“Setting the Standard of Excellence”
Outside Mason Hall, Summer 2004

SUPER XVI • 2004-2005
The transition from the SUPER summer program to the fall semester brings many changes. Perhaps one of the most drastic changes is the significant reduction of opportunities that SUPER students have together as an intact group. Historically, ORO 500 has been treated as a required seminar for all entering freshmen CAAP students. The main goal is to introduce freshmen to important university issues, services, and college achievement tools. But for SUPER, ORO time has more symbolic value; it is 50 minutes out of every week where the SUPER family can come together as a group and “learn” how to adjust to college life both academically and interpersonally.

This year’s academically oriented ORO seminar topics included resume writing, GPA computation, and learning styles inventory. But “learning” and “adjusting” encompass so many topics, not all of which are directly linked to academics. In one ORO, a public educator from Olin Health Center presented an interactive learning activity, busting several health and nutrition myths undergraduates may have about proper nutrition, weight gain, weight loss, working out, and healthy eating habits. CAAP advisor Richard Lee facilitated a two-part ORO session addressing conflict resolution.

In session one, he helped students to see how listening, rather than speaking, can tremendously help defuse arguments and conflicts.

In session two, Richard encouraged students and staff to pass around a Native American inspired “listening stick.” The holder of the stick shared with everyone the name of a person who has inspired them to do positive things with their life and achieve their highest potential. The touching stories expressed in the room helped all of us see an intimate and vulnerable side to members of the SUPER family that hopefully will inspire students to draw on each other for strength and support. Another community building ORO session tackled the topic of a campus wide epidemic, depression. We took an uncomfortable look into our own lives to identify personal symptoms of depression, hurt, fear, and rejection that may sabotage not only our academic progress but also our relationships.

Though ORO could not possibly address the myriad academic and interpersonal issues linked to college success, it did send an important message – college success is not contingent on academic capabilities alone; the relationship you have with yourself, peers, and support systems can impede or help you achieve your academic capabilities.
Just last fall, through overhanging branches with bright red, yellow, and gold leaves, I gazed in awe at a beautiful waterfall enlivened by the gushing sound of water pounding rocks 30 feet below. The steady rhyme of the water reminded me of the words on a poster of a waterfall: *Always The Same Yet Ever New*.

The beauty and constancy represented by these words drew my attention to the new SUPER students that we embrace each summer. The new group may be predominantly male or female, of varying ethnic mix or family composition, either troubled or supported by their life circumstances, and in their special way, they are all excited about their new beginning as first year students at Michigan State. The highs and lows that will ensue over the course of their first year are experiences that we have encountered before. Yet each student’s ‘way of being’ makes each class distinct and refreshingly new.

Change, the forever constant, is creating new experiences across campus from college mergers to relocations, and from the birth of a new college to department and program name changes. SUPER students also faced adaptation to new program requirements. During the summer in order to incorporate Strength Based advising model, for the first time we employed group advising. The promise of this theoretical model to engage students in open discussion and the benefits of peer role models and group support worked well during the summer when the students shared the same close living space, classes, and academic support network. A more isolated program format during the fall rendered group advising less effective and we returned to individual sessions.

This was the first year that we continued structured study beyond the summer. During the fall the early resistance to this change gave way to the students appreciating the prime study space that they occupied in the College of Law Building. This time was also conveniently used for consultation with a SUPER adviser.

The SUPER student government board was particularly strong leading the students in the annual car wash and fun team building activities during the Fall And Spring Retreat. Contact from the Youth Opportunity program in Detroit resulted in our hosting them on campus. By engaging the students in class shadowing, SUPER students played a major role in the success of their campus visit. SUPER students and staff also benefited from our collaboration with the College of Education. We welcomed Laura Kietzmann, Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology, as our first fall spring semester intern. Laura worked closely with the students and assumed leadership for a major student-centered program during each semester.

Images of managing these firsts along with the students’ unique group identity are etched in our collective consciousness. And this time as we leave SUPER XVI students with similar feelings as before, we reflect on the theme… “Yet Ever New” and we feel especially proud that a student will be joining the Honors College, that a second language student received our annual Outstanding Student Award, and that others are well on their way to becoming successful second year scholars.
Super Presents Plaque to President McPherson

Student signatures from the inception year, 1988, filled the plaque presented to President Peter McPherson fall semester 2004. The signatures represent student and staff collective praise and appreciation for his staunch support of SUPER throughout his tenure at Michigan State.

Left to Right: Betty Sanford, President McPherson, Judy Tran, Ra'Shell Davis, Elizabeth Tappon, & Onte McClendon.

Student Government

This year’s SUPER student government was comprised of four outspoken, outgoing, and outstanding young ladies: Ra’Shell Davis (President), Ileana Cortez (Vice President), Shalonta Davis (Secretary), and Yanisleidy Reina (Treasurer).

Their leadership efforts included fundraising, facilitating recreational activities, and volunteering for community service projects. In the summer, they successfully organized a car wash campaign which established their start-up budget.

