D. **Assessment of Compliance with Section 4: Federal Requirements**

*4.1   The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement consistent with its mission. Criteria may include: enrollment data; retention, graduation, course completion, and job placement rates; state licensing examinations, student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals. (Student achievement)

Off-Site Committee's Response

Texas College is an open-admission institution that defines student success by its ability to enable students to become active productive members of society. The College evaluates student success by assessing course completion rates, state licensing examinations, and job placement. The one state licensing exam that is tracked is Teacher Education and two years of data was provided as evidence. Although criteria for evaluating student achievement were identified, thresholds for each criteria, rationale for acceptability of thresholds, and data were not provided.

Institution's Response

The Off-site Committee noted that the College has both defined student success and evaluates student achievement. The Committee was concerned in that although criteria were identified, the thresholds for each and the rationale for acceptability of thresholds and data were not provided.

As an open admission institution, the administration has reviewed national data of student success/achievement to review the items that are general practices of similarly situated post-secondary institutions. The administration has also looked at data for the state of Texas to determine if students were similarly situated. The results of the data review indicated that students nationally and regionally (Texas) were similar in that: 1) approximately an average of 25% of high school graduates were prepared to enter the post-secondary level with the ability to perform well in a general core; 2) the highest attrition of high school student s after entering college was during the freshman year; 3) the communication skills of high schools graduates were lacking; and 4) the need to address students' achievement per the criteria of the Department of Education was needed. All of the aforementioned were the elements of consideration that assisted in the College determining the measures of student achievement. Attachment 4.1-A is a sample of the information that assisted the College in determining the measurements for graduation rates, retentions rates, and success. Moreover, the measures of student achievement were subsequently shaped in a way that the College believed it could both measure and provide intervention.

The thresholds for each criterion are listed below with the rationales they were chosen for consideration. This is to include:

- Graduation rate: The graduation rates for the institution are calculated to meet requirements of the 1990 Student Right-to-Know Act, which requires postsecondary institutions to report the percentage of students who complete their program within 150 percent of the normal time for completion (within 6 years for students pursuing a bachelor's degree). It is reported by the National Center for Statistics that the graduation rate since 2007 for private nonprofit institutions was 65 percent and 32 percent at private for-profit institutions. Texas College chose the aforementioned criteria as measures for success.
- Retention rate: To determine if the institution's FTE (full-time equivalence) is being met, an annual review of retention is measured annually and between semesters. At four year institutions , private non-profit the average retention rate ranges from 64 percent at the least selective institutions to 97 percent at the most selective institutions. Texas College chose the minimum range as a criterion to work towards i.e., 79 percent.
- Educator Preparation Program (pass rate): The State of Texas requires that institutions with Educator Preparation Programs maintain a 70 percent minimum pass rate. Texas College has chosen 70 percent as the annul goal to maintain accreditation compliance.
- Job Placement rate: The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reports the annual employment rates of graduates. The data provided for 2014, revealed that 69.4 percent of college graduates found employment. Texas College has chosen to use the rate provided because it was a better indicator of recessionary influences.
- Demonstration of Communicative Skills, Critical Thinking and Content Knowledge: The secondary data for high schools in Texas revealed that approximately 25 percent of high school graduates are prepared to enter post-secondary education with the academic preparation to do well in a general education core. The remaining 75 percent are reported to need developmental programs, enrichment work and/or tutorial assistance. With this in mind, Texas College has chosen a benchmark of 70 percent to successfully complete a general core within a two-year period.

The chart that follows references the results of success for the most recent year.

