



### **Clarkson University Freshmen Retention Initiative**

At the 2007 National Conference the Executive Director, Carl Mack, spoke of the alarming statistics of retention of minorities in the Science, Engineering and Technology (STEM) fields. When the attendees from the conference returned to the Clarkson University chapter and shared the information, it was found that a similar trend existed on the campus. Therefore, a program was designed in order to give freshman students the added help they needed with core STEM field courses in order to further encourage retention.

The Clarkson University Freshman Retention model involves using student instructors to bridge the communication gap. The instructors have all completed the courses and are encouraged to conduct the reviews based on their observations while taking those courses. The model also encourages the full cooperation and liaison with the relevant departments and faculty. In doing so, all the resources available can be fully utilized to ensure the freshmen will receive a thorough program. There is also regular communication with professor to ensure that the material being presented at the reviews are consistent with the problems that the students are currently facing. Thus far, both students and faculty have expressed that the model is viable and productive.

This model led to the formation of the first tutoring program called Pass Your Physics Exam (PYPE). The success of PYPE led to PSYCHE (PasS Your CHemistry Exam), then PASCAL (PASs CALculus). Any student can attend the tutoring sessions, and any student can assist with the tutoring program. The popularity of these peer-directed programs are 1) strengthening the academic excellence of the NSBE membership and other students, 2) creating visibility for the chapter, 3) reaching across campus-wide constituencies, 4) providing collaborative opportunities with professionals, and 5) developing strong leadership skills within the NSBE executive board and the chapter membership. All of these are proving to impact retention.

I implore all chapters to participate in retention using this model. Academic excellence and service to the community is at the heart of NSBE's mission and this model allows chapters nationwide to have a full share in impacting not only the community but themselves. There are challenges to be faced when engaging in any new initiative, however, the rewards are rich and overwhelmingly fulfilling. It has been my great privilege to both develop and serve as a mentor for these programs. I would encourage all chapters to have as full a share as possible.