A Georgia State University Alumni from the College of Education has been elected as a national officer for the NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education professional organization. Dr. Dhanfu E. Elston (Ph.D. Educational Policy Studies, 2011), will serve in an executive leadership role as Co-Director of the NASPA African American Knowledge Community (AAKC), along with Dr. Raphael X. Moffett, Vice President of Student Affairs for Langston University. The African American Knowledge Community (AAKC) increases members' awareness of, knowledge about, and appreciation for issues unique to African American professionals working in higher education and student affairs. The AAKC also seeks to educate the NASPA membership on trends and issues related to African-American professionals and students through sharing information on research, campus issues, and mentoring. Currently, Elston serves as co-chairperson of the NASPA Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Council. He is a past recipient of the Georgia State University Martin L. King, Jr. Torch of Peace Award.

**Elston Biography**

Dhanfu E. Elston, Ph.D. is the Executive Director of Student Success and Transition for Purdue University Calumet in Hammond, Indiana, with over eighteen years of student affairs experience. Dr. Elston’s responsibilities include the development and implementation of comprehensive success and retention programs for underserved student populations. He has held previous academic and student affairs positions at Clark Atlanta University and Georgia State University. Dr. Elston received a bachelor’s and master’s degree from Clark Atlanta University, and a doctorate in educational policy studies from Georgia State University. His research includes scholarship in the areas of white student disengagement, student retention, learning communities, leadership development, and historically black colleges and universities. He is a member of the NASPA African American Knowledge Community Leadership Team and the NASPA HBCU Council, and former recipient of the NASPA Region III Research and Assessment Grant.
Candidate Statement
As a constituent group of NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, the leadership of the African American Knowledge Community (AAKC) has worked diligently to highlight the higher education and student affairs interests of members within and supporters of the African diaspora. Within the spirit of progress that continues to be made by the AAKC, Dhanfu E. Elston and Raphael X. Moffett submit our names to be considered as nominees for the Co-Chairpersons positions.

Combined, we have over seventeen years of engagement and leadership experience within NASPA and the AAKC. Most recently, we have served as the Co-Chairpersons for the AAKC Special Populations Research Team. Through the research team role, we have served as representatives for the Multicultural Institute and facilitated the publication of AAKC members’ articles on issues impacting special populations. Our work with the AAKC has led to an additional appointment in coordinating the NASPA Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Council, a constituent group that helps advise NASPA on how best to meet the unique needs of student affairs professionals at HBCUs. Individually, we have both held regional representative roles within knowledge communities that have allowed us to learn the national NASPA structure while serving various groups. The opportunity to work with and learn from the current leadership in a Co-Chairperson elect capacity will provide a seamless transition of leadership and continuity within the AAKC.

As college administrators, our ideologies related to the work of the African American Knowledge Community is firmly rooted in research, professional training, teaching approaches, educational leadership, public policy, philosophy, and theory in higher education. Our professional experiences have included roles at a variety of institutions (public, private, liberal arts, research, Urban, commuter, and HBCUs) that allow for a breadth of areas for exploration in the AAKC. The community that we seek to build upon in the AAKC is not a hierarchical
structure wherein knowledge and information is a set commodity within the leadership, but rather intent on broadening the AAKC through a communal approach that ensures professional development opportunities for a multitude of colleagues in the profession. We intend to embody the Student Affairs professional competencies and NASPA focus areas by allowing ourselves to be learners, team players, risk-takers, and persons in process. The following are three key areas of opportunity in the AAKC on which we plan to focus:

- Creating publication opportunities for AAKC members related to African American higher education trends and emerging issues;
- Provide professional development opportunities for new, mid-level, and executive level members;
- Develop strategies to assist and mentor AAKC participants in their higher education career trajectory.

As advocates for student affairs professionals, we seek to ensure that the concerns which are important to and affecting the African American student affairs staff and students are presented and addressed throughout the whole of NASPA and higher education. Through the expansion of membership and increased engagement, we seek to create a welcoming environment within NASPA for all student affairs professionals interested in issues championed by the AAKC. Having worked together on numerous NASPA programs and initiatives, our complementary styles will allow us to facilitate a nurturing AAKC environment in which the members can experiment with new behaviors, confront mistakes, challenge the status quo, discover themselves, and expand the reach of the knowledge community. Should we be granted the honor to serve, our commitment is to the continued elevation of the African American Knowledge community in support of NASPA’s vision of being the “leading voice for the student affairs profession worldwide.”

NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

NASPA is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession. We serve a full range of professionals who provide programs, experiences, and services that cultivate student learning and success in concert with the mission of our colleges and universities. Established in 1918 and founded in 1919, NASPA is comprised of 13,000 members in all 50 states, 25 countries, and 8 U.S. Territories.

Through high-quality professional development, strong policy advocacy, and substantive research to inform practice, NASPA meets the diverse needs and invests in realizing the potential of all its members under the guiding principles of integrity, innovation, inclusion, and inquiry. NASPA members serve a variety of functions and roles, including the vice president and dean for student life, as well as professionals working within housing and residence life, student unions, student activities, counseling, career development, orientation, enrollment management, racial and ethnic minority support services, and retention and assessment.