Goals	Assessment Measures	2013-2014 Achievement Data
Demonstration of the command of communicative skills	The ASSET/Compass assessments are used to evaluate students' performances in Reading and Writing.	19% (pre-test)/44% (post-test)* *Results after one semester
Demonstration of the command of computational skills and critical thinking	The ASSET Reading component offers evaluative assessment of critical thinking and comprehension.	23%
Demonstration of content knowledge	Evaluation by essay and authentic portfolio assessments are used. Pre-	19% (pre-test)/24% (post-test)*

	and Post-test measures are used by content areas and differ pending the subject.	*Results after one semester
Graduation Rate	Graduation is defined as students' successful completion of the college's core requirements, content requirements and institutional requirements. It is also expected that students would have met his/her financial obligations to the college at the time of graduation. The graduation rate is measured when students have successfully completed the requirements juxtaposed to the term they entered.	30%
Retention Rate	The retention of students is measured per annual retention and term retention. The annual rate is measured from Fall term to Fall Term and the term rate is measured from term to term. Retention is defined as students who enroll full-time with no break in service.	75% (annual rate)
Job Placement/Graduate-professional school attendance	The job placement/graduate-professional school attendance of students is measured upon their successful completion of the baccalaureate program. The assessment is conducted in six month intervals following graduation The assessment is monitored up to a year and on-half period.	34% Job placement 20 % Graduate/professional school
Educator Preparation Program Completion (Licensure Programs)	The assessments include ASSET/Compass testing, TExES (Texas Examination of Educator Standards) and THEA. The Educator Preparation Program Survey is also used.	100% Completion rate

Documentation:

Attachment 4.1-A: Reviews from the Literature and Data for the State of Texas

Attachment 4.1-A reviews from the Literature and Data for the State of Texas

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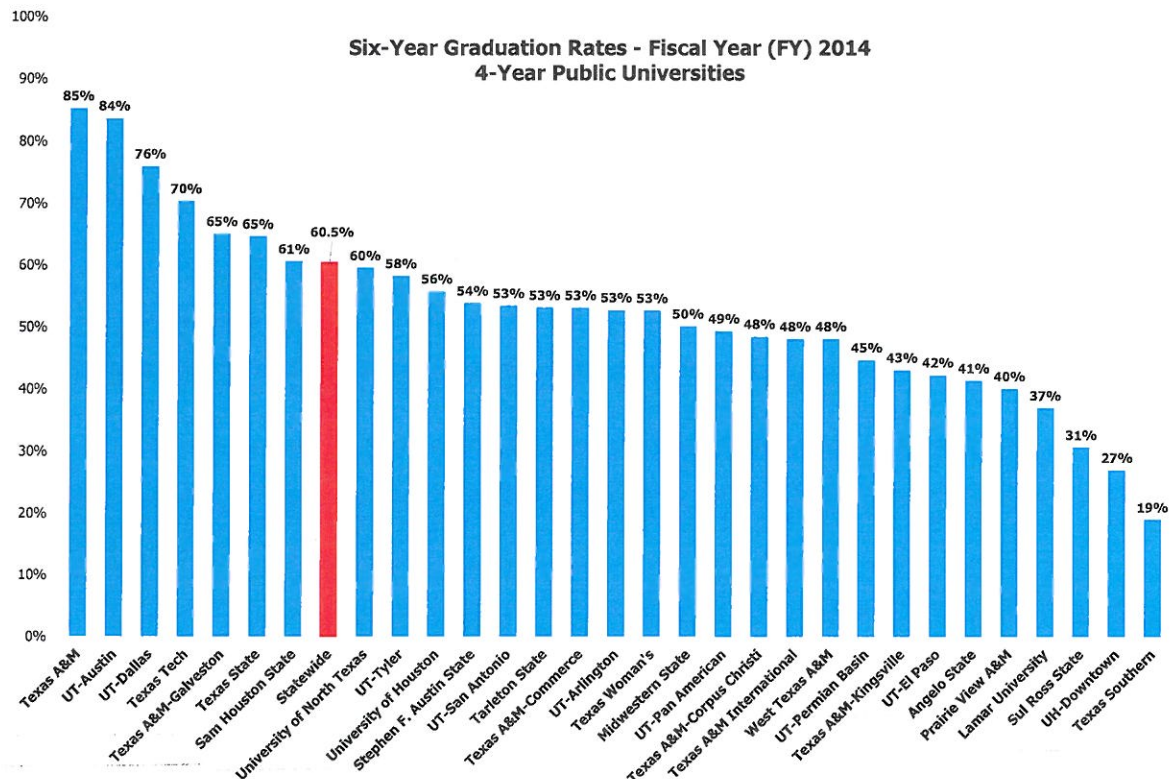
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Texas Achieves 60.5 Percent Six-Year College Graduation Rate, Up from 49.6 Percent Prior to *Closing the Gaps* Plan

Texas public institutions strive to do even better in the future.

