

The Benefits of a Comprehensive Retention Program for African American Students at a Predominately White University

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Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the retention of African American students at predominately White colleges and universities continues to be problematic. Although many of these institutions have implemented retention programs for African American students, few have incorporated a comprehensive program that utilizes multi-program components. Using a qualitative methodology, this study explored how a comprehensive retention program at one predominantly White university impacted the matriculation of African American students. The results revealed that the retention program had a positive influence on the success of African American students, thereby resulting in the students' receiving several academic, social, and cultural benefits. Also emerging from the study was a comprehensive retention model for supporting the retention of African American students at predominately White institutions.

Keywords: retention, retention programs, African American students, graduation rates, colleges and universities

Throughout history, the African American experience has been immersed with social subordination, political repression, and economic exploitation. In an effort to repress these experiences, African Americans identified education as the most valuable resource for improving their standing in America (Watkins, 1993). The two federal legislative acts that helped facilitate changes in higher education opportunities for African Americans were the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Higher Education Act of 1965.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ordered a census of all U. S. postsecondary institutions that identified students by race or ethnicity and cautioned administrators at these institutions that federal monies would be withheld if found to be noncompliant with equal opportunity mandates. The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) expanded both the number and types of financial assistance available to citizens pursuing higher education. While the HEA triggered an increase in the enrollment of African Americans at predominately White institutions, little change could be seen and difficulty still remained in their retention and graduation rates (Davis, et al., 2004). Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson and Mugenda (2000-2001) viewed this condition as being one of the most pressing concerns in higher education.

Although campus-based affirmative action initiatives have contributed to an increase of African American students at predominantly White institutions (Williamson, 1999), this student population is still achieving less and graduating at lower rates than their White counterparts

(Davis, 2004). In fact, the 2008 report of the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010) revealed that the enrollment of African American students at predominately White institutions was 14% compared to 68% for White student enrollment. Further, the research notes that in the 21st century, African American students will continue to enroll in predominantly White institutions at higher rates than at Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and if this current trend for enrollment and completion continues, over half of the African American students enrolled at predominately White institutions will fail to graduate (Benton, 2001).

Studies which have identified factors that affect the adjustment, academic performance, and attrition of African-American students (Ting & Bryant, 2001) at predominately White institutions have resulted in many of these institutions initiating retention programs targeted specifically for African American students. Despite these efforts, African American students continue to achieve less and receive a lower percentage of degrees than White students (Rodgers & Summers, 2008). To improve the effectiveness of retention programs at predominately White institutions, researchers suggest that these programs specifically target African American students (Furr & Elling, 2002) and take into consideration how race and attrition affect their experience and psychological processes (Rodgers & Summers, 2008).

The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of a retention program for African American students at one predominantly White university by focusing on the experiences of African American students, faculty, and staff involved in the retention program. It was hypothesized that an understanding of student perceptions of the benefits of retention programs could provide useful information to higher education institutions seeking alternative ways to improve retention programs for African American students.

Problems and Concerns of African American Students at Predominately White Institutions

African American students enrolled at predominately White institutions are confronted with many challenges. Among the most often cited is stereotypes. When African American students internalize the stereotypes of their White peers, it causes them to spend a lot of time proving their academic credibility in the classroom, thereby causing some students to contemplate dropping out (Fries-Britt and Turner (2001). African American students also believe they are treated differently because of stereotyping. In fact, some students have reported being treated like they needed to be remediated in order to meet the standards that were set by their White educators (Davis, 2004).

Another problem reported by African American students is difficulty in their relationships with White faculty. Good faculty-student relationships are important to the success of African American students (Love, 2008). Tinto (2006-2007) stated that such relationships are also essential to student retention. Nutt (2003) emphasized this point by asserting that, "It is the people who come face-to-face with students on a regular basis who provide the positive growth experiences for students that enable them to identify their goals and talents and learn how to put them to use" (p. 17). However, Allen (1988) found that the majority of African American students reported that their White professors showed some difficulty in building a working teacher-student relationship, and that many professors commonly avoided interactions with them outside the classroom. Additionally, over half of the students expressed strong concern about

their professors' fairness in evaluating their academic performance. Some students had difficulty knowing if their evaluations were based on their race or academic capabilities (Sedlacek, 1999). Therefore, it is not surprising that African American students tend to believe that White faculty are prejudiced towards them, which can take the form of lower performance expectations and/or overly positive reactions to work quality (Allen, Bobo, & Fleuranges, 1984).

