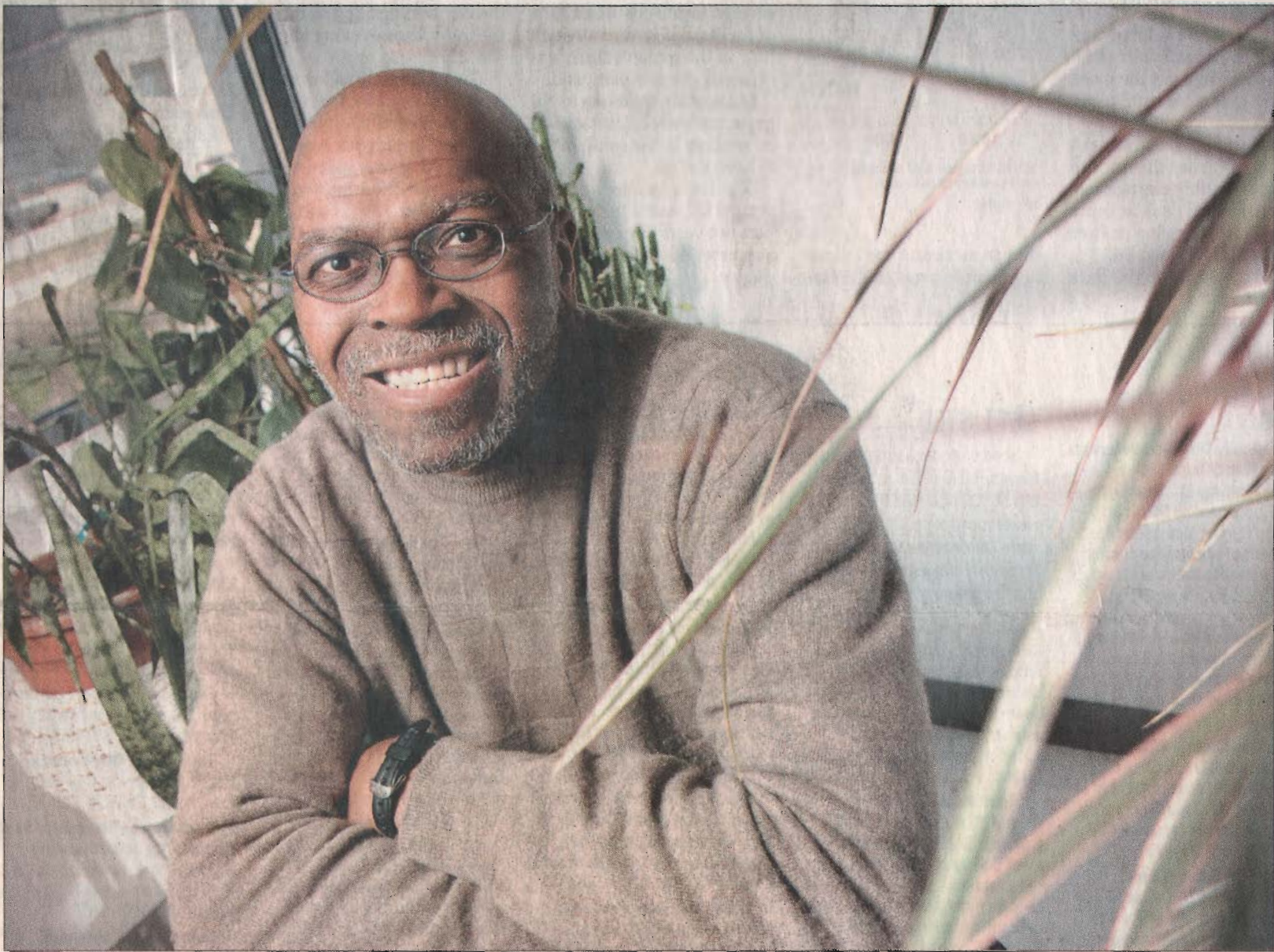


## PROGRAM PREPARES STUDENTS OF COLOR



Times photo by Paul Middlestaedt, [pmiddlestaedt@stcloudtimes.com](mailto:pmiddlestaedt@stcloudtimes.com)

**Robert Johnson, a St. Cloud State University professor and chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies, has helped hundreds of students turn college dreams into reality. Now a \$2.2 million grant will help him work with 600 students of color in the St. Cloud school district**

# A PIPELINE TO COLLEGE

## \$2.2 million grant help local youths

By David Unze  
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For 20 years, Robert Johnson's "pipeline programs" at St. Cloud State University have helped hundreds of students of color realize college as a viable option after high

school and has helped them prepare for it.

