



Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

September 6, 2024



A Message from Dr. Keith Johnson, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion

**“A Strategy for Enhancing Educational Success
Among At-Risk Populations: Addressing Barriers
and Implementing Effective Interventions”**

Dear Friends,

Retention rates for African American and Hispanic males in higher education institutions have long been a subject of concern and research. Despite efforts to improve educational access and support, African American and Hispanic males often face unique challenges that contribute to lower retention rates compared to their peers. Several factors influence the retention rates of African American and Hispanic males in colleges and universities, including, but not limited to academic preparedness, financial barriers, social and emotional support, institutional support, and institutional climate and racism.

While Hispanic males have made notable progress in college enrollment over recent years, their persistence and completion rates still face challenges. According to the National Center

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***“We must use our lives to make
the world a better place to live, not
just to acquire things. That is what
we are put on the earth for.”***

~Dolores Huerta ~

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Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

for Education Statistics (NCES), Hispanic student enrollment in postsecondary institutions has grown at a much faster rate than that of other racial and ethnic groups. However, this enrollment growth does not always translate into higher persistence and graduation rates.

Hispanic males and African American males alike, often have familial and work responsibilities that can interfere with their academic commitments. Balancing these responsibilities with college demands can be challenging and may affect their ability to remain enrolled.

While Hispanic male students have seen an increase in enrollment and continue to see increases in post-secondary enrollment, the number of Black male students on the other hand has experienced significant decreases in enrollment at an alarming rate on college and university campuses across the United States, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). According to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission Black Male Success Initiative Taskforce Report (THEC, 2021), the public high school graduation rate for Black males in Tennessee is 13% lower compared to other student groups. Additionally, enrollment of Black males in Tennessee's public postsecondary institutions dropped by 16% from Fall 2015 to Fall 2020 (THEC, 2021). Among those who do enroll, Black males are 20% less likely to graduate within six years compared to their peers (THEC, 2021).

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) mirrors these broader trends. Over the past five years, the number of African American male students at ETSU has decreased by nearly 100, falling from 423 in Fall 2018 to 327 in Fall 2022. Although overall enrollment at ETSU has also declined during this period, the proportion of Black male students has decreased more significantly—from 3.1% of the total student population in Fall 2018 to 2.5% in Fall 2022 (ETSU Moon Shot Power BI Data, 2023). Similarly, the six-year graduation rate for Black males at ETSU has fallen from 36% (Fall 2013 cohort) to 24% (Fall 2017 cohort), even as the institution's overall six-year graduation rates increased from 58% to 65% during the same period (ETSU Moon Shot Power BI Data, 2023).

Several factors contribute to these declines in enrollment and graduation rates. Many Black male students are questioning the value of a college degree, particularly in light of rising tuition costs and student debt. Alternative pathways, such as starting a business, pursuing careers in real estate, learning a trade, seeking city and state jobs, or becoming social media content creators, may appear more viable and quicker to achieve.

Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

As a strategy to address the low persistence and graduation rates among African American and Hispanic male students, the Captain George Nichols Academy was launched during the fall semester of 2023. [Captain George Nichols](#) was the first African American student, male or female to graduate from East Tennessee State University. The Nichols Academy at ETSU aims to enhance the campus experience and increase retention and graduation rates for African American and Hispanic male students through regular interactions with staff, faculty, and alumni in bi-weekly group and individual meetings. It connects students to university resources and support services, including coaching, tutoring, advising, and career development. ETSU's approach is modeled after successful programs like the Todd Bell Resource Center at Ohio State University and the UT Success Academy at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, which offer similar support and enrichment activities to boost academic success and personal well-being for students who participate.

Please stay tuned to learn of the future success of the Captain George Nichols Academy program. During the interim, don't forget, at ETSU,

- PEOPLE come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential;
- RELATIONSHIPS are built on honesty, integrity, and trust;
- DIVERSITY of people and thought is respected;
- EXCELLENCE is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic;
- EFFICIENCY is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources; and
- COMMITMENT to intellectual achievement is embraced.

Sincerely,

Dr. Keith V. Johnson

***“If you have a chance to accomplish something
that will make things better for people coming behind you,
and you don't do that, you are wasting your time on this Earth.”***

~Roberto Clemente~

Hispanic Heritage Month - September 15 - October 15

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period starting on September 15 and ending on October 15. It was enacted into law on August 17, 1988, on the approval of Public Law 100-402.