Feb. 5, 2015, Austin, TX – For the first time since completion data has been collected, Texas achieved a 60.5 percent six-year college graduation rate from its public universities in fiscal year 2014, up from 49.6 percent since the 2000 implementation of the *Closing the Gaps by 2015* strategic plan.

"Texas has worked hard to implement student success programs that lead to higher completion rates. This achievement is even more remarkable because Pell grants increased 14.3 percentage points during this time, which means a greater number of economically disadvantaged students are completing college," said Higher Education Commissioner Raymund Paredes. "While the rate of improvement is impressive, it's still not sufficient to meet our workforce needs. We're getting better, but we're not getting better fast enough."

Six-Year Graduation Rates - Fiscal Year (FY) 2014
4-Year Public Universities

Institution	Rate
Texas A&M	85%
UT-Austin	84%
UT-Dallas	76%
Texas Tech	70%
Texas A&M-Galveston	65%
Texas State	65%
Sam Houston State	61%
Statewide	60.5%
University of North Texas	60%
UT-Tyler	58%
University of Houston	56%
Stephen F. Austin State	54%
UT-San Antonio	53%
Tarleton State	53%
Texas A&M-Commerce	53%
UT-Arlington	53%
Texas Woman's	53%
Midwestern State	50%
UT-Pan American	49%
UT-Corpus Christi	48%
Texas A&M International	48%
Texas A&M	48%
West Texas A&M	45%
UT-Permian Basin	43%
Texas A&M-Kingsville	42%
UT-El Paso	41%
Angelo State	40%
Prairie View A&M	37%
Lamar University	31%
Sul Ross State	27%
UH-Downtown	19%
Texas Southern	

