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Systemic Mentoring for Competitiveness: The Model of the Timbuktu Academy¹

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The Timbuktu Academy is a comprehensive, systemic mentoring program at Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge (SUBR), Louisiana. We define systemic mentoring as one that is woven into the core functions of an organization. For most universities, those functions include instruction, research, and service. While the Academy has programs for pre-college and graduate students, its Ten-Strand Systemic Mentoring Model was specifically tailored to undergraduate education. We discuss basic considerations that led to the paradigm, programs, activities, and results of the Timbuktu Academy. The proper implementation of the Ten-Strand Systemic Mentoring Model couples teaching and superior learning, on the one hand, and integrates research and education, on the other hand. For undergraduate education, key strands include support (financially or otherwise), scientific advisement, research participation (academic year or summer), immersion in a professional culture, monitoring, and guidance to graduate school. From the summer of 1994 to 2009, the Academy has engaged 2,093 pre-college scholars in its summer programs. To date, the Academy has assisted in the production of one hundred seventy (170) minority undergraduate scholars who have earned a Bachelor of Science degree. Seventy (70) of 83 physics graduates, twenty (20) of 29 chemistry graduates, and twenty-two (22) of 49 engineering graduates have earned graduate degrees or are successfully enrolled in graduate school, with emphasis on the pursuit of the Ph.D. For the above model and results, the Timbuktu Academy received the 2002 U.S. Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring. Its director was among the first individual recipients of this award in 1996. The handouts accompanying this presentation are intended to facilitate the adaptive replication of the Timbuktu Academy by individuals, departments, colleges and universities, and other organizations.

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