Minority parents receive help

By Stephanie Harper
Lantern staff writer

Rosalyn Gilbert wants to be a teacher and a high school track coach. But she found as both a student and single mother, she could not reach her goal without help.

Help came to Gilbert in the form of an OSU program aimed at helping minority single parents obtain their diploma.

The program, called ACCESS, is designed to recruit and maintain minority single parents at Ohio State, said Cynthia Applin, the program’s original coordinator.

Gilbert, 25, a junior majoring in health education, enrolled at Ohio State six years ago and took classes on and off for her first three years.

In the winter of ‘86, she dropped out of school after having her baby.

Gilbert said the ACCESS program helped her find financial aid and affordable housing so she could return to school this summer quarter.

CELESTENE ROBB, coordinator of the program since January 1989, said no other Big Ten university has such a program.

Robb said the ACCESS program links the individual with valuable resources and information at Ohio State, such as child care, financial aid, and housing.

“We’re just trying to take out some of the hustle and bustle and running from here to there for our mothers because it’s hard as it is to just be a student,” Robb said. “To be a student and a mother is a real problem.”

“This program lets you know someone’s there to help you,” Gilbert said. “Right now there’s not enough people taking advantage of it.”

Robb said the number of students in the program will increase to 16 by fall quarter, with at least 50 inquiries wanting to hear more about the program.

BARBARA NEWMAN, associate provost for the office of academic affairs, headed a planning committee of 14 which initiated the program last summer. The committee applied for an OSU affirmative action grant and was awarded $15,440 to fund the program through the end of 1989.

Gilbert is the only member of ACCESS taking advantage of the program’s connection with Buckeye Village to help members find housing.

The program has a similar relationship with the OSU Child Care Center to help with child care costs. The program offers two free nights of babysitting at the center.

One of the original members of ACCESS, Terri Long, takes advantage of this babysitting service. Long, 29, a sophomore majoring in education, has three children ages 11, 9, and 2. She said she uses the time the children are with the babysitter to study.

Robb said there are currently no statistics determining how many single parents are at OSU. One of the future goals of ACCESS is to compile a count of single parents.

“ULTIMATELY, WE would like to be a resource for all single parents here on campus,” Robb said.
Single parents at OSU talk to Celeste

By Mary Yost
Dispatch Statehouse Reporter

"Keep the financial aid coming. It does give us a chance to help contribute to society and become better citizens."

Terri Long asked Gov. Richard F. Celeste to give that message to President Bush today on behalf of herself and other single parents working toward college degrees.

Celeste met yesterday with parents at the Ohio State University Child Care Center to gather ideas to take to the president’s education summit today and Thursday in Charlottesville, Va.

Celestene Robb told Celeste that single parenthood is "a major barrier to education." Robb directs OSU’s ACCESS program to help single, minority students with children stay in school. ACCESS helps them find housing, financial aid and day care.

Long, a mother of three, maintains a 3.9 grade-point average. She said ACCESS lets her take her children to the day-care center two evenings a week so she can study.

Willa Jackson, a freshman along with her oldest son, said she worked 15 years before ACCESS helped her return to school.

"I thought I was doomed to a life of being a secretary," she said. "I was doing very well, but there was a ceiling, and I had reached the ceiling. This is a brand new door."

Celeste said he will urge Bush to redesign student aid packages with more grants and fewer loans. He said he fears that otherwise students who really want to be teachers will look to other careers to pay off student loans quicker.

"I don’t want student loans to affect vocational choices," he said.

Celeste said he will urge more federal money for Head Start and push for national performance standards for schools.

A common set of high standards would help students, teachers, parents and public officials know what must be done in education to meet the challenges of the next century, Celeste said.

He called Head Start, a 25-year-old federal program providing preschool for disadvantaged children, "a program that we know works." He said children with Head Start experience are more likely to stay in school and go on to college.

Jennifer Weaver, who is in the ACCESS program, helped Celeste drive that point home. Weaver, 18, said she was enrolled in Head Start as a child. When she entered OSU this fall, she was designated a minority scholar.

