



# **An Inception, History and Summary**

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**The mission of Pathways is to increase the engagement and success rates of minority male students at Wake Tech, by way of mentoring through exposure to academic, social, and career-based activities and opportunities.**

**Program Inception.**

In 2006, Community College system professionals across the state began examining retention and graduation rates among community college students. The results of their findings indicated that a systemic method be put in place to address and eventually improve the low academic retention and graduation rates among the minority male student population across the system. As a result, the NC Community College System's Minority Male Mentoring Initiative Pilot Project was formed; six community colleges in the state of North Carolina were selected for the Pilot project; a few years later, Wake Technical Community College became a part of the NC Community College System's group of participating colleges within the minority male mentoring initiative. Subsequently, Wake Tech became a part of the group, receiving their first state-supported male mentoring grant.

In examining institutional numbers in the areas of minority male retention and graduation, a decision was made to move forward with programming efforts. Under careful consideration by Wake Tech's president (Dr. Stephen Scott), Wake Tech Community College made a collective decision to compose a task force for minority males, to support system-wide retention and graduation efforts. Student Development Dean, Dr. Paul Norman, along with several staff, faculty and students invested the time and planning to pursue this initiative with support from Dr. Robert Ireland, Vice-President of Student Services at that time. Later, the task force was narrowed down to a much smaller group, to include persons such as Troy Woodruff, Regina Willis, JoAnne Clayton, and Dean Norman. While kicking-off programming efforts, the task force began to see the need to bring on an individual whose sole purpose was to focus on the structuring and implementation of the male mentoring initiative more effectively.

As a result, on March 12, 2008, Will Kincy was hired as the full-time coordinator, with the primary charge of structuring and implementing the minority male mentoring program at Wake Tech. Being effectively mentored by the task force, Will, along with the task force pioneers and other interested colleagues, dedicated themselves to making a tremendous impact on program participants and the Wake Tech community. In working to enhance the image and intention of the African American Male Initiative, Wake Tech's mentoring program name was soon changed to the "**Pathways Leadership Initiative.**" At that time, about 38 North Carolina Community

Colleges had male mentoring initiatives that worked to address low retention and graduation rates.

Research showed that coaching fostered a higher level of confidence and independence within the students, thus increasing their chances of success academically and in the professional workforce following graduation. As a result, in 2013 the NC Community College System's Minority Male Mentoring "Initiative" became a "Program," acquired a total of 46 participating community colleges, and moved away from the traditional mentoring model into a coaching model; with this model, student participants were coached throughout their college experience while in the program. In adapting to the program's evolution from a system-wide perspective, the Pathways Leadership Initiative's name later changed to, "**Pathways 3MP**" (Pathways Minority Male Mentoring Program), and the program name was undergirded with the phrase, "Males Pursuing Pathways to Success." The caliber of student mentees within the Pathways 3MP evolved over time, and attendance at mentoring sessions and program events became more consistent. Many active student mentees graduated and/or transferred to four-year universities such as NC Central University, UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Greensboro, UNC Wilmington, and UNC Charlotte. In addition, several have successfully entered the work force. A program Advisory Team was established to continue efforts in building working relationships across Wake Tech, with representation from the Office of Financial Aid, Registration and Records, the Curriculum and Pre-Curriculum Divisions and the Wake Tech Foundation. The image of the Pathways 3MP continuously enhanced, through involvement in on-campus and off-campus events. The "pathways" used to reach the goals of increased academic retention and graduation rates included personal/academic counseling, exposure to educational seminars and workshops, 4-year college tours, volunteerism, individual and group mentoring, careful tracking of student progress and exposure to networking opportunities through outside conferences.

Beginning with the 2016-17 academic year, the NCCCS redesigned the Minority Male Mentoring Program to more closely align with the student success initiatives that took place throughout the system. This new model was designed to strengthen minority male student outcomes by encouraging participation and collaboration among student participants and institutional departments. To help achieve the stated goal, the NCCCS sought for colleges to

make a three-year commitment to assess and enhance the student success outcomes of minority male students. The primary reasons for the redesign were to:

- Increase student success;
- Maximize student and campus participation; and
- Increase program effectiveness and efficiency.

