherhood. It is important as a minority to have a group of like-minded students as a support group. They can aid, push, and help you reach your goals on and off campus.” In addition to the strong bond SAAB has created for many students, additional themes about what students like most about SAAB included:

- The professional nature of the organization and focus on developing professionals
- Opportunities to develop and exercise leadership skills
- Networking opportunities
- The organization's focus on academic success

***What members would change about SAAB.*** Many students reported that they would not change anything about SAAB. Among those who did report a change they would like to see, several stated a desire to see their chapter connect with others outside of the chapter—for example, the broader campus community or other chapters. One student would like to see SAAB make a “stronger impact on the student body,” while another student expressed a desire to “communicate with other SAAB members nationally and internationally.” Additional feedback for changing SAAB varied greatly depending on the chapter, and included creating more structure, increasing membership, and offering financial support or scholarships to members.

## References

Stoutland, Sara E., and Coles, Ann S. (April 2009). *Who's Making It: The Academic Achievement of Recent Boston Public School Graduates in the Early College Years*. Prepared for The Boston Foundation and TERI.

## Appendix A: Project Methodology

In 2008, with support from the Lumina Foundation for Education, SAAB hired the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning (OMG) to conduct a three-year evaluation project focusing on the organization's college chapters. The project had two overarching goals: 1) to increase SAAB's capacity for evaluation, and 2) to provide preliminary evaluation findings concerning SAAB's effectiveness. The project was conducted in two phases, each of which corresponded to one of the overarching goals. A description of each phase, and the methodologies utilized, is below.

### 2.1 Phase I: Building Capacity for Evaluation

During the first phase of the project, OMG conducted activities designed to document the program model and expected outcomes of SAAB; see how SAAB is implemented on different campuses; and determine the current and potential capacity of chapters to collect and utilize data. Phase I also included the development of a system and tools to collect data from chapters for the purposes of evaluation. Phase I activities included:

#### ***Case studies of three SAAB chapters***

In early 2009, teams from OMG visited three SAAB chapters—University of Louisville, Stony Brook University, and University of Texas at Austin. Visits consisted of observations of SAAB meetings, as well as interviews with SAAB advisors and students, staff, administrators, and other stakeholders at each campus. Case studies, included as Appendix B, were written for the three chapters; each highlights unique and cross-cutting elements of the chapter's work.

#### ***Development of a program-wide theory of change***

In order to develop the SAAB theory of change, OMG reviewed existing documents (e.g., governing documents, chapter structures, and sample by-laws); interviewed seven stakeholders including SAAB board members, chapter advisors, and other higher-education officials engaged with the organization; and attended the 2008 West Regional SAAB Conference in San Diego. Based on the information gathered, OMG drafted and worked with SAAB leadership to finalize the theory of change, which is attached as Appendix C. The document defines the strategic focus of the organization, the context for its creation, assumptions underlying the program model, key SAAB activities, and short- and long-term desired outcomes.

#### ***Online survey of chapter advisors***

In order to gain a better understanding of SAAB chapters and their capacity to collect and use data, OMG designed, piloted, and administered an online survey of chapter advisors to 44 collegiate chapters in May 2009. The content of the survey focused on chapter activities and current data collection and analysis efforts. Advisors from 32 chapters responded to the survey, for a chapter response rate of 73%.

#### ***Development of SAAB data systems***

Based on the information gathered through the activities described above, OMG recommended—and SAAB approved—the development of two data collection systems to gather information from chapters for evaluation purposes. The systems collect different types of data, and both were

necessary to provide sufficient information about SAAB's desired outcomes. These systems were: 1) a web-based data tracking system, and 2) an online student survey.

The web-based data tracking system, called the SAAB Data System (SDS), was designed to collect information from SAAB advisors on members' academic progress, membership status in SAAB, and participation in SAAB activities. Specifically, SDS records data including: members' contact information, background and demographic characteristics, SAAB membership status, academic progress (GPA, credits earned, etc.), and participation in SAAB activities. The system also allows users to generate summary reports about SAAB. Advisors are responsible for inputting data for their members every academic period and must collect data from students as well as administrative offices at their institutions. Each chapter can view and access their own student-level data; however, no chapter can see another chapter's confidential data. In addition, all content in the system is password protected.

To support use of SDS, OMG developed a User Manual explaining how to use the system, and a Technical Manual documenting how the system was developed. During the planning and development of SDS, an advisory group of four chapters provided feedback to OMG and beta tested the system.

To complement the data tracking system and collect data from students themselves, an online survey was developed to measure changes in SAAB members' aspirations, feelings about college and themselves (e.g., their self-esteem and identity), and satisfaction with their SAAB experience. The survey is designed to be administered to members immediately upon joining SAAB and subsequently twice a year (every Fall and Spring). Analysis of the survey data examines changes in members' feelings over the course of SAAB involvement. Responses from multiple administrations are linked by asking students to enter the digits from the month and day of their birthdays, and their initials. To further ensure confidentiality, chapter advisors do not have access to the raw survey data; rather, they receive summary reports of survey findings from SAAB's national office.

In addition to providing SAAB advisors a hardcopy version of the survey, OMG developed Survey Administration Guidelines for the advisors. The guidelines explain when students should be informed to take surveys and what the role of the advisor is in the survey process. During development of the survey, a group of advisors provided input on the survey content. Additionally, the instrument was pilot tested by five SAAB members.

## **2.2 Phase II: Providing Initial Evaluation Findings**

Following the development of the data systems, a one-year pilot of the new tools was conducted. A group of 18 chapters was identified to collect data using the systems throughout the 2010-11 academic year. The pilot was designed as a way to both test the new data systems and collect initial data to form the basis of an evaluation report. Phase II activities included:

### ***Sample selection and outreach***

Early in 2010, SAAB identified 20 chapters for possible inclusion in the data system pilot. Candidate chapters were selected to represent a variety of institutional characteristics including

the age of the SAAB chapter, whether the institution was a 2-year versus 4-year college, whether the institution was a predominantly white institution or a historically black college or university, and geographic location. In addition, SAAB felt that it would be important to include eight new chapters affiliated with the University System of Georgia's African American Male Initiative. Due to the fact that these chapters are all in Georgia, the level of variation that could be achieved with respect to geography was limited.