Relationships with faculty are very important to the success of African American students at predominately White institutions (Love, 2008). And, the lack of African American faculty/staff has been reported as being one of the central problems faced by these students (Allen, 1992). According to Sedlacek (1999), the absence of powerful African American figures as role models can have a strong effect on feelings of loneliness and isolation; and the lack of a variety of viewpoints relevant to African American students could impact their learning, development, and identification with the institution. The low number of African American faculty can also contribute to limited access to faculty for support and mentoring (Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002).

Retention Efforts at Predominantly White Institutions

To increase the success of African American students, many predominately White institutions have implemented a variety of academic retention strategies (e.g., support programs, programs for first year students, mentoring programs), as well as made retention an institution-wide commitment. The importance of support programs has been recognized as a significant contributor to student success (Gansemar-Topf & Schuh, 2005). Many of these programs are designed to increase the retention of African American students because of the disproportionately large number of ethnic minority students dropping out of college (Thile & Mott, 1995). The most beneficial supports are programs such as tutoring, study skills training, and mentoring. When compared to a matched group, participation in a support program was shown to have a significant impact on the retention of African American students (Dale & Zych, 1996), and tutoring and study skills training were identified the most helpful services (Bell & Drakeford, 1992; Swail, 2004).

According to Himelstein (1992), programs for first year students, such as early intervention programs, have proven to assist in the retention of African American students at predominantly White institutions. These programs focus on the freshman year as being a critical determinant of college continuance by helping students adjust to college life and academic expectations (Himelstein, 1992). Researchers ("Features", 2006; Jamelske, 2009; Robbins & Smith, 1993) report that universities with the most success at retaining African American students proactively identify these students and provide retention services within the first few weeks of the semester. Moreover, minority students who participate in freshman courses have been found to have greater knowledge and use of university resources, which helps increase their networking and satisfaction with the university (Robbins & Smith, 1993). Effective retention programs also have a pre-freshman bridge program to help students increase their academic skills before enrolling in more challenging college courses (Campbell, Denes, & Morrison, 2000).

Mentoring programs are also an invaluable service to African American students. These programs are typically targeted at minority students, women, and academically under-prepared students with the goals of enhancing the institution's degree completion rates (Blackwell, 1989). Mentoring programs have many benefits and are becoming very common in universities across

the country (Leon, Dougherty, & Maitland, 1997). Some of the benefits of mentoring programs include students' successful attainment of their educational and career goals and the facilitation of faculty-student relationships, which are important in student retention (Blackwell, 1989). Mentoring programs decrease students' discomfort at predominantly White institutions (Kimbrough, Molock, & Walton, 1996), and having mentors who successfully attained their degree at these institutions and peers who are racially and ethnically similar that are persisting in their education, can foster a belief in one's own abilities to complete certain tasks in order to obtain specific goals (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Lorang, 1982). In brief, mentoring programs can provide students with an opportunity to interact with faculty thereby enhancing both academic and social support, which increases their retention (Guffrida, 2005; Tinto, 2006-2007).

Institution-wide commitment is also critical to student retention. Parker (1997) notes that institution-wide commitment (i.e., involvement of the entire university) provides the greatest impact for improving student retention. Institutions should work diligently to assist minority students in their quest for academic success by removing barriers that may contribute to their failure. This can be accomplished by appropriately responding to concerns relating to academic preparation, financial assistance (scholarships), and maintaining an ongoing process for identifying other concerns. To assist with achieving this goal, institutions should integrate minorities into all aspects of institution life (e.g., the boardroom, classroom, staff). To help make the goal a reality, institutions must develop educational initiatives that create a campus atmosphere where students are presented with instructions for success (Parker, 1997).