Six-Year Graduation Rates, Texas Public 4-Year Universities*

4-Year Public Universities**	FY 2000 (Entered Fall 1994)	FY 2002 (Entered Fall 1996)	FY 2004 (Entered Fall 1998)	FY 2006 (Entered Fall 2000)	FY 2008 (Entered Fall 2002)	FY 2010 (Entered Fall 2004)	FY 2012 (Entered Fall 2006)	FY 2014 (Entered Fall 2008)	Percentage Point Change FY 2000 to FY 2014
Angelo State	40.6%	43.5%	44.5%	44.0%	40.0%	44.0%	40.8%	41.3%	0.7%
Lamar University	28.6%	37.4%	37.3%	37.1%	36.9%	33.8%	35.9%	36.9%	8.3%
Midwestern State	37.8%	35.1%	39.5%	40.8%	44.2%	41.2%	46.3%	50.1%	12.3%
Prairie View A&M	29.3%	35.9%	38.0%	38.1%	39.6%	34.2%	40.3%	40.0%	10.7%
Sam Houston State	43.9%	43.2%	49.7%	53.0%	54.5%	57.9%	57.8%	60.6%	16.7%
Stephen F. Austin State	51.8%	51.3%	49.8%	52.0%	51.7%	57.0%	55.3%	53.8%	2.0%
Sul Ross State	24.1%	21.9%	27.3%	26.2%	24.5%	28.5%	32.6%	30.6%	6.5%
Tarleton State	42.6%	51.8%	50.1%	53.2%	49.5%	47.5%	47.6%	53.1%	10.5%
Texas A&M	77.0%	79.2%	80.9%	81.6%	83.6%	83.6%	84.2%	85.2%	8.2%
Texas A&M International	N/A	46.8%	45.3%	48.7%	45.1%	46.0%	45.7%	48.0%	N/A
Texas A&M-Commerce	46.4%	42.3%	48.1%	42.5%	43.5%	44.8%	44.6%	53.1%	6.7%
Texas A&M-Corpus Christi	49.9%	46.5%	54.0%	53.8%	52.9%	50.3%	51.0%	48.4%	-1.5%
Texas A&M-Galveston	59.7%	50.8%	52.4%	61.9%	59.9%	59.2%	62.6%	65.0%	5.3%
Texas A&M-Kingsville	26.8%	32.8%	32.2%	36.4%	35.0%	41.7%	39.2%	43.0%	16.2%
Texas Southern	14.4%	21.5%	16.4%	13.8%	14.8%	14.9%	14.1%	18.9%	4.5%
Texas State	52.9%	56.5%	58.6%	61.9%	63.8%	64.4%	61.4%	64.6%	11.7%
Texas Tech	57.2%	61.8%	65.5%	66.0%	68.8%	72.8%	73.6%	70.3%	13.1%
Texas Woman's	48.5%	48.6%	52.5%	50.4%	55.2%	54.5%	54.2%	52.6%	4.1%
UH-Downtown	17.8%	19.1%	17.6%	21.3%	18.5%	18.1%	17.4%	26.9%	9.1%
University of Houston	44.6%	43.6%	46.6%	49.9%	49.0%	53.1%	53.6%	55.7%	11.1%
University of North Texas	46.6%	48.5%	48.3%	54.5%	53.3%	57.4%	56.8%	59.5%	12.9%
UT-Arlington	37.4%	43.6%	44.1%	49.7%	49.6%	50.7%	55.5%	52.7%	15.3%
UT-Austin	72.2%	75.1%	78.0%	79.8%	81.3%	82.9%	82.5%	83.6%	11.4%
UT-Dallas	59.9%	64.7%	65.6%	64.0%	68.2%	70.7%	71.9%	75.9%	16.0%
UT-El Paso	24.7%	27.0%	29.7%	31.5%	33.8%	37.4%	41.2%	42.2%	17.5%
UT-Pan American	26.5%	28.2%	31.2%	37.0%	40.2%	38.9%	44.0%	49.3%	22.8%
UT-Permian Basin	42.5%	29.6%	42.9%	40.3%	42.6%	44.6%	47.9%	44.6%	2.1%
UT-San Antonio	34.5%	34.8%	37.0%	38.2%	43.1%	44.0%	43.1%	53.4%	18.9%
UT-Tyler	N/A	0.0%	55.6%	50.9%	44.2%	49.6%	51.8%	58.2%	N/A
West Texas A&M	34.6%	42.6%	44.2%	44.2%	47.6%	45.6%	48.2%	48.0%	13.4%
Statewide	**49.6%**	**52.6%**	**55.5%**	**57.2%**	**56.8%**	**57.4%**	**58.7%**	**60.5%**	**10.9%**

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
* First-time, full-time, degree-seeking students who have graduated from the same or another Texas public university in six years or less.
** Upper-level institutions, newly established institutions, and institutions that have very recently admitted freshmen are not included due to calculation methodology.

Higher Education Accountability System

Statewide Totals

Four-Year Institutions (not Texas public) Performance

Accountability CB Data   CB Home   Measures and Definitions   Participation   **Success**   Excellence   Institutional Efficiency and Effectiveness   Questions?

Always Show Contextual Measures

PDF Version

This Section Complete Report

N/A: not applicable
NR: not reported

Institution Selection

To see information on a particular institution/system, select the institution below.