The day of September 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively.



What's the difference between Hispanic, Latino, Latinx and Latine?

Heritage and identity are personal and the words to describe both evolve. One example of this is the ongoing conversation around the terms *Hispanic* vs. *Latino*, and newer terms: *Latinx* and *Latine*.

- *Hispanic*, while broadly used, is actually pretty specific. It refers to a person's language, meaning someone from Spanish-speaking Latin American countries or Spain.
- *Latino* identifies people who have heritage rooted in Latin America, regardless of what language they speak. For instance, a Portuguese-speaking person from Brazil may identify as Latino, not Hispanic.
- While *Latino* may not refer to language, the Spanish language employs masculine and feminine versions (*Latino* vs. *Latina* respectively). The word *Latinx* and the more recent *Latine* shift from using the masculine word as the default descriptor. *Latinx* is more well-known among English speakers currently.

Always ask someone how they identify and which word they choose to go by.

Did you know that September is National Voter Registration Month?



It's the perfect time to get engaged with what's happening on campus and beyond! ETSU Votes has some exciting plans lined up to celebrate NVRM and prepare us for the upcoming November election. They're planning a few surprises that they can't wait to share with you. As you all know, voting is one of the most powerful ways to have your voice heard. Whether it's about local issues or national policies, your vote truly matters.

Did you know that the journey to secure voting rights in the U.S. has been long and challenging? From the [15th Amendment](#) to the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#), each milestone has brought us closer to the inclusive democracy we strive for.

As we gear up for the November election, now is the perfect time to register if you haven't already. Check out www.etsu.edu/votes for all the latest information on how you can get involved.

*My vote is my voice...and the voice of all who struggled,
so that I may have my voice.*

~Lydia Obasi~

Call For Volunteers



The 6th Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference is September 26 – 27, 2024. We are excited to be welcoming presenters and participants from college, community, and business organizations from in and out of state!

This year's conference organizers **would like to invite you to serve as a conference volunteer**. The efforts of the volunteer team are instrumental to the success of the conference.

There are several roles identified for volunteers including room hosts, greeters (throughout campus), set-up crew, and more. As an added benefit, conference volunteers are provided a \$10 registration discount. Volunteers can expect a minimum time obligation of 3 - 4 hours in addition to the 1-hour volunteer training prior to the conference.

If you are interested in volunteering, please complete the [Volunteer Sign-Up form](#) after which you will receive correspondence from me with the volunteer registration code. We ask volunteers to sign up by September 12.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. If you have any questions, please contact Trish Caughran, Conference Volunteer Coordinator at CAUGHRAN@etsu.edu.

With Gratitude,
Trish Caughran
Conference Volunteer Coordinator



Upcoming Events

September 2024				
Tuesday	Sept. 10th	MCC Cookout	Upper/Lower Pride Lawn	5:00- 8:00pm
Wednes- day	Sept. 11th	Intersect & Connect: A Feminist Forum Topic: Gender Roles and Stereotypes	Culp Center, Room 215	4:00- 5:00pm
Wednes- day	Sept. 11th	Sherrod Library Diverse Characters Book Club Register here	Sherrod Library Room 309	5:00- 6:00pm
Thursday	Sept. 12th	Employee Training Respect for Students	Brinkley Center - Ballroom	12:30- 2:00pm
Thursday	Sept. 12th	Environmental Sustainability of Native American Lands: The Navajo Experience	Brinkley Center - Ballroom	6:00- 8:00pm
Saturday	Sept. 14th	Umoja Festival	King Commons Park Downtown	10:00- 4:00pm
Friday	Sept. 20th	Native American Festival	Quad	11:00- 5:00pm
Saturday	Sept. 21st	<p>International Day of Peace</p>  <p>https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace</p>		
Tuesday	Sep. 24th	Fresh Perspectives: Teaching First-Year Students Club	C. Sherrod Library Room 441	11:00- 12:00pm
Thursday and Friday	Sep. 26th- 27th	6th Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference	D.P. Culp Student Center	All Day
October 2024				
Thursday	Oct. 3rd	Nichols Academy	MCC	5:00- 7:00pm
Saturday	Oct. 5th	Homecoming Tailgate	Parking Lot #21	10:00- 3:00pm
Sunday	Oct. 6th	Gospel Choir Concert	Culp Auditorium	2:00pm
Monday- Tuesday	October 14th-15th	Fall Break		
Wednes- day	Nov. 13th	Sherrod Library Diverse Characters Book Club Register here	Sherrod Library Room 309	5:00- 6:00pm

Upcoming Events ~ continued



It's time to register
 For ETSU's sixth annual
[Equity and Inclusion Conference](#)
 taking place September 26 - 27, 2024
 in the D.P. Culp Student Center.