Method

Research Design

This case study utilized qualitative methodologies to explore how a retention program at one southern, predominantly White university, impacted the matriculation of African American students. Case study is a method that can be used to study an individual or an institution, in a unique setting or situation, in as intense and as detailed manner as possible, to enable the researcher to develop a rich account of what is occurring (Salkind, 2008). This study addressed two research questions:

1. How does participation in a student retention program at a predominantly White university influence African American students?
2. To what extent do students and staff/faculty identify component(s) of the retention program as positively influencing the success of African American students?

Setting

The setting for this study was a predominantly White university in the southern region of the United States. During the time of this study (Fall 2004) there were 13,140 undergraduate students, of which 1,139 was African American. Data reported for the 2011-2012 academic year indicate an undergraduate student population of 14,591, with 7.2% or 1,045 African American. The graduation rate for African American students reported for the 2011-2012 academic year was 80.9% compared to 84.9% during the time of this study. Appendix C provides a summary of

the graduation rates for undergraduate students who graduated four, five, and six years after the study.

Participants

The participants in this study were six students and four retention program directors/deans, of which one held a dual appointment (i.e., staff/faculty). The six students (3 males; 3 females) were all African American, ages 18-21 years with a 2.5 GPA or higher, and actively involved in one or more components of the university's retention program for at least two semesters. These students (2 sophomores, 2 juniors, 2 seniors) were from varying backgrounds and their motivation for degree attainment ranged from representing and helping their communities to achieving career and/or financial goals. The retention program staff was comprised of two African American females, one African American male, and one Chinese male.

Data Collection

After obtaining institutional review board approval, student participants were recruited for the study and interviewed concerning their experiences with the retention program. The recruitment process involved: (a) mailing copies of the recruitment letter and consent forms to the administrative assistant to post in the retention program office, (b) sending announcements to qualifying students, and (c) making announcements at various events/meetings/activities hosted by the retention program office.

Data were collected at the end of the 2004 spring semester, and was comprised of audiotaped interviews with retention program staff/faculty and students. The interview questions were open-ended (see Appendix A and B) and designed to explore each individual's experience at the university and in the retention program. It also consisted of a collection of university documents (i.e., reports, web pages, publications, and students' grades).

Data Analysis

Data analyses were conducted using coding, memos, constant comparative analysis, and triangulation. *Coding*, the formal representation of analytical thinking, involved analyzing and generating categories and themes to facilitate analysis; developing a coding scheme for the categories and themes; and diligently and thoroughly making passages in the data using the codes (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The coding process consisted of codes developed from the literature review, documents on the retention program, and transcribed interviews. The data was continuously coded and analyzed as it was collected, and all of the codes were kept in a notebook, color-coded, and labeled according to the source of origin.

Memos, an essential tool in qualitative analysis, capture and facilitate one's analytic thinking about data (Maxwell, 1996). Memos are meant to be analytical and conceptual rather than descriptive. They flourished in complexity, density, clarity, and accuracy as the research progresses and force the analyst to move from working with data to conceptualizing it (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, memos were kept on a continuous basis. The researcher began writing memos after developing initial codes. These memos contained: (1) the views of the researcher regarding the interviews as they were held, (2) thoughts of the researcher that

occurred during the time of codebook analysis, (3) ideas of the researcher that emerged from the student and staff/faculty interviews, and (4) various documents that were regularly and consistently analyzed.

Constant comparative analysis, a process that involves the reduction of data into a manageable model and a continual reassessment and refining of concepts as fieldwork proceeds (Lincoln, 1994), was also used. For this analysis, the researcher took all of the color-coded codes and compared them for similarities and differences. Emergent themes were identified from the codes after multiple coding and data analyses. The list of codes was reevaluated throughout the data collection phase resulting in a revision of the themes, which included merging multiple themes, adding, and disconfirming codes. However, when disconfirming evidence was found, the researcher examined all sources of data for additional evidence. Also, as the list became smaller the color-coding was redone. This process was repeated continuously until themes were established.

Triangulation, the final phase of data analysis, was used to ensure trustworthiness and reliability of the data. Triangulation involved the use of multiple methods of data collection, an analysis to assist in confirming research conclusions (Sheperis, Young, & Daniels, 2010).