A recent grant from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system will allow Johnson to expand that pipeline and establish a presence within St. Cloud school district to reach more children and stay connected more frequently and consistently.

The \$2.2 million grant will be used to target 600 students of color for services such as academic counseling, tutoring and mentoring, cultural enrichment and financial aid and college admissions preparation.

While Johnson's summer camps have brought numerous students of color to campus for a week or several

weeks of on-campus living, classwork and exploration, the MnSCU grant will bring help into the St. Cloud secondary schools.

"We want to identify 600 students in grade 8-12 and give them an array of services, programs and activities that will support them in completing secondary school and going on to post-second-

ary education," Johnson said. "These new services and programs would build upon, interact with, be supportive of and complementary to the existing resources."

Eight academic advising

See **COLLEGE, 6A** ►

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■ **Johnson answers questions about the program/6A**

# Program pushes students to achieve goals

By David Unze

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St. Cloud State University professor Robert Johnson recently answered questions about a grant from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities:

**Question:** Tell us about the program that you are developing with the MnSCU grant.

**Answer:** "This program will reach a larger number of students and will reach them on a sustained basis. And it will have professionals working with them in conjunction with school personnel addressing very basic needs on a consistent basis. We will try to get to students early and work with them throughout the course of their secondary career, encourage them to be on track for graduation, to be on track for college preparation in terms of course-taking, the standardized tests that they have to face, financial aid information, college admissions information and enrichment activities to further encourage their participation and graduation. So we're trying to deal directly with the issues of academic achievement, high school graduation and college admission."

**Q:** Why is this program necessary?

**A:** "As we get older, we rely more and more on the younger generations. And to the extent that those young people are prepared, they're trained, they have skills, then to that extent they will be productive citizens. It's their productivity that will support us, that will enhance our living conditions, our lifestyles and will be the basis for our subsistence in years to come. So we can be short-sighted and self-centered and assume that people are a burden or a nuisance or a bother. But if we don't help prepare the younger people for the roles they have to play in our society, then we all suffer, whether immediately or in the long term. If we aren't engaging young people in constructive pursuits like education, like development, socialization, then they will be engaged in anti-social behavior and that will have an immediate impact on quality of life and on people's well-being in the short-term.

Long-term, people have to be supported. Either they support themselves or they're maintained by public institutions such as prisons, welfare systems, charity and the like. And they don't contribute to society. So it's in everyone's best interest to address these problems, address them early, address them comprehensively and address

them in a meaningful way so that we have young people, regardless of whether they have been citizens of our society for generation or whether they are new arrivals, who are unlikely to return to their places of origin, to have those people prepared to play very productive and constructive roles and to support us as we get older. The fact that this is a MnSCU-funded grant shows that the state is beginning to recognize the need to address the changing demographics and prepare the younger generations for the challenges of the future. And so that's a good sign to see."

**Q:** What approach do you take with students who have potential to get there but maybe don't think they do?

**A:** "Talk to them about what they want to do, where they want to be in their

lives. Talk to them about the means of getting from Point A to Point B. And sometimes it's helpful to have them in an environment where they see people like themselves being successful, doing the things that they would like to do but don't think that they have the opportunity to do. And so if we can get them in our program, be they residential programs or day programs, and they can work with college students who can serve as role models for them, then they can be encouraged to think beyond their immediate circumstances. And we also talk to them about what they need to do in high school, the things they may need to change, behaviors they may want to modify, what courses they may want to take. Talk to them about scholarship opportunities. These are some of the approaches that we can take and do take."

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