OMG conducted outreach to the candidate chapters and informed them about the purpose and responsibilities involved in piloting the data systems during 2010-11. Interested chapters were asked to sign and return a written statement of interest, and to obtain institutional approval for participation in the pilot. For many chapters, securing this approval required obtaining clearance from an Institutional Review Board.

Out of 20 candidate chapters, 18 were both interested and able to participate in the pilot. The characteristics of the pilot chapters as a group are presented in Appendix Table 1.

**Appendix Table 1: Characteristics of SAAB Chapters Participating in the Pilot**

Characteristic	SAAB Pilot Sample
2-year institutions:	7 (39%)
4-year institutions:	11 (61%)
Age of SAAB chapter:	1 – 15 years (most were 1 – 6)
Predominantly white institutions:	15 (83%)
Historically black college/university:	3 (17%)
Region of the U.S.	
Midwest:	4 (22%)
Northeast:	2 (11%)
Southeast:	8 (44%)
Southwest:	4 (22%)

### **Training**

OMG provided data system training to advisors from the 18 pilot chapters. Training was delivered via webcast and covered the purpose of each system; how to collect, input, and view data in SDS; how to administer the survey to SAAB members; and the timeline for all data collection activities. Two training sessions were offered to accommodate the varying schedules of the SAAB advisors. In addition, OMG created a series of webcast videos describing the steps of inputting data to SDS. The webcasts are available on the SDS website and can be accessed by advisors who have questions about data entry or need a refresher on system usage.

### **Data Collection**

Advisors of the pilot chapters were asked to collect and input data to SDS for Fall Semester 2010 and Spring Semester 2011. In particular, they were asked to input four types of data:



1. *Student data* – student contact information and demographics (entered into the system once, and edited as needed);
2. *Academic data* – information on credits earned, GPA, etc. (entered into the system every semester);
3. *Membership data* – information on whether the student was an active, inactive, or prospective SAAB member, whether the student was employed, etc. (entered into the system every semester); and
4. *Activity data* – the types of activities organized by the SAAB chapter during the semester, and which SAAB members attended (entered into the system every semester).

Deadlines for data entry to SDS were January 31, 2011 for Fall Semester data, and June 1, 2011 for Spring Semester data.

- *By the January 31 deadline*, 13 of the 18 pilot chapters had entered Student data (contact information and demographics) for a total 306 students, or 66%<sup>6</sup> of those from the pilot chapters. However, only five chapters had entered a full set of Fall Semester data including Academic, Membership, *and* Activity data. These five chapters entered data for a total of 80 students, or 17% of those from pilot chapters.
- *By the June 1 deadline*, 15 of the 18 pilot chapters had entered Student data (contact information and demographics) for a total 395 students, or 88% of those from the pilot chapters. However, only four chapters had entered a full set of Spring Semester data including Academic, Membership, *and* Activity data. These four chapters entered data for a total of 55 students, or 12% of those from pilot chapters.

Advisors were also asked to administer the student online survey to SAAB members in their chapter using a standardized schedule. Members were to take surveys: 1) immediately upon joining SAAB, and 2) every April and October thereafter. Students who took their first survey (“baseline”) between September and December 2010 were advised to take their second survey in April 2011. Students who took their first survey between January and June 2011 were advised that they should take their second survey in October 2011. In addition, due to the fact that the survey was new in 2010-11, all SAAB members who began participating in SAAB *prior* to Fall 2010 were advised to take their first survey during October 2010. This was considered their baseline survey. The role of advisors in administering the survey was to notify students when they should take the survey, provide them with the link for accessing the survey, and generally encourage survey completion.

Response rates for the survey were as follows:

- Between September and December 2010, the survey was completed by 242 SAAB members, or 53% of SAAB members from the pilot chapters during Fall Semester 2010. All 18 pilot chapters had at least one student who took the survey.
- Between January and June 2011, the survey was completed by 137 members, or 30% of all members from the pilot chapters during Spring Semester 2011. These respondents were from 14 of the 18 pilot chapters.

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<sup>6</sup> Pilot chapters were asked to report their total number of SAAB members per semester at the end of Fall Semester 2010 and Spring Semester 2011. All response rates expressed in percentages throughout this report are based on these figures. The chapters reported a total of 457 members during Fall 2010, and 450 members during Spring 2011.

## Analysis

OMG's analysis of SAAB data was designed to answer the following evaluation questions:

- Who are SAAB members (i.e., what are their characteristics)?
- What activities are being offered by SAAB chapters to meet members' needs?
- Does participation in SAAB lead to changes in members' enrollment (i.e., persistence), academic progress, aspirations, self-esteem, sense of attachment to college, ability to navigate institutional processes and systems, sense of social responsibility, and satisfaction with SAAB?

The first question, *who are SAAB members*, was addressed by analyzing data from the Fall 2010 administration of the student survey. These data were selected over data from the Spring Semester because more students completed the survey during the Fall (242 versus 137 in the Spring), thus the results were more likely to be representative of the pilot chapters. Data from the two survey administrations were analyzed and compared to ensure consistency, and results confirmed that both administrations yielded very similar findings.

The second question, *what activities are being offered by SAAB chapters*, was answered through an analysis of SDS data. This analysis included data entered for 293 students in Fall 2010, and 232 students for Spring 2011.

The third question, *does participation in SAAB lead to changes in...*, was examined using data from both SDS and the student survey. The analysis of *change* required having SDS data on the same group of students for both Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 Semesters, and also required that students take the survey both semesters. In other words, addressing this question required longitudinal analysis.

- Changes in enrollment and academics were analyzed using data from SDS.
  - Based on the data entered to SDS during 2010-11, Academic data for 54 students was used in the analysis, as well as Membership data (including enrollment) for 84 students. In other words, these were the students for whom Academic and/or Membership data were entered for *both* Fall and Spring Semesters.
- Changes in aspirations, self-esteem, attachment to college, ability to navigate institutional processes and systems, sense of social responsibility, and satisfaction with SAAB were analyzed using student survey data.
  - Longitudinal survey analysis was based on 27 students who took the survey in both the Fall and Spring Semesters. As a group, these students were slightly different than the overall group of survey respondents. These students were more likely to attend 4-year institutions (81%, versus 68% of all Fall 2010 survey respondents) and to live off-campus with non-family members (48%, versus 18% of Fall 2010 survey respondents). They were *less* likely to be in their first year of college (18%, versus 32% of Fall respondents) and more likely to be in their second year. Aside from these differences, the groups were similar on most other characteristics measured.