Results

Research Question 1: *How does participation in a student retention program at a predominantly White university influence African American students?* The first research question attempted to determine how participation in a retention program at a predominately White university influenced African American students. It was revealed that the retention program had a positive influence on student success. This positive influence resulted in the students receiving innumerable academic, social, and cultural benefits. The students felt that they needed this resource to help them successfully cope with various aspects of the university and stated that it was comforting to know that they had an advocate and a system of support. Overall, the students confirmed that program participation influenced them academically, socially, and culturally.

Academically, the students benefitted in a variety of ways. They stated that involvement in the mentoring program helped with their coursework and internships. They also commented on how the program staff helped them pinpoint exactly what they needed to focus on to achieve academic goals. Additionally, the students pointed out that the staff was influential in their decision to remain at the university.

Socially, the students stated that program participation increased their socialization with faculty, program staff, African American leaders, and other students. It also kept them abreast of various issues and concerns at the university that were prevalent in the African American community. They also stated that the retention office provided them with information on various events and organizations, and encouraged their involvement.

Culturally, the students' cultural awareness was a prevalent theme that emerged. Attending a predominantly White university appeared to have made these students very aware of their culture. They were proud to be African American and proud of their cultural heritage. This pride made them feel that it was important to participate in cultural activities and classes. Fortunately,

the retention program allowed them the opportunity to attend cultural activities and interact with prominent African American leaders.

Moreover, the students conveyed that because of the support received from the retention program, they were empowered and better prepared to deal with various situations. For them, the program made the difference between staying and leaving, and coping and not coping. The students saw this program as a comfort zone, a home away from home, and their advocate. Also, the students felt that any obstacle they faced whether it was racial, financial, personal, social, or academic, the program would support them.

Research Question 2: *To what extent do students and staff/faculty identify component(s) of the retention program as positively influencing the success of African American students?* The second research question investigated the extent to which students and staff/faculty identified component(s) of the retention program as positively influencing the success of African American students. The students identified several components of the retention program as having a positive influence on their retention at the university. However, the majority of students identified the mentoring program and peer helper program as the most influential.

The mentoring program provided the students with academic and career advice. They found it very helpful to talk with mentors who looked like them in professional positions and who had expertise in their area of interest. Also, they were able to seek help on academic assignments and build lasting relationships. Both the staff/faculty and students considered the mentoring program a valuable resource in providing academic, social, professional, and cultural enhancements. It should be noted that the recruitment of faculty mentors involved the director sending letters to all minority faculty with an invitation to join the program. Those electing to join completed an application and returned it to the director. The faculty selected for involvement in the program was required to attend an orientation and reception, and were matched with a student according to their interests and careers.

The peer helper program paired students with upperclassmen that advised them on how to navigate the various areas of the university. They also made favorable remarks about how their peer helpers provided them with an instant support system. In fact, the students commented that the peer helpers reached out to them throughout the summer with the writing of three letters, thus cultivating the start of an emerging friendship. The peer helpers hosted various events that promoted socialization as well as cooked dinners; and they took them to restaurants or movies. For academic assistance, they held study sessions and had an initiative designed to increase the grade point averages of African American students. The students were glad to have upperclassmen that had already acclimated to the university to share with them and to help them proactively deal with various issues or situations.

Also, the peer helpers greeted parents and students during the recruitment celebration that the Office of Admissions hosted for African American students who had been offered admissions to the university. On the day the students moved onto the university campus, a formal welcoming reception was held for them, which was hosted by the peer helpers along with other faculty and staff. The Office of Admissions also hosted an award ceremony to honor the students for completing their first semester of college. Overall, the students maintained that the support given to them from their peer helpers helped them to survive their first year of college.

Interestingly, the students who served as peer helpers also believed in the benefits of the program to first year students. Most of the current peer helpers had participated in this program and knew first-hand how students felt during their first year. Staff/faculty also reiterated the effectiveness of the peer helper program. Their views were similar to the peer helpers regarding the importance of students' success during their first year of college and how it increases the likelihood for student success at the university. The consensus of students and staff/faculty was that the peer helper program was instrumental in helping first year students remain at the university. And, that the development of relationships with staff/faculty and peers was very important for students.

