

# UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

## OFFICE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

*“Young, Gifted & Black: 40 Years of Preparing Students for the Quest”*



### “YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME”

The Office of African-American Affairs (OAAA) was created in 1976 to assist the University of Virginia in developing a welcoming, supportive environment for its Black students. As a proponent of students' interests and needs, OAAA promotes the active involvement of its students in all aspects of the University community. Through its programming and outreach, OAAA enhances the University's knowledge, sensitivity and understanding of Black issues, culture, and history. These efforts have contributed to UVA having the highest graduation rate for undergraduate African-American students at a U.S. public university for the past twenty years [*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*].

### THE PEER ADVISOR PROGRAM

Nationally recognized by the American Association of University Administrators for “exemplary practice in achieving campus diversity,” the Peer Advisor Program helps first-year and entering-transfer Black students transition successfully to University life. It provides personal and caring support, while encouraging academic excellence and extracurricular involvement.

Each entering Black student is assigned an undergraduate Peer Advisor to serve as a resource for the entire academic year, based on similar academic and extracurricular interests. Peer Advisors and their advisees participate in various activities, including the annual Harambee I and II programs that highlight the successful transition of new students.



### THE GRADSTAR PROGRAM

The GradSTAR initiative supports academic success and leadership development for undergraduates through three programs:



#### RAISING-THE-BAR

Students receive “hands-on” support from OAAA Deans and Peer Advisors at weekly group sessions covering topics such as *Time Management*, *Choosing a Major*, *Career Exploration* and *Studying Aboard*. Tutoring in certain subjects is also available to students at no cost.

#### THE MENTORING PROGRAM

Students build positive relationships with University administrators, faculty and staff outside of the classroom in this culturally responsive mentoring program. Mentors and students participate in group and one-on-one activities with a mutual goal to “cultivate the next generation of scholars and leaders.”

#### PATHWAYS: PRE-PROFESSIONAL ADVISING

OAAA Deans provide small group and individualized advising for many undergraduate majors and programs (e.g. commerce, pre-health, pre-law). Students receive coaching for post-graduate and career transition, which complements advising. OAAA also partners with other University offices to promote opportunities that support students' academic and extracurricular development.

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## LUTHER PORTER JACKSON (LPJ) BLACK CULTURAL CENTER

The Luther Porter Jackson Black Cultural Center sponsors educational and social events to enrich the cultural knowledge and heritage of African-American and African people, often in collaboration with University academic departments and student organizations. Through the Center, many internationally respected scholars and artists present lectures, workshops, poetry readings, dance performances, exhibitions, films and other activities to University audiences. The Center also houses a book collection donated by the family of Virginia educator and civil rights activist Luther P. Jackson, which students can use on site for scholarly research and study.



## THE LUTHER PORTER JACKSON BLACK MALE INITIATIVE (BMI)

Established in 2011, the Luther Porter Jackson Black Male Initiative was created to promote the academic and social success of Black male students. By increasing interaction and dialogue between Black male students, faculty, staff and alumni, the BMI focuses on relevant issues ranging from academic retention and graduation to economic empowerment. Participants engage in co-curricular activities that highlight the diverse cultural, political and sociological perspectives among Black men. BMI has three major components:

MONTHLY MEETINGS which provide a forum to convene and discuss relevant issues,

A BOOK CLUB in which participants can think about and discuss critically written works for and about Black men,

AN ANNUAL RETREAT that brings together undergraduate & graduate students, faculty, staff, national consultants and Charlottesville community members. Their “Conversations in the Commonwealth” include activities that promote academic achievement, personal development and social/cultural enlightenment.



## PROJECT RISE

Project RISE serves University students who may deal with a range of issues related to academic, personal, and social circumstances. Designed to create a system of consistent uplift, motivation, and support, Project RISE also helps Black students who may experience feelings of alienation, depression or anxiety within the University community. Trained peer educators receive technical support from the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) and the Student Health Counseling and Psychological Services Center (CAPS). The confidential and intimate nature of services helps students to “resolve issues through support and education.”



**Staff:** Maurice Apprey, Dean  
Patrice Preston Grimes, Associate Dean  
Kimberley C. Bassett, Associate Dean  
Michael Mason, Assistant Dean  
Angela L. Comfort, Office Manager  
Deanna Carter, Administrative Assistant  
Jeffrey Smith, Executive Assistant

UVa-Office of African-American Affairs (OAAA)  
#4 Dawson's Row (adjacent to Old Cabell Hall)  
PO Box 400132, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4132  
434-924-7923 (office)  
434-924-0513 (fax)  
[www.virginia.edu/oaaa](http://www.virginia.edu/oaaa)