Overall, the number of students for whom data could be analyzed longitudinally was low in comparison to the total number of members in the pilot chapters. The analysis of enrollment and academics presented herein was based on approximately 12% - 19% of students in the pilot

chapters, and survey analysis was based on approximately 6% of students in the pilot chapters. Due to these limited numbers, the results of longitudinal analyses of change should not be considered representative of either the pilot chapters or of SAAB members nationally. Rather, the results are most helpful when viewed as examples of the types of analyses that SAAB will be able to perform in the future, when data collection results are strengthened and chapters are more consistently collecting and inputting data into the new systems.

All analysis was conducted using the statistical software package SAS. In order to perform longitudinal analyses, data from Fall and Spring Semesters were merged using a unique Student ID. In SDS, the Student ID is a number generated by the system when the advisor creates a new student record. The ID is not based on student data; it is based on the numerical count of students in the system. On the student survey, students were asked to create a survey ID consisting of their initials and the month and day of their birth (not the year). The students enter this ID each time they take the survey. This information is not used to identify students, only to connect their survey responses over time. Once data from both systems had been merged and cleaned, OMG constructed longitudinal variables and performed analyses of the data.

## Appendix B: SAAB Case Studies

### University of Louisville: Finding real brotherhood



It's a Wednesday night in February at the University of Louisville's Cultural Center. Some two dozen African American male students in business attire are

nearly through their evening's agenda, having started promptly at 6 p.m. They've recited key beliefs together and shared committee reports, including one on a community outreach program to encourage Louisville high school students to attend college. One of the group's Executive Committee members stands and starts offering "props"—shout-outs about good grades, kind acts, and model behavior from the past week. Following the meeting, several of the young men leave to study together.

So goes another meeting of the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) chapter at the University of Louisville. The chapter was established in 2005 with a primary mission to help increase graduation rates of African American males at this state-supported, urban research university in Kentucky's largest metropolitan area. About 30 active members regularly attend chapter meetings, and the organization's reach extends to many more Louisville students who participate in SAAB-sponsored activities.

Although it's still early in the life of the chapter, every Louisville student who has joined SAAB since its inception has either graduated or remains in school. What's behind that achievement? It appears to be a combination of the chapter's ability to stay true to mission, focus on outcomes, use culturally relevant tools, and employ peer support.

#### **About the Student African American Brotherhood**

*Founded by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe, the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) aims to increase the number of African American and Latino men that graduate from college by creating a positive peer community based on a spirit of caring. The first SAAB chapter was established at Georgia Southwestern State University in 1990. Since then, SAAB has grown to more than 100 chapters on college campuses and in high schools throughout the United States, with a national office at the University of Toledo. Member composition varies across chapters.*

#### **About the University of Louisville**

*The university is home to approximately 15,000 undergraduates, with about 12.5 percent of those students identified as Black, non-Hispanic. Approximately 87 percent of its undergraduate students are residents of Kentucky.<sup>1</sup> Like many universities, Louisville has a diverse student body and is working to increase student retention and graduation rates. In 2007, its six-year graduation rate for undergraduate students was 43.7 percent; for African American male students, the rate was 29.9 percent.<sup>2</sup>*

#### **About this case study**

*As part of its work to develop and implement a system for assessing SAAB's success, the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning visited SAAB chapters at several campuses across the United States and interviewed SAAB advisors, campus administrators, and student members. This case study provides a snapshot of SAAB's work on one campus, based on those conversations, observations of chapter activities, and a review of chapter documents.*

<sup>1</sup> University of Louisville, Institutional Research and Planning. *Common data set 2008-09*. Retrieved September 1, 2009 from <https://louisville.edu/institutionalresearch/files/common-data-set-files/cds2008-09.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Education Trust. (2009). *College results online*. Retrieved September 1, 2009 from <http://www.collegeresults.org/search2a.aspx>

## ***What is the Chapter Trying to Accomplish, and How?***

The Louisville chapter has articulated three strategic goals:

- To assist and enhance the academic performance, retention, and graduation rate of African American male students at the university;
- To enhance the image of the African American male;
- To prepare every black male for graduate school.



***SAAB members support and encourage each other***

The chapter is advised by Michael Anthony, the Interim Director of Louisville’s Cultural Center. A secondary student advisor, Mikhaal Forbush, is a former SAAB member pursuing a graduate degree in Pan-African Studies. A student Executive Board consisting of a President, Vice President, Historian, Recording Secretary, and six committee chairs governs the chapter, with help from the advisors.

The literature on college retention points to five components that support student success in college: a structured first-year experience providing a home base, comfort navigating college services, social support, academic support, and financial security. The Louisville SAAB chapter has placed great emphasis on the first four of these components—a decision influenced not only by guidance from the SAAB national office, but also from student feedback about factors they see as important to college success. The students themselves recognize the benefits of having a home base, of helping each other navigate college resources, of assisting each other with academics and, perhaps most significantly, of supporting one another socially and emotionally during the college years.

## ***Providing Connections through the Gift of Relationships***

Most experts on student retention agree that active and constructive involvement in campus life greatly increases the likelihood that students will stay in college and eventually graduate. Students at Louisville reported that when they arrived on campus, they looked for a place where they could find people with whom they could connect, share interests and experiences, and feel at home. For many, SAAB fulfilled that need: helping students of color tackle feelings of alienation they might experience on a predominantly white campus. It offers a system of peer support that helps students feel like others are looking out for them—that members “have my back.”