The visit was one of several Celeste has made recently to ask educators, students, business leaders and parents what they would like to see come from the education summit.

Celeste said only one of every five eligible children in the nation is enrolled in Head Start. Ohio added state money to the program this year and will expand it to reach about 45 percent of those eligible in the next two years. Only eight other states help pay for Head Start.

Celeste said he asked Bush in a pre-summit letter yesterday to consider increasing federal Head Start funding by $3.5 billion to cover two-thirds of those eligible, and to challenge states to pick up the rest.
ACCESS provides support

By Becky Brooks
Lantern staff writer

Jennifer Weaver finds the struggle of being a full-time student, full-time mother and part-time employee well worth it. Weaver, 21, was the first person in her family to graduate from high school, and now she is a sophomore majoring in education at Ohio State.

A typical school day for Weaver begins at 5:30 a.m. “I wake my kids up, get them ready and drop them off at day care by 8 a.m.,” she said. She spends her day taking education classes and doing clerical work for a university office until 5 p.m.

“After I fix dinner, I like to spend family time with my kids,” she said. Weaver tries to have her kids in bed by 8 p.m., so she can spend the rest of her evening studying.

“Lots of people said I could never do it, and those are the people I send my grades to every quarter,” Weaver said.

Weaver is a participant in the ACCESS Program at Ohio State.

“The ACCESS Program is a social support program for minority, single parents,” Jacqueline Wade, director of Academic Skills Enrichment Program, which encompasses the ACCESS Program, said.

The program is open to African-American, Latin-American, Asian-American and Native-American, single parents who have custodial responsibilities for their children and who have not completed an undergraduate degree.

The ACCESS Program was instituted in the spring of 1990. There are currently 24 women participating in the program.

“Currently the program only has African-American women, but this was not by design,” Wade said. “We are very open to other groups,” she said.

“Single parents have problems, interests and needs unique to their university life,” Wade said. “ACCESS offers them support and the chance to succeed,” she said.

“If it wasn’t for the ACCESS Program, I wouldn’t have come to college,” said Kim Butler. Butler, 18, gave up a minority excellence scholarship when she found out she was pregnant during her senior year of high school. “I didn’t know what to do; ACCESS opened up a lot of doors,” she said.

“The ACCESS Program assesses families’ needs and helps them access the appropriate resources,” Wade said.

The program offers financial aid seminars and helps people take advantage of community resources and social services, she said. The program also helps single parents to access child care resources and find low-cost or subsidized housing.

“Most participants receive public assistance and qualify for low or no-cost child care,” Wade said.

Weaver said she was able to go to school because of the housing and child-care connections provided by ACCESS.

ACCESS also offers programs that bolster family life. The programs discuss a range of issues such as child abuse, sexual harassment and the legal rights of single parents. “All programming is pro-active and preventative,” Wade said.

The most important function of the program is that it provides a community for minority, single parents to share and connect with one another, she said.

“Most of my friends are in the ACCESS Program; they have been my extended family,” Weaver said.

“We have the potential to become a national model because we are one of the few universities to provide services expressly for the needs of minority, single parents,” Wade said.

“If we get the funding, we want to expand the program to at least 50 participants,” she said.

The average age of an ACCESS participant is 22, and most women have one child around two-years-old, Wade said.

The average grade point average is 3.2. “We have a whole range of majors: some engineering, education, business, etc.,” Wade said.

“I chose education as my major because I want to give back to my community; the kids are not getting the education they deserve,” Weaver said. “I don’t want my kids to live like that, I want them to have a better life,” she added.
Access program assists single mom earn degree

By REGGIE ANGLEN
Call and Post Contributing Writer

For Sherri Smith of Columbus, receiving her college degree last month from the Ohio State University was one of the thrills of her life. The road to graduation for this single mother of two sons began 15 years ago.

During that time Smith earned a two-year associate degree in business administration from Franklin University. She then worked at Ohio State on a bachelor of arts degree in communications, with an emphasis in telecommunications. She was awarded her degree at winter quarter commencement, March 19.