Additionally, the staff/faculty believed that the retention program was beneficial to students because pride in the mission and goals of the program were well exhibited. Students were excited as they described their programs and were proud of the work of the entire office. Each student gave heartwarming stories of the ways the staff helped him or her. It seemed that the students were able to feel the staff's dedication and commitment as sincere, which further helped them to be positively impacted by the program. Moreover, the staff/faculty seemed to be aware of the importance of this program and how beneficial it was to the students. They kept abreast of the effectiveness of their program by gathering information through surveys and other forms of data collection.

Discussion

This study was undertaken to explore how a retention program at one predominantly White university in the southern region of the United States impacted the matriculation of African American students. The overarching theme that resonated from this research was that the retention program was an effective conduit for sustaining, supporting, and cultivating African American student success.

At the time of this study, the retention program was comprised of five tiers—a Peer Helper Program, Mentoring Program, Center of African American Culture, Library of African American History, and an African American Parents Association. The current retention program is still comprised of five tiers, with one exception—the Library of African American History was replaced and has now become a Tutoring Program.

The data analysis revealed that the retention program was successful in retaining African American students as a result of the combined efforts of the retention program, its commitment to African American students, and institution-wide commitment. The analysis also revealed that the students benefited academically, socially, and culturally from participating in various components of the retention program. They received academic assistance from the peer helper and mentoring program, and they were able to receive academic advice from the peer helpers (e.g., information on classes, majors, professors).

Socially, the students' support system was comprised of both faculty/staff and peers. The students were provided with an immediate social network from their peer helpers and fellow peers, and they were able to socialize with their mentors and staff in the retention program office and at various social events. Culturally, the students were able to attend various forums, listen to and interact with well-known African American figures, and participate in small group discussions to learn about their culture. The retention program that supported African American

students housed an African American Library and computer laboratory, which enhanced each student's ability to study and research their culture. Consequently, universities that report improvement in their retention rates for African American students have strong African American student organizations that help students to foster a sense of belonging at the university ("Features", 2006). Additionally, African American cultural centers and organizations offer support and a mechanism for students to become more integrated into the campus community (Rodgers & Summers, 2008).

All of the participants identified the mentoring program and peer helper program as the most effective components of the retention program. In fact, they considered these programs as being the backbone of the retention program. Mentoring programs for African American first year students that include upperclassmen peers have shown great success on student retention at many universities ("Features", 2006).

Unexpectedly, the researcher found that the retention program was also successful due to the commitment and dedication of the retention program staff/faculty. Each dean (or program director) that the researcher spoke with talked passionately about the role they served. They seemed to think that what they did was more than a job but a personal commitment and duty. They also appeared to have a vested interest in seeing African American students graduate.

Likewise, the researcher found that university-wide commitment to the retention of African American students further enhanced the effectiveness of the retention program. For example, the retention program staff established relationships with the entire university community to assist African American students in obtaining their degree. They also encouraged the university to hire African American faculty and staff so that students could see someone who looks like them in various positions of authority. Love (2008) and Oseguera and Rhee (2009) point out that good faculty relationships are beneficial to African American student retention at predominantly White institutions. Though highly influential in the success of the students, the retention program staff did not take all of the recognition for the high retention rates. Instead, they attributed success stories to the commitment of the university as a motivating factor to student retention, which is supported by Steele (1997) who asserted that institution-wide commitment makes the greatest impact on student retention. Also, it should be noted that since the time of this study, this predominately White university has continued to implement its retention program, and it continues to be successful at retaining African American students. Though some of the staff has changed, the overall structure of the program is relatively the same.