<sup>1</sup> Stony Brook University, Office of Institutional Research. *Official enrollment counts*. Retrieved September 1, 2009 from <http://stonybrook.edu/offices/students/fall2008/demographicprofile08.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Education Trust. (2009). *College results online*. Retrieved September 1, 2009 from <http://www.collegeresults.org/search2a.aspx>

This SAAB chapter's regular weekly meeting appears to be the glue that holds things together. The students sought the opportunity to meet weekly, and the meetings are run by the student Executive Team. Chapter members gather at the Cultural Center's multipurpose room for an hour. The meeting begins with a welcome by chapter leadership, followed by an invocation and group recitation of the Black National Anthem and SAAB mission statement. Committee chairs share status updates and plans for future activities. Guest speakers often attend, providing perspective, opportunities for reflection, and shared knowledge. The meeting-ending sessions

***“In order to empower ourselves and promote brotherhood, we the members of the Student African American Brotherhood embrace the principles of accountability, proactive leadership, self-discipline, and intellectual development. Through our beliefs and convictions, we uphold this mission at all times. I am my brother's keeper...and together we will rise!”***  
—SAAB mission statement

known as “props” offer members a chance to share recognition and positive reinforcement; topics run the gamut from compliments on clothing to praise for the successful organization of a campus activity. The atmosphere in the room is one of camaraderie and support.

The peer-mentoring component is just as strong outside the meetings. Whether involved in athletics, social activities, or community service, SAAB members do things in groups. They also coordinate study sessions and keep each other on track, helping each other stay focused on their common goal of success, and reminding one another when they need to be studying rather than socializing. In addition, members are encouraged to join other campus organizations and attend campus-wide events that provide opportunities for networking and relationship building, such as the Minority Business Expo. They host or partner with other student organizations to hold social/spiritual events that have campus-wide appeal.

Collectively, these activities create a sense of connection for students and a familial environment. The students have a strong sense that they belong and fit in on campus. They report that they genuinely care for each other and know they can count on and trust one another.

### ***Empowering Students as Leaders***

SAAB members are encouraged to develop their leadership abilities, public speaking, and group presentation skills by planning complex social, community, and service activities together. These projects may start small, presented as an idea, but as they grow, become an opportunity for members to assume increasing responsibility as committee chairs or chapter executives. Success in these endeavors, members say, leads to feelings of empowerment and increased self-confidence.

***“It is not about what SAAB has done on campus but what they have done for us and in us. We try to change our own mindsets—you hold my hand and I will hold yours and we will walk out together....”***  
—SAAB member

### ***Using Culturally Relevant Tools to Promote Knowledge of Self and Culture***

An individual's cultural background, experiences, and socioeconomic level all work to form the context for growth, development, and learning. SAAB understands the importance of culture in identity development, and uses culturally relevant tools in its discussions to facilitate learning

and personal growth. Through these discussions and an emphasis on “teachable moments,” students come to appreciate the role ethnicity plays in shaping how they think and interact in their worlds.

A teachable moment is that time when a person seems most receptive to learning something concrete. It also includes the idea that what is learned at that moment is likely to make a deep and lasting impression. Students are more likely to believe what is being offered if it earns their respect, is tangible, and comes from a credible source. SAAB Louisville strives to have a teachable moment at every meeting. The group invites respected faculty and other campus leaders to talk about topics of current interest and relevance. Recent discussions have included African American identity development models, preparation for graduate school, spirituality and religion, financial management, and other support services offered on campus. SAAB members have also taken leadership roles in the University of Louisville’s Black Male Rap Sessions (B-MRS, pronounced *beamers*), an informal support group initially intended for African American male students to exchange ideas and conversation, to facilitate identity development, and to promote a sense of belonging. Now hosted by SAAB, these events are open to anyone interested in a variety of topics, concerns, and issues relevant to black men. Recent topics have included crime in the black community, black masculinity, and a discussion of President Obama. Topics are chosen by first-year SAAB students, and meetings are planned by the SAAB Executive Board members.

### ***Walking the Walk: Modeling Positive Behavior to Challenge Negative Stereotypes***

Students filing into the weekly SAAB meeting stand tall and walk proudly. There are requirements to follow: dress in suits and business attire, and be on time. SAAB believes in the importance of starting meetings promptly—dispelling the stereotype that black functions do not start on time. In the words of the membership: “SAAB time is on time!” Members recognize that timeliness is also important in the business world, which many of them hope to be part of some day. SAAB’s founder, Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe, established the business attire dress code for SAAB meetings because he believes that dress links to image and helps shape attitudes. The Louisville students note that their business attire on Wednesdays makes them stand out on campus, and other students look at them with respect. When others ask the members why they’re dressed up, it’s an opportunity for the SAAB students to talk about their professional goals.



***SAAB Chapter Meeting***

Many SAAB students at Louisville report coming from environments where it is not “cool” to be smart, so it can be challenging for them to deal with the stereotypes about academic achievement. First-year students, in particular, may experience anxiety around needing to combat these negative perceptions and labels. The Louisville chapter counters such stereotypes as part of its mission, fostering and reinforcing positive behavior. To help provide positive academic role models, SAAB Louisville began an initiative called “Brother to Brother”—an academic peer advisory program pairing SAAB upperclassmen with younger members, ideally in the same major or area of interest. The paired students talk about school and often study together, sharing study tips. This mentoring strategy provides opportunities for the mentors to develop leadership and teaching skills, and for mentees to feel comfortable with academic success.

### ***Giving Back: Appreciating How Collaboration Helps Improve One’s Community***

Having experienced first-hand the social inequities black men face on campus and in the larger society, SAAB members show a strong concern for social change. Members are expected to be involved in community service activities and keep service learning logs and journals. The chapter enjoys partnering with student organizations like black sororities or the Collegiate 100 in its service projects. According to their advisor, the chapter initially started doing assorted but unconnected volunteer projects, such as working at the Salvation Army or visiting a boys’ home. Eventually, he encouraged members to begin taking on larger projects with more sustained involvement and impact. For example, SAAB

Louisville has gotten involved with KnowHow2Go (KH2GO), a public-awareness effort initiated by the American Council on Education, Lumina Foundation for Education, and the Ad Council designed to encourage low-income 8<sup>th</sup>- through 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students and their families to take steps toward college. SAAB members have developed presentations and worked with local high schools to provide information about college and KH2GO. SAAB members are excited about this work and believe it has the potential to become the chapter’s signature project.

