

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 4, 2014

**FAMU Utilizes Department of Education Grant to Research
Aspects of Financial Literacy**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – The Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) School of Business and Industry (SBI) and the Department of Psychology are making strides toward building financial literacy through a grant from the Department of Education awarded September 30, 2013. The five-year grant, which totals \$576,245, provides graduate students the opportunity to conduct research and will educate college students and members of the community in the area of financial decision-making analysis, including all aspects of financial literacy, personal responsibility, and retirement security.

“Through the grant, we are using students in business and community psychology as graduate assistants to actively help develop the financial literacy program, conduct research and make presentations at conferences,” said SBI Dean Shawnta Friday-Stroud, a co-principal investigator for the grant. “The collaboration across programs truly makes this an interdisciplinary project.”

The grant funding is used to train graduate students to conduct research on financial literacy and build a database so that the knowledge that they’re accumulating is available for the broader community. Co-principal investigator, and psychology professor Yolanda Bogan, Ph.D., said her goal is to ensure that the community looks beyond the notion of becoming “rich.”

“Due to the disparity in wealth between minorities and the majority population, the Department of Education granted money for the purpose of learning how to build wealth in the minority community, which I really appreciate,” said Bogan, who is also the director of the Office of Counseling Services. “When you look at the areas the graduate students are focusing on, you can see that they are areas that significantly impact the minority population.”

Several business and community psychology graduate students work on the project: Thomas Bolen of Ft. Washington, MD, Shameka Levins of Tampa, FL, JohnWayne Reid of Miami, FL, Brittanye Jacobs of Orlando, FL, Amina Long of Atlanta, Bianca Owens of Barberton, OH., Tanisha Pelham of Nocatee, FL, and Wesley Thornton of New Orleans, LA. Each student selected their own research topics, exploring a variety of areas of interest, including emotional intelligence, money attitudes, substance abuse, financial stress and coping strategies. Each researcher will build a collection of data in their chosen area.

Thornton is researching the effects of stress and substance abuse and use on financial literacy and how it affects young men. “I found that white males use substances in their earlier years more than black males, but after 30 [years of age] black and Latinos use substances more than whites,” said Thornton. “Maybe life didn’t work out the way they planned it, which is the stress factor of ‘why?’ The substance abuse factor... it doesn’t

necessarily explain all of the stress, but it's a moderator because stress can be why you use substances but using can also be the cause of stress."

The long-term goal of the project is to provide graduate students with a broader understanding of research within the context of financial literacy and to help minorities develop a better financial position in the long term. In addition to the research, the graduate students will engage in focus groups to collect undergraduate students' ideas and beliefs on financial literacy. Bogan believes the media and current research have opposing views of what people need to be happy.

"A lot of the time, the media will indicate that in order for you to be happy, you're supposed to be rich," said Bogan. "The literature shows that you need to be able to meet your needs and some of your wants, which is very different from being rich. You need to have relationships that enrich and that are supportive; intimate and trusting relationships. That's what we want people to start thinking about when they think about being successful and happy."

When the grant is complete, Bogan would like to have a wealth of data to provide for future graduate students to build upon and continue studying this topic.

"This is definitely a topic that is not going away," said Bogan. "If we can have this cultural shift in our community that focuses on life satisfaction, not just happiness, then I think that we'll be doing our students a wonderful service of examining more realistic expectations. Everyone is not going to be Beyoncé and Oprah and LeBron James. We have to look at the average person. We want them to really be satisfied with who they are and have their college experience to be a time when they have some realistic expectations and start working towards some attainable goals that they can attain throughout their lives."

-30-

Photo Caption: (L-R) Tanisha Pelham, Bianca Owens, Amina Long and Wesley Thornton.

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