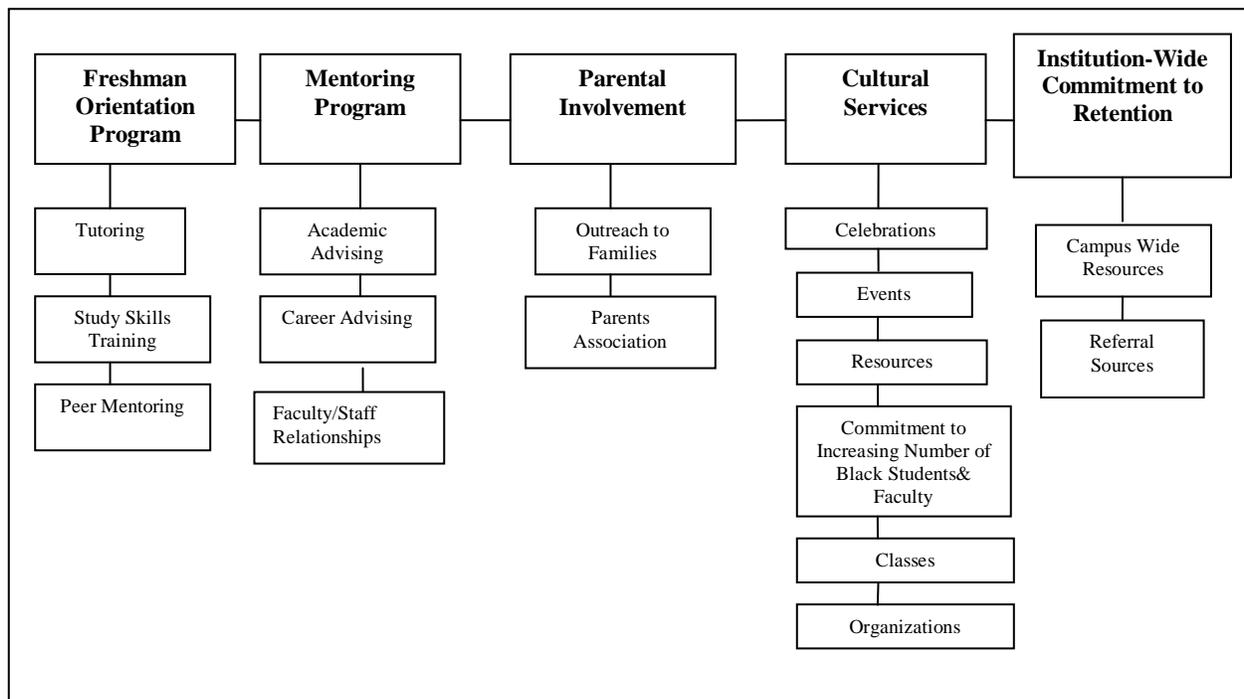
Limitations

This study is not without limitations. The main limitation was its limited student and faculty sample size. Another limitation is that the study explored the effectiveness of a retention program at one predominately White university. The data collection period was also brief and consisted of one round of interviews; and, the data collection timelines did not allow for the interviewing of students at each classification level. Despite these limitations, this research provides important information about a retention program for African American students. Future research should include a larger sample size and allow for a longer data collection period. Such an investigation would serve as an extension to the existing research and possibly add another dimension to understanding the impact of retention programs on African American students' success at predominantly White colleges and universities.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest that a comprehensive retention program that focuses on academic, social, and cultural development have the potential to enhance the success of African American students. The comprehensive retention model shown in Figure 1 was developed from data obtained in this study and prior research on retention. It includes five main components—a freshman orientation program, a mentoring program, parental involvement, cultural services, and institution-wide commitment to retention.

Figure 1. Comprehensive Retention Model



Freshman Orientation Program

The freshman orientation program includes tutoring services, study skills training, and peer mentoring. The tutoring services are designed to enhance students' academic capabilities as well as assist them in any area of weakness. The study skills training program is designed to provide students with various strategies to explain how to study and manage time effectively. The peer mentoring component is designed to provide the students with the positive experience of upper class students and place incoming students with the much-needed assistance to adjust to college life (e.g., ways to navigate the college environment; tips on classes, professors, and information on majors). It is also structured to provide introductions into campus social life and extracurricular activities, as well as formulate friendships. One of the most important aspects of the freshman orientation program is building peer relationships, which is needed to help combat the alienation and isolation that African American students experience at predominantly White institutions. Research on retention illustrates that students who actively participate in educationally purposeful activities on campus achieve more satisfaction and are more successful (Bean, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Mentoring Program