***“We wanted to help distribute this info [KnowHow2Go] so more people could know about it, and really make a difference getting some of these kids to college. We can engage with these students, we’re close to their age and have been where they are.”***  
—SAAB member

### ***Planning for the Future***

The SAAB chapter at the University of Louisville is interested in developing a deeper understanding of its successes and challenges. To date, the chapter has been able to note student success anecdotally. In time, the chapter hopes to more systematically measure its impact and to underscore its success stories.

The SAAB Executive Board, along with its advisor, is appropriately concerned about the sustainability of the chapter to ensure that members will have continued strong support. The chapter’s President and Vice President are juniors, and the next school year’s leaders were elected in the spring of 2009. As part of their summer retreat, the outgoing leadership works with the incoming leaders to help them transition into their roles. As an added benefit, the former officers will remain as SAAB members throughout their senior year so they can provide, in true SAAB fashion, any necessary advice and guidance to the new leadership.



## Stony Brook University: Creating a network of support



The Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) chapter at Stony Brook University has in its DNA many elements found on other campuses, including a network of supportive peers, a commitment to intellectual development, and a desire to prepare its

members for success beyond college. One thing that makes Stony Brook's chapter unique: a team of six advisors. Imagine the advantage students have when, as soon as they step foot of campus, they're welcomed and supported by a team of staff and administrators dedicated to helping them stay in and succeed in college. This is what members of Stony Brook's SAAB chapter experience, and this element of support is one of the keys to the chapter's strategy for success.

The Student African American Brotherhood was established at Stony Brook University in 2007 to help increase graduation rates of African American and Hispanic males. The chapter has about 35 active members, with many more attending meetings and participating in SAAB-sponsored activities. While primarily comprised of African American and Hispanic male students, the chapter's membership is diverse and open to all students.

The Stony Brook chapter boasts an impressive organizational structure. It's governed by a student Executive Leadership Team comprised of officers and committee chairs and co-chairs. They work with guidance from Cheryl Chambers, Stony Brook's Associate Dean for Multicultural Affairs, and five other staff co-advisors. Directing the work of the chapter are seven committees, each led by members of the leadership team and supported by a staff advisor. The committees include academic, personal, and spiritual/social development; community service; financial affairs; membership development; and marketing.

### **About the Student African American Brotherhood**

*Founded by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe, the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) aims to increase the number of African American and Hispanic men that graduate from college by creating a positive peer community based on a spirit of caring. The first SAAB chapter was established at Georgia Southwestern State University in 1990. Since then, SAAB has grown to more than 100 chapters on college campuses and in high schools throughout the United States, with a national office at the University of Toledo. Member composition varies across chapters.*

### **About Stony Brook University**

*Stony Brook University is a public research university located on Long Island in the suburb of Stony Brook, N.Y. The university is home to approximately 16,000 undergraduates. Seven percent of those students are identified as African American; another 8 percent are identified as Hispanic American. New York is home to 87 percent of Stony Brook undergraduate students.<sup>1</sup> The six-year graduation rate among undergraduate students who enrolled in 2001 was 59.3 percent. The graduation rate among African American male students in the same period was 59 percent; for Latino male students it was 34.5 percent.<sup>2</sup>*

### **About this case study**

*As part of its work to develop and implement a system for assessing SAAB's success, the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning visited SAAB chapters at several campuses across the United States and interviewed SAAB advisors, campus administrators, and student members. This case study provides a snapshot of SAAB's work on one campus, based on those conversations, observations of chapter activities, and a review of chapter documents.*

### ***What is the Chapter Trying to Accomplish, and How?***

The SAAB chapter at Stony Brook takes its mission of student success and inclusion seriously, and has developed an organizational structure to ensure commitment to that mission. The chapter's leadership holds a strategic planning retreat each summer to outline the goals and activities for the upcoming academic year. Its detailed strategic plan focuses on several key areas, with activities designed to increase members' retention rates and improve academic performance; enhance the image of members as positive and active contributors to the campus and community; and promote the engagement of students, faculty, staff, and administration on campus and within the larger community.

The strategic plan provides focus. As one of the advisors described it, "we have goals that really do reflect the mission and the strategies so there isn't a mission shift that can creep in to many organizations." Grounded in research and rooted in SAAB's national model, the chapter's programming contributes to its desired goal of promoting graduation of men of color. Specifically, the Stony Brook chapter members 1) work to actively foster a group culture that promotes positive images of African American and Hispanic men; 2) create opportunities for the members to connect to resources on campus and in the community; 3) participate in mentoring relationships with advisors and other students to build supportive guiding relationships; and 4) reach out to those who hope to succeed in college someday.

### ***Dressing to Change Lives and Perceptions***

Each Wednesday, the SAAB chapter members at Stony Brook University are the best-dressed students on campus, exuding confidence as they walk to and from class in shirts and ties. To the chapter members, the trademark dress of SAAB Wednesdays is about more than looking good. "It's a movement," as one student put it. These students understand that this display of professionalism and leadership is an integral part of their mission.

Members say their Wednesday attire challenges stereotypes about male students of color—that they don't take academics seriously and won't graduate from college. When other Stony Brook students ask why they're dressed up, they relish the opportunity to talk about SAAB's mission as well as their own personal and professional goals. They're quick to tell others about their ambitions to succeed in college and beyond. They spread their message of success to all who will listen, sharing aspirations of becoming entrepreneurs or medical doctors, and hoping to inspire others.



***SAAB members and advisors***

Not only does dressing up help chapter members tell their stories, it also has a significant, transformative impact on each of them. There is a connection between how the students look, how they think about themselves, and how they feel. When they're dressed up, they carry

themselves differently and are more engaged in class. This has a cyclical effect: with others taking them more seriously and showing respect, members gain confidence and are even more motivated to fulfill the high expectations of others. As one student put it, “When I...wear a suit I feel important, powerful, authoritative. ...I feel the need to get more organized, take care of my responsibilities.”