Statewide--Four-Year Institutions (not Texas public) ▼

Success

Persistence of Students at Institution

5. Persistence rate of first-time at the instiution undergraduates: One-Year ⓘ	Entering Cohort Fall 2008		Entering Cohort Fall 2011		Entering Cohort Fall 2012		Point Change Fall 2008 to Fall 2012
	Cohort	Rate	Cohort	Rate	Cohort	Rate	
Total	4,867	**45.9%**	8,102	**46.0%**	3,580	**42.0%**	**- 3.9**
Same institution		39.9%		39.9%		37.6%	- 2.3
Other institutions		5.9%		6.1%		4.4%	- 1.6
White	608	**33.6%**	2,318	**49.3%**	864	**49.7%**	**- 16.1**
Same institution		25.8%		44.0%		45.6%	- 19.8
Other institutions		7.7%		5.3%		4.1%	3.7
African American	515	**38.8%**	2,114	**38.3%**	1,011	**39.4%**	**- 0.5**
Same institution		32.8%		32.5%		35.0%	- 2.2
Other institutions		6.0%		5.9%		4.4%	1.7
Hispanic	724	**42.0%**	2,105	**54.1%**	733	**44.5%**	**- 2.5**
Same institution		32.3%		47.5%		39.3%	- 7.0
Other institutions		9.7%		6.6%		5.2%	4.5
Asian	45	**46.7%**	109	**60.6%**	35	**48.6%**	**- 1.9**
Same institution		35.6%		54.1%		42.9%	- 7.3
Other institutions		11.1%		6.4%		5.7%	5.4
International	20	**70.0%**	69	**55.1%**	87	**70.1%**	**- 0.1**
Same institution		55.0%		52.2%		70.1%	- 15.1
Other institutions		15.0%		2.9%		0.0%	15.0
Other	2,955	**50.4%**	1,384	**39.2%**	848	**32.4%**	**18.0**
Same institution		45.9%		31.5%		27.8%	18.1
Other institutions		4.5%		7.7%		4.6%	- 0.1

6. Persistence rate of first-time at the institution undergraduates: Two-Year ⓘ	Entering Cohort Fall 2007		Entering Cohort Fall 2010		Entering Cohort Fall 2011		Point Change Fall 2007 to Fall 2011
	Cohort	Rate	Cohort	Rate	Cohort	Rate	
Total	4,873	**35.2%**	4,440	**19.8%**	7,669	**30.0%**	**- 5.2**
Same institution		26.3%		13.9%		22.6%	- 3.8
Other institutions		8.8%		5.9%		7.4%	- 1.4
White	906	**33.7%**	1,012	**18.5%**	2,148	**31.5%**	**2.2**
Same institution		25.3%		15.0%		24.2%	1.1
Other institutions		8.4%		3.5%		7.3%	1.1

African American	668	**37.1%**	1,025	**16.5%**	1,943	**25.6%**		**11.5**
Same institution		26.3%		11.0%		18.3%		8.1
Other institutions		10.8%		5.5%		7.4%		3.4
Hispanic	826	**35.7%**	996	**22.6%**	2,036	**34.4%**		**1.3**
Same institution		26.2%		15.8%		27.1%		- 0.9
Other institutions		9.6%		6.8%		7.3%		2.2
Asian	63	**39.7%**	55	**25.5%**	105	**41.0%**		**- 1.3**
Same institution		30.2%		16.4%		31.4%		- 1.3
Other institutions		9.5%		9.1%		9.5%		0.0
International	30	**26.7%**	24	**25.0%**	69	**46.4%**		**- 19.7**
Same institution		26.7%		20.8%		43.5%		- 16.8
Other institutions		0.0%		4.2%		2.9%		- 2.9
Other	2,380	**35.0%**	1,326	**21.1%**	1,365	**26.4%**		**8.5**
Same institution		26.7%		13.7%		18.3%		8.4
Other institutions		8.2%		7.4%		8.1%		0.1

Graduation and Persistence Rate: 6-Year

7. First-time, full-time students enrolled in a minimum of 12 SCH their first fall semester who have graduated or are still enrolled at the same institution or another Texas public, independent, or career institution ⓘ