The mentoring program includes academic advisement, career advisement, and the building of faculty/staff and student relationships. Academic advising can help students monitor their academic performance. Career advisement can provide students with information to assist them in making realistic career choices. Student/faculty/staff relationships, which are positive in nature, helps students feel supported and provides them with a confidant they can trust and depend on through their highs and lows at the university. According to Tinto (1993; 2006-2007), developing good faculty relationships are critical in helping students integrate into the academic and/or social systems of the university.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement at predominately White colleges and universities is important. It can be cultivated through outreach activities for students' families and a parent association. To be effective, outreach to families must begin prior to a student's entry to the institution. For example, parents should be given a variety of information on financial aid to help alleviate the financial burden of tuition. While a parent association typically serves to enhance students' university experience and help build collaborative relationships between parents, students and the university; they also serve as advocates for parents, participate in recruitment and fundraising activities, as well as sponsor programs that promote parental involvement. Additionally, a parent association could provide students with, for example, an extra support system and additional financial assistance for books, emergencies, supplies, and trips home through donations and fundraising. Researchers suggest that an African American student's family is a key factor in assisting students with obtaining financial assistance (Stewart, Russell, & Wright, 1997).

Cultural Services

Another integral part of retention programs is cultural services (Patton, 2006). These services should include cultural activities and celebrations, resources, as well as a committed effort to increasing the number of African American faculty and students on campus. Cultural activities and celebrations could consist of celebrations of importance to African American culture. Resources should be available to provide students with access to useful information about their culture, including various cultural organizations and classes on the university campus. According to Hikes (1998), parents and students want universities to recognize their culture and address their concerns.

Institution-Wide Commitment

Institution-wide commitment is also essential to sustaining a welcoming and supportive campus environment. This type of engagement can provide retention program staff with an abundance of resources for the students it serves. Research indicates that institution-wide commitment and involvement provides the greatest impact on student retention (Parker, 1997).

If implemented collectively, all of the components of the retention model—freshman orientation program, mentoring program, parental involvement, cultural services, and institution wide commitment—presented in Figure 1 should be effective and helpful in increasing the retention of

African American students at predominately White colleges and universities. Of equal importance is the faculty and staff working with these students. These entities must be sincere and have a genuine interest in the success of African American students. This is especially important because students can readily sense the sincerity of faculty and staff.

Conclusion

It is imperative that African Americans excel in education to disprove the myths and stereotypes (e.g., being lazy, criminal, anti-intellectual, not valuing an education) that are prevalent in society (Gray, 2001; Davis, 2004). Society needs to recognize that African Americans are intelligent, hardworking, and productive members of society, and that all citizens regardless of race or nationality should be given an equal opportunity to pursue a college degree in a welcoming and nurturing environment.

Because African Americans will continue to enroll in predominantly White colleges and universities for various reasons—e.g., tuition costs, scholarships, programs of study, academic rankings, facilities—these institutions need to promote their matriculation in a manner that equals to that of their White peers by implementing retention programs that increase student satisfaction, retention, and graduation rates. Despite the limitations in the present study, this research continues to reiterate that predominately White institutions can be successful at retaining African American students and that retention programs are essential to retention efforts and student success.

While this study suggests that not all African American students' experiences are negative at predominately White institutions, there were things that could be done to enhance these experiences in more positive ways. The literature explained that even though educators recognize certain factors that affect retention and subsequent matriculation, few schools have rectified the problem.

Lastly, although most, if not all, predominantly White institutions have offices that address the needs of ethnic minority students, as well as one or two components of retention (e.g., mentoring), rarely do these institutions have a comprehensive retention program geared specifically for African American students. For retention programs to be effective for African American students, these programs should be designed specifically for this population.

AUTHOR NOTES

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Appendix A: Student Interview Protocol

Pre-entry Attributes (family background, skills, and abilities, prior schooling)

1. Could you tell me about where you grew up?
2. Could you tell me a bit about your parents' educational background? Your siblings? Other family members?
3. What role did your parents and family play in your education? Can you give me an example? How did your family feel about education?
4. Tell me about your high school background. What courses did you take? Do you think these courses prepared you for college? For your major? For your career choice?
5. Why did you decide to attend college?
6. Was there anyone who played a role in your education and decision to attend college?
7. What attracted you to the University of _____?