Thank you Ra’SHELL, Ileana, Shalonta, and Yanisleidy for giving back to SUPER with your time, creative ideas, and moral support. We hope that SUPER will be a stepping stone for your future student leadership endeavors.
This year’s spring retreat focused on two major themes: refreshing our bonds with SUPER and getting motivated to finish the first year of college. The retreat was a major success.

The spring retreat featured two speakers: Eric Thomas and Mark Nazario. Eric was a new speaker for the SUPER program and was warmly received by a group of excited students. He began his speech with a simple message: "It’s impossible for me to be more excited about your future than you are." He demonstrated that he was very excited for the SUPER students, and gave plenty of wisdom and anecdotes about hard work, discipline, and success. Mark Nazario, a long-time friend of the SUPER program, shared an activity about the tough decisions that need to be made every year when it comes to admissions time. His message was well received by all of the students in attendance. Ultimately, the students found the retreat to be informative and motivational.

The days of summer gone, The memories of mixed-emotions last… Exhustion from work made everyone anxious, waiting for this to be over fast. Trips back and forth from Mason to Bessey, hauling, booking, Us becoming attached to the heat… Everyone’s wishes seemed to come true when the summer retreat rolled around in a matter of weeks. Awards later, everyone greeted each other with hugs and goodbyes, When ten weeks earlier we were strangers, Now leaving with some type of love in our eyes. Overjoyed because of the break, but had to prepare ourselves for fall session in a week… Summer now long gone, only thing left is pleasant memories… Fall came and went, soon so will spring, The semester everyone is looking forward to end… But forced to reminisce about our pleasant memories all over again.
Because of the SUPER XVI program, I have had a chance to experience college before the rest of my peers. I have also had a chance to hold a leadership position as an officer and make many great friends. I am confident in the academic decisions I make because of the guidance provided by the SUPER program. There are many ways to be successful, and choosing the right path among the many available options is more clear to me now.

Shalonta Davis – Freshman
Human Biology Major

Brandon Castillon – Freshman
Advertising Major

The SUPER program was a great way for me to start off my college experience. The Staff of Super was there ever step of the way to guide me and get me off to a good start in the beginning. Not only have they given me great amounts of help getting started off, but they have also given me self confidence and a way to look at life as half full instead of half empty.
I feel that SUPER benefited me in several different ways. The study hall sessions gave me the time to study that I needed. The ORO/MIS meetings brought forward information that was needed that other students didn't have the opportunity to receive. Advising helped me to keep track of my goals and helped me to manage my time. Overall, my experience with SUPER has prepared me for future success in college.

Utaka Walton – Freshman Packaging Major

The SUPER program prepared me for the fall semester. When I needed to know where a building was I already knew from the summer. If I needed to know how to do research in the library I learned that in the summer. If I didn't know anyone in my classes then I could turn to my SUPER family and ask them for help. SUPER was a great experience that will help me throughout my whole college experience.

Krystal McKnight – Freshman Criminal Justice Major

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This spring, SUPER helped out by checking coats at the Marriott hotel. Several SUPER students helped fund raise while helping the community by helping to check coats during the college of communication job fair held at the Marriott Hotel. Pictured here from left, Acacia Rose, Leticia Rodriguez, Ra’Shell Davis, Vonnta Jones, Betty Sanford and Twianna Edwards were all present to make sure the event went smoothly.

By Ashley Tillman, SUPER XV

Over Winter Break 2004, instead of going home to see my family, I got on a plane and flew to Costa Rica. While there I took two classes, climbed mountains, jumped in waterfalls, and swam in two oceans. This trip was more than an educational venture, however. It completely changed my outlook on life.

I made the decision to go on the trip because I wanted to get away from city life for a while. I want to travel the world before I die, and this trip was supposed to be my first adventure. When we first got off the plane I noticed a lot of differences. It was 70 degrees in the middle of December and people were speaking Spanish. There were a lot of American restaurants with Costa Rican food in them. A lot of people walked on the side of the road or rode on motorbikes to get around.

March 31 – Detroit Youth Community Organization Visits SUPER and MSU

Ra’Shell Davis, Shalonta Davis, Katishia Perry, and Ileana Cortez came out and showed their Spartan spirit on a cold, wet, and drizzly March day, playing hostesses to a group of non-traditional high school students from the Detroit Youth Community Organization. The agenda included having “real college food” at Snyder/Philips cafeteria, attending class with a SUPER hostess, and going on an informal tour of the campus. At the end of the day, everyone exchanged hugs. Detroit Youth participants openly expressed that they had more fun on their MSU visit than at their U of M visit, no doubt because of their SUPER hostesses. Chela, the program director, commented, “it felt as if we were with cousins, not tour guides.”

When I got off the plane in Detroit, I was so happy to see my brother I gave him a huge hug. I did not come back with a lot of best friends, nor did I have my camera due to a mix-up on the plane. I had fun and I will go abroad again in the future. I can’t wait for my next adventure!
SUPER XVI
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