### ***Opening Doors through Connections***

The literature on student retention indicates that being connected to on-campus resources, as well as to faculty, staff, and administrators, increases the likelihood that students will stay in college and eventually graduate. This is especially true for students of color attending a predominantly

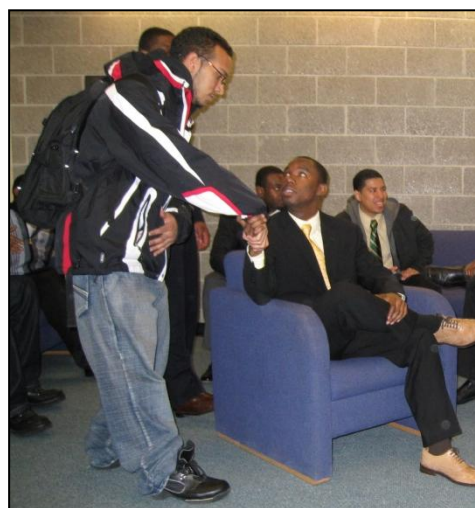
***“Many students will go through college and not have faculty or staff connected with them. It is a real travesty when a student has invested all this time and money and leaves only with a degree, having not forged the relationships that help them, which they need to forge.”***  
—SAAB Advisor

white institution like Stony Brook. For SAAB members, the organization provides these connections, which are so critical to their success, putting them in touch with the school’s educational leaders and teachers, as well as connecting them to resources and opportunities that can enhance their college experience. The chapter, as one advisor put it, “can be a conduit to getting more students to utilize resources on campus.”

The advisory structure at Stony Brook greatly increases the opportunities to connect students to resources around campus. The advisors work in a variety of university roles, and some are Stony Brook alumni. They give students quick and detailed access to the inner workings of the campus, and provide insight about navigating what can be an intimidating system. Students find comfort in being able to talk to someone who can help them “learn the ropes”—from finding services on campus to identifying internship opportunities. Advisors also connect students to those in their professional networks. Students cited the benefit of advisors who, “just by knowing us...introduce us to [their] coworkers.” This expands the students’ networks, and exposes them to yet another layer of faculty, staff, and administrative expertise.

The SAAB chapter’s work with the Admissions Office to help enroll new students has also connected members to varied administrators on campus. Toward the end of the chapter’s first year, members gained additional exposure by speaking before Stony Brook’s senior-level administrators about their programmatic, academic, and community service accomplishments. The chapter hopes to make this presentation an annual event.

There are other connections to on-campus and professional networks. The SAAB chapter has co-sponsored events with alumni groups and the Career Center, such as “Hispanic Experience” and “African American Experience,” which offer students opportunities to meet successful Hispanic



***SAAB members greet one another***

and African American Stony Brook alumni, respectively. Members also regularly invite experts and speakers to address their chapter meetings and to conduct workshops. Such speakers, whether from on or off campus, have not only furthered students' knowledge in areas like public speaking and financial planning, but have also offered themselves as resources to students.

SAAB members understand the value of relationships and seek opportunities to enhance their college experience (and beyond) by developing new relationships. They know they wouldn't have such opportunities were it not for SAAB. As one advisor put it, SAAB is successful when "a student who, as a result of the SAAB experience ... has created a network of relationships with individuals they feel can help them to make that next step beyond Stony Brook."

### ***Providing Support through Mentoring***

To take the networking and relationship building to a deeper level, the SAAB Stony Brook chapter has a multipronged mentoring system. The literature on student success indicates that mentorship by faculty and staff plays a key role in students' success on a college campus, increasing feelings of connectedness and educational outcomes, especially for students of color. The SAAB chapter at Stony Brook incorporates mentoring as a key component of its work, and it addresses the need for mentoring relationships in a variety of ways. First and foremost, having

***"PDP really helps the freshmen and sophomores identify where they are, who they want to be, helps them with working out those goals and what they need to do to get where they want to be."  
—SAAB Advisor***

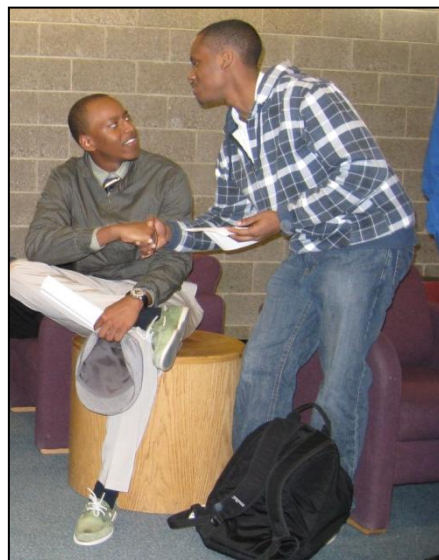
six advisors enables the chapter to develop formal mentoring relationships between an advisor and each member of the Executive Leadership Team. Members meet with the advisor assigned to their committee, to develop and work on goals established through a Personal Development Plan (PDP). These PDPs articulate students' goals in four areas—academic, personal, career, and leadership—and are used to help these student leaders identify action steps for achieving those goals. Students

meet one-on-one with their advisors about once a month, with advisors providing guidance and holding the students accountable to their goals. As one student described it, "[Advisors] play an active role in keeping in touch with us and [keeping us] on track." In the future, the chapter hopes to expand the use of the personal development model, with Executive Leadership Team members helping underclassmen develop and work on their own plans.

Executive Leadership Team members are encouraged to mentor younger college and high school students, and other SAAB members have mentees at a local elementary school. Members also reach out to their peers informally, establishing bonds based on common interests and majors. "It comes naturally for me ... I know things he doesn't know yet about SAAB and academics," said one student. Each of these relationships is unique, but each is valued and viewed as an essential part of SAAB's commitment to developing young men of color. As one student remarked, "The mentoring is what drew me to SAAB. I like working with students. I tutor other students. We can have all these programs, but what is really important is the relationships we build, the positive atmosphere when we all encourage each other."

## ***Setting Examples for Hope and Opportunity***

An important element of SAAB, and a way in which members model their leadership, is in their efforts to recruit prospective African American and Hispanic college students to Stony Brook. The chapter works closely with the College 101 program, a community-based organization formed by Stony Brook alumni that brings inner city high school juniors and their counselors to the campus to learn about its offerings and student life. The SAAB chapter has identified this program as integral to its community service work. Through it, SAAB members become ambassadors for the school, sharing their stories of success and examples of the support they receive with those interested in attending college. In the words of one administrator, “They are wonderful about articulating to prospective students and families what college is about.”