One key to Smith’s success was participation in Ohio State’s Access Program, offered by the Office of Minority Affairs for the past four years. The program serves minority single parents who are interested in pursuing higher education.

“The Access Program helped me make Ohio State a much smaller place to be,” Smith said. “Access has made a difference in my world.” She hopes to pursue a career in entertainment public relations.

"We provide a supportive atmosphere and linkage network,” said Ken Kirksey, program coordinator and a graduate student in Ohio State’s College of Social Work. “We try to eliminate some of the stress that minority single parents might confront in attaining their goals.”

The program has 41 participants, all of whom are women except one. While the program is comprised of mostly African Americans, Access is open to any Ohio State minority student who is enrolled at the university.

“I’d like to see more men get involved in the program,” Kirksey said. “We know there are single male heads of household out there who are interested in furthering their education, and we want them to apply.”

Services offered to Access participants include referrals to housing, day care, tutoring and book stipends. Workshops are held each quarter that deal with issues such as stress management, family conflict, empowerment skills and more.

“It was a struggle for Sherri,” said her mother, Barbara Covington, who is attending Ohio State part-time to earn a doctorate in adult education. Covington works for the city’s water department.

“Learning goes on throughout adulthood and Sherri proves that,” Covington said.

If you’re interested in receiving information about Ohio State’s Access Program, contact the Office of Minority Affairs, Office of Retention Services at 292-8732.
Group seeks increased support

By Leslie A. Waddell
Lantern staff writer

Access, a support program for minority single parents, is looking to increase its services and membership through permanent funding, said Lee Jones, director of Retention Services.

Access, founded in fall of 1990, is one of two college programs in the country that focuses on the needs of minority single parents, Jones said. Access provides a number of services geared to the concerns of these students.

"To retain students, you have to look at specific needs as opposed to lumping people," Jones said. "Single parent needs are different."

Ken Kirksey, Access coordinator, said there is a great need for programs like the group.

"Our definitions of families are changing," Kirksey said. "Single parent families are becoming more acceptable and demographics are changing."

Access is open to any minority single parent with legal custody of a child. The student must be in good academic standing with the university and enrolled full time, Kirksey said.

Participants receive assistance with the use of both university and public services, he said.

All participants receive financial aid assistance and scheduling priority. Access reserves slots in Buckeye Village and the Ohio State Child Care Center for its members.

In addition, each student receives 10 free hours of childcare from the center. This time must be used for academic purposes, including night classes, midterm, and studies.

Access works closely with federal and state programs, Kirksey said. The program gets student participants into subsidized housing, and helps students receive Aid for Families with Dependent Children and Women with Infants and Children benefits, as well as medical care.

"Lots of people aren't aware of what they are entitled to," he said. "Access provides the networking and resources for single parents to be able to continue their education."

According to Kirksey, Access currently has 41 members. Thirty-nine are African-American females, one is a Hispanic female, and one is an African-American male.

The program is aiming to have 60 members, he said.

Getting into the program involves an application and interview process.

For membership, potential participants are assessed based on the student's need and the potential to do college-level work.

Access works with the student to make sure the education is completed, Kirksey said.

According to Carol Phillips, a senior from Columbus and participant in the Access program, Ohio State should be doing more to be accessible to single parents.

An increase in childcare spaces and financial aid packages need to be available, she said.

Phillips said that finding the time to balance her studies and to care for her two-year-old daughter is the most difficult aspect of being a student single parent.

"There needs to be an increase of programs like Access to help single parents," she said.

Phillips added that participation in the program helped her adjust to life as a full-time student and parent.

"At first, having a child had a negative impact, like it was the beginning of the end," she said. "Things are a lot better now, and having a child has become a motivational factor in my education."

Kirksey said the value of programs like Access will be seen with time.

"Some people think that programs like these will encourage pregnancy, but we're just providing an opportunity for people in that situation," he said.

Kirksey added he would like to see the program get into recruitment of high school single parents that do not see college as an option because they have a child.

If single parents are reached early, there is less of a chance they will become a burden to the system, he said.