ETSU Employees:
 \$85
 \$100 After September 19
 ETSU employees may
 utilize their education
 benefits to cover the cost of
 registration.
 If you elect to use this
 option, please be sure to
 select the
 appropriate ticket type
 When registering.

**Higher Ed Faculty/
 Staff:** \$100
 \$125 After September 19

**Community Partner/
 Member:**
 \$100
 \$125 After September 19

Students: Free

[Register](#)

The conference is open to anyone who wishes to attend. Community members as well as higher education professionals and students from other institutions are welcome and encouraged to join us.

Upcoming Events ~ continued

THE MCC COOKOUT


EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY
Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center



MUSIC | FOOD | FUN

Tuesday, Sept 10th 2024 | 5 pm - 8 pm | Upper and Lower Pride Lawn

For more information contact etsumc@etsu.edu or call (423) 439-4844

UMOJA FESTIVAL

SATURDAY, SEPT 14TH 2024

10 AM - 5 PM

KINGS COMMONS PARK, DOWNTOWN



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ETSUMC@ETSU.EDU OR 423-439-4844

Upcoming Events ~ continued



2024

www.umojajc.org

UMOJA

SEPT 14 FESTIVAL

Opening Ceremony at 12PM

Live Entertainment

The Company BAND
Music That Moves You!

M'Soul

- ◆ GOSPEL FEST
- ◆ KIDS' ZONE
- ◆ MERCHANDISE
- ◆ FOOD VENDORS
- ◆ RESOURCES
- ◆ ARTS AND CRAFTS

BILINGUAL HEALTH FAIR

Parade at 11AM From Carver Park to King Commons

Ishmael Nehemiah

Rhoda G.

King Commons Park • 112 N Commerce St • Johnson City, TN



“To strive for & maintain unity in the family, community, nation & race.”

~ Umoja ~

“To believe with all our heart in our people & the victory of our struggle.”

~ Imani ~

Upcoming Events ~ continued

Two sessions of the Safe Zone 2.0 training will be held this this fall!

Safe Zone 2.0 is a skills-based continuation of the original Safe Zone experience.

You can expect to learn some new concepts and sharpen your allyship skills in the process.

This is an interactive experience, so a microphone is required.



[Friday, September 20 from 9am-12pm](#)

[Tuesday, November 19 from 1pm-4pm](#)

Both sessions are online and registration is required. Click the links above for more information!

If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to

Brittany Wilkins (wilkinsb@etsu.edu) or Heidi Marsh (marshh@etsu.edu).

NATIVE AMERICAN FESTIVAL



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center



Friday, Sept 20th 2024
10:00 am - 4:00 pm
THE QUAD

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ETSUMC@ETSU.EDU OR 423-439-4844

Upcoming Events ~ continued



NICHOLS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Nichols Academy connects students with resources and opportunities to support their success and strengthen relationships with ETSU faculty, staff, administrators, and peer mentors.

KICK-OFF!
THURSDAY, OCT 3RD 2024
2ND FLOOR LOBBY, CULP CENTER

5 PM - 7 PM

CALL: (423) 439-4844

EMAIL: TADESSE@ETSU.EDU



HOMECOMING
OCTOBER 5

★ **TAILGATE** ★ ★ **COMEDY** ★
STEP SHOW

10AM-3PM
PARKING LOT 21

8PM-11PM
CULP AUDITORIUM

BROUGHT TO YOU BY: ETSU Multicultural Center, Black Affairs Association, Black Alumni Society
WWW.ETSU.EDU/MCC | 423-439-4844 | ETSUMC@ETSU.EDU

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Instagram and Twitter - [etsu_equity](#)

**We would like to
hear from you.**

If you have an announcement, event, accomplishment, etc. you would like to have published in the newsletter send them to Kim Maturo at maturo@etsu.edu.

To add a name to our mailing list, please email Kim Maturo at maturo@etsu.edu.