***SAAB brothers relax after a meeting***

In addition to its work with College 101, the chapter’s community service committee accompanies the Stony Brook admissions office to local schools, particularly high schools the SAAB students have attended. Back in familiar hallways, SAAB students share stories of their college experiences, offering hope and inspiring others like them to pursue higher education. These visits allow members to share a critically important message with high school students and their families: if they choose to attend Stony Brook University, they will not be alone. There’s a network of support and connections on campus, including SAAB, to help them succeed in the Stony Brook community.

## ***Planning for the Future***

The SAAB chapter at Stony Brook University has come a long way in its first two years. With 13 founding members, it’s more than doubled in size and continues to actively recruit underclassmen into the leadership ranks. This strategy of sustainability has been in place since the chapter’s inception. One founding member shared how, when the chapter was founded, they laid the groundwork for sustainability and continuity by “strategically choosing sophomores and juniors so they would have people for a couple years.” Members and advisors recognize the importance of maintaining an active chapter that continues to develop new leaders while staying committed to its mission. “So many clubs have come and gone through the years,” as one advisor put it. But SAAB is different, he says. They’re working “to make sure that the mission remains throughout the years and the different leaders, and to make sure that the motivation [to impact on the lives of young men of color], that essence, keeps going.” And based on early observations, they can be confident that mission will be in place for years to come.

## The University of Texas at Austin: A chapter that helps “shrink the campus”



The Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) chapter at the University of Texas at Austin was established in 1996 to help increase graduation rates of African American males on campus. The UT Austin chapter has the distinction of having

created the SAAB mission statement and motto used by the more than 100 SAAB chapters nationwide: “I am my brother’s keeper, and together we will rise!”

Since its establishment in 1996 with five members, the chapter has grown to 20 active members, with many more attending meetings and participating in SAAB-sponsored activities. The chapter is advised by Kyle Clark, Assistant Director of New Student Services at UT Austin, who provides assistance to an eight-member Student Executive Board that governs the chapter.

### **What is the Chapter Trying to Accomplish, and How?**

The UT Austin SAAB chapter is committed to creating an environment where African American male students are given opportunities and resources to help them develop as individuals, succeed academically, and ultimately graduate from college.

The chapter uses a number of approaches that are supported by research on college retention and success to pursue its goals. A welcoming, close-knit environment helps students feel at home and creates a safe space where they can rely on each other for support throughout their college years. They are able to draw on each others’ experiences to help navigate college life and academics, and have created a culture of success that increases aspirations. In addition, the SAAB chapter provides structure for students that helps connect them with social, academic, and professional resources on the campus.

### **About the Student African American Brotherhood**

*Founded by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe, the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) aims to increase the number of African American and Latino men that graduate from college by creating a positive peer community based on a spirit of caring. The first SAAB chapter was established at Georgia Southwestern State University in 1990. Since then, SAAB has grown to more than 100 chapters on college campuses and in high schools throughout the United States, with a national office at the University of Toledo. Member composition varies across chapters.*

### **About the University of Texas at Austin**

*The University of Texas at Austin is a state-supported urban research university located in the state capital. Nearly 92 percent of its undergraduate students are Texas residents. The university is home to approximately 37,000 undergraduates; 4.8 percent of those students identified as African American.<sup>1</sup> The six-year graduation rate among undergraduate students who enrolled in 2001 was 77.5 percent, 68.1 percent for African American male students.<sup>2</sup>*

### **About this case study**

*As part of its work to develop and implement a system for assessing SAAB’s success, the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning visited SAAB chapters at several campuses across the United States and interviewed SAAB advisors, campus administrators, and student members. This case study provides a snapshot of SAAB’s work on one campus, based on those conversations, observations of chapter activities, and a review of chapter documents.*

## ***Sending a Message of Success***

Each Thursday, the student body at UT Austin looks a little different. The SAAB students “dress out,” displaying a trademark of SAAB membership by wearing collared shirts and ties to class. Thursday is also the day of chapter meetings, and members carry themselves with confidence as they walk to and from classes. When others ask SAAB members why they’re dressed up, they’re able to talk about SAAB’s mission, as well as their personal and professional goals. “Dressing out” provides an opportunity for students to not only share their stories, but to also display and be a part of an image that presents African American men as academically driven and professionally successful.



***Students at a SAAB meeting***

## ***Brotherhood: Creating a Connection that “Shrinks the Campus”***

The literature on student retention indicates that feeling connected on a college campus greatly increases the likelihood that students will stay in college and eventually graduate. For many students, SAAB provides the connection so critical to their success—an organization that brings together men of color and helps them tackle the feelings of alienation they might experience on a predominantly white campus. This “brotherhood,” as one staff member put it, “is the vehicle that shrinks the campus.”

***“Being a black male on this campus is unique and brings a unique set of problems that SAAB helps you deal with.”***  
—SAAB member

SAAB provides students with a number of opportunities to connect to one another through formal and informal relationships. Formally, underclassmen are paired with older members who build relationships with them, talk to them about their college experience, and help with getting acclimated to campus life. Such a structure ensures that

younger students aren’t lost amid what can feel like an overwhelming number of UT Austin students. Informally, it’s common for upperclassmen to help younger students in the same major, assisting them with academics or giving guidance on the best classes or professors to take. The members give each other advice about lessons learned—like the importance of visiting faculty during office hours—and connect each other to staff, faculty, and administrators they know on campus. And as students look at job options and explore graduate programs, they share opportunities and resources, helping each other navigate the ins and outs of preparing for life after college.

As important as sharing resources and networking are, the connection among SAAB members runs even deeper. During the weekly chapter meetings, the group engages in what they call “just venting,” a time for members to share their struggles, and even failures—in academics, in relationships, at home—whatever they need to get off their chests. The students do a lot of talking during these sessions, but even more listening. The group listens closely to the stories of their peers and offers support, letting them know they’re not alone, and encouraging one another.