Pathways' name was revised to "Pathways Male Mentoring Services." No longer were we a program, but rather more of a service. Twelve 12 student mentees served as student mentors, across 3 teams; those teams were the *Peer Mentoring*, *Community Mentoring & Outreach* and *Social Teams*. This set-up was used to serve and engage first year minority male students across the Southern and Northern Wake campuses. A detailed and functional website (<http://pathways.waketech.edu>) was kept current from semester to semester, and our Facebook and Instagram identity was started. In addition, the Pathways email address served as a primary means of communication internally and externally ([pathwaysmentoring@waketech.edu](mailto:pathwaysmentoring@waketech.edu)), so that persons within and outside of the college could communicate with program staff. Our ability to highlight and educate on our mentoring efforts expanded, with professional development session offerings for Wake Tech faculty and staff, highlighting the benefits of mentoring and coaching, what they entail, and the examination of the pitfalls and best practices of working with first-year minority male students. In keeping with our mission, we aspired to work more across the Wake Tech community and Wake County area, reaching more current and future students, building mentoring relationships with area public schools and four-year institutions. We continued our then 4-year mentoring partnership with Salem Middle School, in Apex, NC, and began a new mentoring partnership with a Wake County High School, working alongside our college's recruitment and outreach staff.

Beginning with the 2017-18 and 2018-19 academic years, we continued our 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year mentoring partnership with Salem Middle School. Nevertheless, we took more of a background support role in our involvement with the high school mentoring partnership (Rolesville High School), implementing select sessions on certain topics once per semester. We continued with more consistent meetings of the Male Mentoring Advisory Teams and tightened our partnerships

with the curriculum side of the college through emphasis on cohort students within developmental education. Furthermore, we decreased our peer mentoring team down to five students, with emphasis on the importance of students having at least one year of successful course completion under their belts and taking more involvement in engaging students in initiatives and mentoring efforts. Partnerships also continued with our colleague partners in the Career and Employment Resources Division, with Industry Road Tours each semester. Our outreach efforts shifted inward, with more attention on academic support to our cohort within the walls of Wake Tech. We gauged these efforts through ongoing table marketing at campus events, classroom presentations and the start of class performance monitoring of first time in college minority male students, primarily through our Starfish Early Alert System. Through the early alert system, the program coordinator and peer mentors were able to reach out to students to offer advice, suggestions and/or assistance in helping them navigate through difficulties being experienced in the classroom. The name would then change to the Pathways Success Scholars Program, reflecting our partnership with developmental education in general, and ACA 090 (Student Success Strategies) more specifically. Through this partnership with developmental education, the Success Scholars Celebration was activated, where student Success Scholars would experience a celebratory ceremony on a semester basis, in recognition of successful course completion for the prior semester. Success Scholars were comprised of cohort mentees who successfully completed all coursework in the prior semester, and students from each section of ACA 090 that showed the most academic progress in their course section during the previous semester.

### **Present-Day and Going Forward.**

Moving forward within our program practices, we continued to strive towards engaging our students in efforts to increase the success rates of the Wake Tech minority male student population in the areas of academic growth, retention, and graduation, by way of mentoring and exposure to academic, social, and career-based activities and opportunities.

For the new NC Community College System's grant funding cycle starting fall of 2019, we received a 3-year allocation of funding that allowed for a full-time Success Coach position for the program. Having the Success Coach on board helped increase our levels of engagement with students and the campus community. Our Student Success Coach joined our team in January of

2020 and added much-needed value to our work. With this additional team member, one-on-one success plans became a requirement upon a student's connection and throughout their involvement in the program. Weekly coaching sessions continued, and more benchmarks were met, in relation to adding additional partnerships, expanding the program's Advisory Team, and enhancing the staff's ability to educate faculty and staff through relevant professional development sessions and partnerships. Across the next few years beginning 2020 and on through 2022, a national pandemic caused a move to virtual engagement programming. The Pathways staff immediately shifted to a weekly Friday virtual coaching session, open to Program participants and faculty/staff program supporters. Common session themes remained relevant and yielded a consistent group of program scholars. During these few years, new partnerships were formed across the college, and Pathways gained a foot hole in Wake Tech's first Summer Bridge Program ("Eagle Start") and the college's newly formed Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Council, a product of Wake Tech's Reach & Rally Strategic Plan. Starting Fall 2022 through 2026, Pathways Success Scholars continues its engagement efforts with minority male-enrolled students within Career & College Promise, a dual-enrollment program offering eligible high school students the opportunity to earn a college credential for employment or credits toward a college degree while in high school.