	FY 2011			FY 2012			FY 2013			Point Change FY 2011 to FY 2013
	Entering Fall Cohort	Cohort	Rate	Entering Fall Cohort	Cohort	Rate	Entering Fall Cohort	Cohort	Rate	
Total	2005	307	8.5%	2006	13	38.5%	2007	5,290	27.5%	19.0
Same institution			0.3%			0.0%			19.7%	19.4
Other institutions			8.1%			38.5%			7.8%	- 0.3
White	2005	100	10.0%	2006	5	40.0%	2007	925	26.5%	16.5
Same institution			0.0%			0.0%			19.5%	19.5
Other institutions			10.0%			40.0%			7.0%	- 3.0
African American	2005	90	7.8%	2006	2	50.0%	2007	652	29.3%	21.5
Same institution			1.1%			0.0%			20.2%	19.1
Other institutions			6.7%			50.0%			9.0%	2.3
Hispanic	2005	108	6.5%	2006	6	33.3%	2007	879	26.4%	19.9
Same institution			0.0%			0.0%			18.7%	18.7
Other institutions			6.5%			33.3%			7.7%	1.2
Asian	2005	4	0.0%	2006	0	N/A	2007	69	26.1%	26.1
Same institution			0.0%			N/A			17.4%	17.4
Other institutions			0.0%			N/A			8.7%	8.7
International	2005	0	N/A	2006	0	N/A	2007	36	58.3%	N/A
Same institution			N/A			N/A			41.7%	N/A
Other institutions			N/A			N/A			16.7%	N/A
Other	2005	5	40.0%	2006	0	N/A	2007	2,729	27.4%	- 12.6
Same institution			0.0%			N/A			19.8%	19.8
Other institutions			40.0%			N/A			7.6%	- 32.4

Graduation Rate: 4-, 5-, & 6-year

8. First-time, full-time entering, degree-seeking, students enrolled in a minimum of 12 SCH their first fall semester who have graduated from the same institution ⓘ

	FY 2011			FY 2012			FY 2013			Point Change FY 2011 to FY 2013
	Entering Fall Cohort	Num	Rate	Entering Fall Cohort	Num	Rate	Entering Fall Cohort	Num	Rate	
		NR			NR			NR		
4-Year graduation rate			NR			NR			NR	N/A
5-Year graduation rate			NR			NR			NR	N/A

6-Year graduation rate	NR	NR	NR	N/A

*Data as reported by IPEDS

Completion Rate: 4-, 5-, & 6-year

9. Degree-seeking students entering the institution for the first time in fall semester indicated who have graduated from the same institution or another Texas public, independent, or career institution ⓘ

	FY 2011			FY 2012			FY 2013			Point Change FY 2011 to FY 2013
	Entering Fall Cohort	Num	Rate	Entering Fall Cohort	Num	Rate	Entering Fall Cohort	Num	Rate	

Statewide data is not available for this measure.

Degrees Awarded

10. Number of degrees awarded ⓘ	FY 2010	FY 2013	FY 2014	% Change FY 2010 to FY 2014
Total Degrees	**5,187**	**16,165**	**16,228**	**212.9%**
White	1,947	5,578	5,474	181.2%
African American	1,562	3,863	3,628	132.3%
Hispanic	1,027	2,732	3,025	194.5%
Asian	242	393	732	202.5%
International	125	223	268	114.4%
Other	1,620	3,376	3,101	91.4%
Level				
Associates	1,195	3,287	2,786	133.1%
Baccalaureate	2,480	8,391	8,145	228.4%
Master's	966	4,093	4,606	376.8%
Doctor's Research/Scholarship	36	127	243	575.0%
Doctor's Professional Practice	0	55	135	N/A
Gender				
Male	2,065	5,672	5,883	184.9%
Female	3,122	10,493	10,345	231.4%

Closing the Gaps Critical Fields

11. Degrees awarded in STEM fields ⓘ	FY 2009	FY 2013	FY 2014	% Change FY 2009 to FY 2014
Fields				
Computer Science	261	1,128	1,183	353.3%
Engineering	180	95	171	- 5.0%
Math	0	0	1	N/A
Physical Science	0	0	8	N/A
Level				
Certificate	1	41	45	4400.0%
Associate's	230	313	302	31.3%
Bachelor's	203	724	811	299.5%
Master's	7	141	192	2642.9%
Doctor's Research/Scholarship	0	4	13	N/A

Doctor's Professional Practice	0	0	0	N/A

12. Degrees and certificates awarded in nursing ⓘ	FY 2009	FY 2013	FY 2014	% Change FY 2009 to FY 2014
Total Nursing Degrees	20	488	1,431	7055.0%
Certificate	0	1	8	N/A
Associate's	0	0	1	N/A
Bachelor's	17	220	996	5758.8%
Master's	3	249	379	12533.3%
Doctor's Research/Scholarship	0	0	11	N/A
Doctor's Professional Practice	0	18	36	N/A