Goals and Commitments

1. What do you want to get from attending college? What are you doing to get it?
2. Tell me about studying--How much do you study? Do you enjoy what you are studying?
3. What will it take you to be successful and graduate from this university?
4. What motivates you to succeed?
5. Imagine yourself ten or maybe five years from now. What do you see? Where do you want to be?

Social System (extracurricular activities and peer-group interactions)

1. Tell me about your own personal experiences here.
2. What is the social scene on campus? Say it's a Wednesday night here. Can you tell me what that might look like for you? What about a Saturday night?
3. Describe your interactions with peers on campus.
4. What makes you feel comfortable here on campus? the department? lectures? What makes you feel uncomfortable? on the campus, department, lectures?
5. Are you involved in any extracurricular activities? Why or why not? Describe involvement.
6. How helpful do you find the staff to be? In what ways are they helpful? Answering questions? Informing you of opportunities? resources? If so, can you give me a specific example of how staff has helped you?

7. What does it mean to be a minority student at this campus?
8. Do you feel that you receive equal treatment here at the university?
9. In addition to the retention program, this university offers classes and/or activities that are specifically geared toward African American or black students. Do you participate in any of these? IF YES---How often? Can you give me an example of something you've done in these activities or classes? What led you to join this class? What does it give you? IF NO, what led you not to take part in these classes and or activities?

Academic System (academic performance, faculty/staff interactions)

1. What is your major?
2. What is your classification?
3. What classes are you currently taking?
4. How are your classes coming along?
5. Tell me more about the class you just mentioned in which you are doing well.
6. What do you think makes the difference between the classes in which you are doing well and the others?

Academic/Social Integration (personal normative integration)

1. How long have you been involved in the retention program for African American students?
2. What prompted your involvement?
3. What components of the retention program do you specifically use or participate in? Can you give me a specific example of your participation?
4. Do you feel the retention program helped you?
5. Describe how (academically, socially, culturally) it helped you and what component(s) you feel helped the most.
6. How does the faculty/staff of the retention program help you specifically?
7. How has participating in the retention program affected your opinion about the university?

Appendix B: Faculty/Staff Interview Protocol

1. What is your position at the university?
2. How long have you worked with the students in the retention program?
3. Have you seen a difference in the success of students who participate in the program?
4. What component of the program do you feel are most effective?
5. What is your perception of the students who are participating in this research study involvement in the retention program?
6. What do you perceive as the benefits of a program such as this to the students it serves?
7. Describe the differences that you see in the students who participate in the program as compared to those who do not.
8. How long are the students usually involved in the program?
9. What are the classifications of the students who usually participate in the program?
10. Do you actively recruit students for the program?
11. How do you recruit students for the program?

Appendix C: University Graduation Rates

| First-Year Retention and Graduation Rates for First-Time First-Year Undergraduate Students Entering Fall 2004 | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Ethnicity | Number Entering | First-Year Retention Rate | Percent Graduated After | | |
| | | | 4 Years | 5 Years | 6 Years |
| African American | 288 | 95.8% | 69.1% | 80.9% | 82.6% |
| Asian American | 335 | 99.1% | 91.0% | 95.8% | 97.0% |
| Hispanic American | 139 | 94.2% | 85.6% | 89.2% | 89.9% |
| Native American | 5 | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Non-Resident Alien | 161 | 93.2% | 80.1% | 83.9% | 86.3% |
| Unclassified | 224 | 96.0% | 84.4% | 91.5% | 92.4% |
| White American | 1,944 | 97.3% | 85.9% | 93.6% | 94.2% |
| TOTAL | 3,096 | 96.9% | 84.5% | 91.8% | 92.7% |
| Gender | | | | | |
| Gender | Number Entering | First-Year Retention Rate | Percent Graduated After | | |
| | | | 4 Years | 5 Years | 6 Years |
| Male | 1,436 | 96.7% | 82.9% | 89.9% | 92.7% |
| Female | 1,660 | 97.1% | 85.8% | 93.4% | 94.1% |
| TOTAL | 3,096 | 96.9% | 84.5% | 91.8% | 92.7% |