

NACME NEWS RELEASE

NACME, Inc. 350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2212 New York, New York 10118-2299 212-279-2626 Fax: 212-629-5178 www.nacme.org

*For information contact
B. Dundee Holt, 212/279-2644*

New Study Identifies Concrete Actions to Attract Minorities to Quantitative Careers

January 15, 2002. New York, New York. According to a report released today, there are a number of concrete actions that educators, policymakers, corporations and foundations can take to address the significant underrepresentation of minorities and women in quantitatively-based fields like engineering, information technology and business.

“Upping the Numbers: Using Research-Based Decision Making to Increase Diversity in Quantitative Disciplines,” commissioned by the GE Fund, General Electric’s philanthropic foundation, not only highlights new research, but it recommends specific actions based on research findings. Shunning abstract exhortations, the report recommends actions that can be taken to engage students from families and households struggling on the edges of our economy, changing their trajectories for the future.

Lead authors Patricia B. Campbell and Eric Jolly presented the report at a special briefing hosted by the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME), Inc. Dr. Babette Moeller, principal investigator for the Center for Children and Technology, and Mt. Vernon Schools Superintendent Ron Ross were among the respondents. In introducing the authors, Dr. Daryl E. Chubin, NACME senior vice president for policy & research, said, “Despite the efforts of many, progress toward the participation of underserved students in quantitative disciplines has been slow. This report features promising practices that we hope will galvanize the nation, as it has the GE Fund.”

— more —

Based on the principles set forth in “Upping the Numbers,” the GE Fund launched a national initiative called “Math Excellence.” In the first year of the project, the Fund committed \$5.5 million for K-16 efforts to help larger numbers of minorities and women prepare for, enter and succeed in quantitative fields.

“Upping the Numbers” looks at student achievement in areas like math and science, course-taking patterns and interest and participation from elementary school through college. It also focuses on factors such as curriculum, the impact of knowledgeable teachers, and effective programs that involve teachers and parents in the preparation of students for careers in fast-growing quantitative fields.

The Mt. Vernon Model

In just three years, Mr. Ross took the predominantly minority Mt. Vernon public school district from the ratings cellar to being recognized as the “most improved school district” in the state of New York. Whereas only 40 percent of students performed at or above grade level in mathematics upon his arrival in 1998, now 80 percent make the grade. His dual focus has been on “teaching teachers how to teach mathematics and letting children know that they can do math.” He says, “I kept repeating the phrase ‘these children are geniuses,’ and eventually changed expectations of what children can do. We held teachers accountable for bringing out that genius and showed them how to do it. Professional development is the key to student achievement.”

NACME’s Chubin said of Mr. Ross, “He has created a model school district. He certainly knows what works. His record adds to the conviction and insights he can offer on what must happen in our schools and with our children.”

About the authors

Lead authors Patricia Campbell and Eric Jolly are nationally known for their research in education evaluation and reform. Dr. Campbell is president of Campbell-Kibler Associates, a research and evaluation group focused on increasing gender and race equity in math, science and technology education. Dr. Jolly is senior scientist and vice president at the Education Development Center, Inc., a not-for-profit organization committed to education that builds knowledge and skill, a deeper understanding of the world, and engages learners as active, problem-solving participants. Lesli Hoey and Lesley K. Perlman, both of Campbell-Kibler, also contributed to the report.