"I have a great deal of respect for single parents willing to face the challenge of getting a college degree," Kirksey said.
OSU program assists minority student moms

By Julie Stebbins
Lantern staff writer

Single minority mothers attending Ohio State are receiving a helping hand from AXCESS, a part of the Office of Retention Services.

Janice Tharp, program coordinator of ORS, said AXCESS is designed to assist single mothers who go to school fulltime. She said AXCESS teaches women in the program how to manage a home while faced with the task of raising children, taking classes, working and paying the bills.

In some instances AXCESS can procure family housing on campus as well as child care options. In addition to these services, AXCESS provides scholarships for books for women in the program who maintain a 2.5 grade point average.

Tharp said.

Some graduate members have been awarded Magna Cum Laude, and others have gone on to pursue advanced degrees. Tharp said she is proud of the academic achievements of the members.

Jennifer Williams, a graduating senior from Cincinnati, said AXCESS was the only way she could attend college. Williams said she got pregnant in her senior year of high school and thought she would have to turn down the scholarship she received from Ohio State.

Williams said when she informed Ohio State she was pregnant and could not take the scholarship, they told her about the AXCESS program.

"The AXCESS program gave me information on how to get child care here at the university. How to get family housing here at the university, so I could still live on campus and bring my baby with me, and still be able to accept my scholarship," Williams said.

AXCESS helped Williams with more than just housing. She said that during her second pregnancy she had a run in with a professor who suggested she drop out of school. But AXCESS assisted her.

"He suggested many times that I should not come back (to class), or that I should take a "W" (withdraw), or he would give me an incomplete," Williams said.

"The AXCESS coordinator at that time stepped in and let him know that I had no problem completing the course work for this course," Williams added.

Tharp praised Williams for her outstanding academic accomplishments achieved during her third pregnancy. She said Williams had the baby right before finals week and still received a 4.0 GPA for the quarter.

Williams, married a year ago, is now helping with the AXCESS program. "I remained active in it because I care about it so," Williams said. She also added that after she graduates she will still be in Columbus teaching in the Columbus Public School system, so she will still be here to help with AXCESS.

Tharp said there are 60 women in the program and many more wanting to join.

"The population of teenagers and young women wanting to have an education is growing," Tharp said. "We hope to give them the hope and desire."
MINORITY RESOURCES IN ACTION

Anreetta Griffin, far left, facilitates a parenting workshop for minority students with children. The workshop is sponsored by the Office of Minority Affairs.

Eric Johnson, a transfer student majoring in actuarial science, tutors Melissa Morris, a freshman pre-med student. The service is provided by Office of Minority Affairs.
For minority students at Ohio State there is a wealth of programs and workshops designed to offer support and boost retention.

For minority single parents at OSU the ACCESS program offers numerous workshops and financial and emotional support.

"We want to give the support necessary to help them complete their education. It's a retention tool," said Lucie Moore, director of the ACCESS program.

Forty-seven women are currently enrolled in the program which began in 1987. To qualify, a student must be a minority with custodial rights and working towards a bachelor's degree, Moore said.

Students enrolled in the program receive 10 free hours of evening child care, a $300 book scholarship for students with a 2.5 or above and priority housing in Buckeye Village.

"If we don't put the money into them now, we still end up putting the money in later," Moore said.

The program also helps residents find other resources which may be available to them.

"We help to tie them into other resources that may be in the community," Moore said. "We help them find out about section eight (a low income housing program) and other welfare programs."

In addition to financial supports the ACCESS program also offers its participants the emotional support which single parents need to make it through the university, Moore said.

For minority students who may be experiencing academic difficulties, The Office of Minority Affairs Retention Services has a free tutoring program.

"The tutoring programs' primary goal is to help counteract rising attrition rates and slow academic progress of undergraduate minority students who face distinct academic struggles in the college educational process," said Don Ibezim, Ph.D. retention services program director.

The tutoring program began in 1983 and has between 60 and 90 tutors on file who provide service for approximately 1600 students per year.
Patrick Forrester, a second year graduate student, works with John Calhoun, a first year graduate student, on the computers available in the Frank W. Hale Jr. Black Cultural Center.