One student shared a struggle that many could relate to. In class, a professor had instructed the students to find a partner and work together in pairs. As the rest of the class paired up, the SAAB member stood alone as the only black student in the class, and the only one without a partner. As the story was told, the SAAB group knew what was coming next: the class had an even number of students. Despite being told to break into pairs, there was one group of three. Stories like this are common among the chapter members. “Venting” brings the group together in a unique way, allowing them to share experiences and offer support, and to let each other know that, yes, they do belong.

### ***Building Men of Integrity through a Culture of Accountability***

The strong sense of brotherhood among chapter members is manifest in many ways, but no theme is more noticeable than accountability. One of the four principles embraced by SAAB, yet often so hard to articulate, this notion of accountability was expressed eloquently by one member: “That concept of accountability has made me the man I am today. The word accountability means so much. It ingrained so much on me. It is more than just a word; it is about doing what you say you are going to do. Anything you feel is your responsibility, it probably is, and so you need to step up in that area.”

SAAB members check in with each other, keep each other focused and on task. If one member starts to fall behind academically, for example, another is there to offer support and pick him up. One member described the help another brother provided, saying, “I was never academically stellar until [another member] set me straight. He sat me down and helped me focus on what I was doing.” Such stories of accountability are common.

“When a brother in SAAB says I’m going to do something, I know they are going to do it,” another member said. The members help each other stay true to their word because of the trust and genuine high regard they have for one another. They may come from different places, but they share the same reality as black men at a predominantly white university. As one member put it, “I allow the people in SAAB to check me. We take it from ‘I want to do well’ to ‘I want you to do well, too.’”



***Students listen to a SAAB brother***

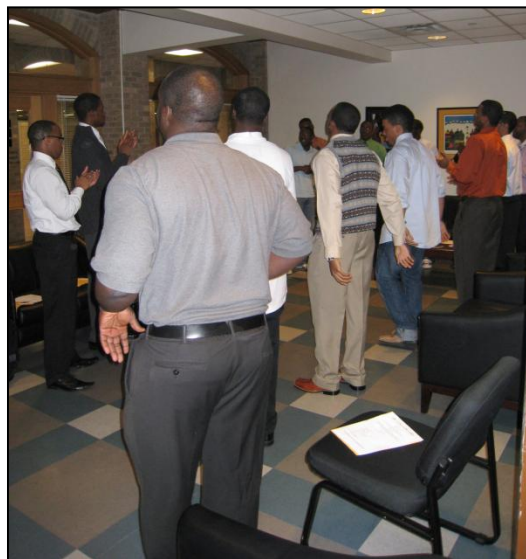
### ***Commitment to Academic Excellence***

A key focus of the SAAB chapter at UT Austin is academic success, and the chapter recognizes the importance of academic support in moving members toward graduation. At the start of the spring 2009 Semester, the chapter was at a critical juncture. Its leadership was strategizing about the upcoming semester when it recognized that UT students of color, and black men in particular, were struggling academically. They decided that programming was getting in the way of academics, and that the students needed to refocus. As one Executive Board member put it, “this is a time of crisis.” The group suspended programming for the semester, and held



abbreviated weekly meetings, using the second half of the meeting time for group study in the library.

The academic culture within SAAB is obvious. Members want to succeed, and being around others who are succeeding is a key motivator. One student summarized this well: “Basically, when you are around a lot of positive black males you don’t want to be the one behind. I want to be doing what they are doing.” Other students echoed this sentiment, saying the culture of success has raised their aspirations. These students have seen SAAB graduates continue their education by attending law and medical school. For many, it’s the first indication that graduate school is attainable. UT’s SAAB chapter had five members graduate in 2008, four of them doing so within four years. One of those graduates went on to a top-ranked law school. “I didn’t think about grad school before, and that is making me strive to do more with my life,” said one student. Another student expressed similar aspirations and a proactive attitude: “Five years from now I hope to have graduated from law school. SAAB has instilled in me to be a proactive leader. That will hopefully get me into law school. I am doing things now to prepare and people are looking at me like, ‘You have plenty of time why are you doing that now?’ But SAAB has taught me to be on top of my game.”



***“Props and praise” at a meeting***

### ***Making an Impact***

In addition to supporting each other, SAAB members engage in a number of activities to impact the campus, the African American community, and the community at large.

The chapter’s signature on-campus program is the annual African American Male Summit. The program aims to “increase the knowledge of African American men on campus about social issues ... in an open dialogue.” The chapter has also held an event on homophobia in the black community, as well as “He Say/She Say,” an examination of relationships between African American men and women.

Off campus, students volunteer with various community groups. Each Wednesday, a group of SAAB members goes to an Austin middle school to mentor students. It’s also common for members of the chapter to assemble a group to volunteer at Big Brothers Big Sisters. The chapter has gone to low-income neighborhoods of Austin to share their stories and talk to residents about opportunities for their children to go to college.

## ***Planning for the Future***

The SAAB brothers at UT Austin have a lot to celebrate. They work hard to understand and address the odds against them and to succeed in college. They share their struggles with each other, so it's only natural for them to share successes. SAAB's Thursday meetings conclude with "props and praise"—a lively, upbeat period filled with clapping and "stepping" in which members share what they're thankful for and recognize others' achievements. They give thanks and acknowledgement for all that has helped them get where they are. They thank their brothers for support, and give praise for a successful test. They recognize the accomplishments of their peers, how far they've come, and how far they're going.

***"As I'm about to leave I think about  
how I'm going to reach out."  
—SAAB member***

Affirmation from faculty, staff, administrators, and students reinforces that the men are making an impression and lasting connections. "It's hard to find a better group of friendships and relationships among a group of men. In a sense, it just looks like a student organization, but the way the relationships extend beyond college, it's much more than that," said one staff member. The chapter draws on its rich history, and the students have known and heard about members who have gone before them, paving the way and leaving a legacy of success that they hope to continue. Most importantly, SAAB is helping young African American men develop into men of integrity who are committed to modeling academic, social, and professional success to those on the campus and in the community, as well as those who will follow in their footsteps.

# Appendix C: SAAB Theory of Change