

Promotion of Underrepresented Minorities in Academic STEM (PUMA-STEM)
Career/Graduate Services Workshop Summary Report

The fourth PUMA-STEM workshop was on the topic of career/graduate services to promote the participation of underrepresented minority (URM) students in Academic STEM. This workshop was held at Dominican University on October 25, 2017. Twenty-nine faculty, administration, or staff from 8 Chicago area colleges or universities, one Arboretum, and one high school attended the workshop. Christopher Anderson (Dominican University) gave a short presentation on the aims and objectives of LSAMP in general and then the specific activities of the PUMA-STEM pre-alliance group, with special emphasis on the planned “full alliance” proposal to be submitted in Fall 2018. Christopher Anderson stated the goals of the workshop as 1. Learn about best practices in Career/Graduate Services from Indiana LSAMP/LSMCE; 2. Self Study: what Career/Graduate Services are offered at our varied institutions, what can we plan to add; & 3. Recruit multi-institution, faculty/admin/staff support for an implementation grant application.

The keynote speaker for the workshop was Dr. Pamala Shaw from the Louis Stokes Midwest Center of Excellence. Dr. Shaw’s presentation (slides enclosed) had four main sections: 1. A More Diverse Nation; 2. Planning for the future, 3. Networking and Collaboration; & 4. NSF Funding opportunities. Below, I briefly summarize the main points from each section of the presentation.

“A More Diverse Nation” framed the need to diversify U.S. graduate STEM education and STEM employment in terms of historical and projected demographic trends in the US. “Planning for the future” focused on the importance of advising students early in their academic careers to set goals (including making “parallel plans”) and to encourage the participation of high-impact practices during their undergraduate career. “Networking and collaboration” focused on the role that partner organizations/societies can play in assisting students make the next step toward STEM graduate education and/or STEM employment. The following organizations were introduced: SACNAS, NOBCChE, GEM, SMART scholarships, CIRTL network, Minority Access Incorporated, ABRCMS, and the National Society of Black Engineers. Finally, Dr. Shaw discussed the NSF graduate research fellowship program and the LSAMP Bridge to the Doctorate Program.

The Q&A period with Dr. Shaw also discussed the activities of the Indiana LSAMP (for which Dr. Shaw has served as director) and the planned implementation grant application that is planned by PUMA-STEM for fall 2018.

The workshop concluded with participants breaking into small groups to conduct a self-study inventory. Several schools reported activities such as career days with panel presentations by recent alums and work out of their career development centers: resume review, job fairs, campus interviews. Given the size of our institutions, much of this advice is not STEM specific. GRE Test Prep (mentioned in the LSAMP element table in the presentation by Christopher Anderson) is only done on an ad hoc basis at a few participant schools. A few schools have grad school recruitment visits (e.g. faculty from Loyola coming to speak with their class) but we agreed that the consortium that many schools already participate in (ACCA) is well suited to bring together a critical mass of students to make recruitment efficient. It may be more worth a grad recruiters time if they can make one visit to speak to STEM undergrads from 15 schools that each serve about 2,000 students, rather than making 15 separate visits.

The evaluation feedback forms indicated a positive response to the workshop and continued interest in supporting the next steps of the PUMA-STEM pre-alliance group.