13. Degrees and Certificates in Allied Health ⓘ	FY 2009	FY 2013	FY 2014	% Change FY 2009 to FY 2014
Degrees and certificates awarded in allied health	488	1,280	1,532	213.9%
Certificate	359	17	103	- 71.3%
Associate's	32	476	535	1571.9%
Bachelor's	0	548	562	N/A
Master's	97	225	312	221.6%
Doctor's Research/Scholarship	0	6	9	N/A
Doctor's Professional Practice	0	8	11	N/A

14. Students taking and passing the certification exams for teacher education ⓘ	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Total number taking exam	NR	NR	NR
Total percent passing exam	NR	NR	NR

15. Graduate status following graduation ⓘ	FY 2009		FY 2012		FY 2013		Point Change FY 2009 to FY 2013
Employed Only (in Texas)	1,765	77.1%	6,123	72.3%	5,740	71.7%	- 5.4
Employed and Enrolled (in Texas Institutions)	30	1.3%	138	1.6%	98	1.2%	- 0.1
Enrolled Only (in Texas Institutions)	12	0.5%	45	0.5%	35	0.4%	- 0.1
Not Found	481	21.0%	2,159	25.5%	2,138	26.7%	5.7

N/A: not applicable
NR: not reported

PARTICIPATION -- KEY MEASURES

1. Fall Enrollment

Fall headcount

Definition: Unduplicated fall enrollment by race/ethnicity, gender, and age. The age is calculated using the year of enrollment minus the year of birth.

Source: CBM001

2. Enrollment Status

Fall enrollment status

Definition: Full- and part-time fall enrollment of undergraduate and graduate students.

Source: IPEDS

3. Annual (12-Month) Unduplicated Enrollment

Annual unduplicated enrollment of students any time during the period September 1 to August 31

Definition: Unduplicated annual enrollment by race/ethnicity, gender, and age. The age is calculated using the year of enrollment minus the year of birth.

Source: CBM001

4. Financial Aid

Percent of students receiving Pell Grants

Definition: Percentage of undergraduate students who are receiving any amount of financial aid as reported to IPEDS. The type of financial aid included is Pell grant, federal, state, local, institutional or other sources of grant aid, and federal loans.

Source: IPEDS

SUCCESS -- KEY MEASURES

5. Persistence of Students at Institution

Persistence rate of first-time at the instiution undergraduates: One-Year

Definition: First-time credential-seeking students enrolled in fall semester, who are enrolled the following fall by race/ethnicity. If a student earned a certificate, Associates or Baccalaureate at any Texas public or private institution and did not persist, they were excluded from the cohort. If a student earned an award and persisted, then they remained in the cohort.

Source: CBM001/CBM009

6. Persistence Rate

Persistence rate of first-time at the institution undergraduates: Two-Year

Definition: First-time credential-seeking students enrolled in fall semester, who are enrolled the second fall by race/ethnicity. If a student earned a certificate, Associates or Baccalaureate at any Texas public or private institution and did not persist, they were excluded from the cohort. If a student earned an award and persisted, then they remained in the cohort.

Source: CBM001/CBM009

7. Graduation and Persistence Rate: 6-Year

First-time, full-time students enrolled in a minimum of 12 SCH their first fall semester who have graduated or are still enrolled at the same institution or another Texas public, independent, or career institution

Definition: Percent of all first-time credential-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in Texas public and private higher education after six academic years by race/ethnicity, gender, and age. Students transferred to out-of-state institutions are not included in this measure.

Source: CBM001/CBM009

8. Graduation Rate: 4-, 5-, & 6-year

First-time, full-time entering, degree-seeking, students enrolled in a minimum of 12 SCH their first fall semester who have graduated from the same institution

Definition: First-time, full-time entering, credential-seeking, undergraduates who have graduated within 4, 5 and 6 years.

Source: IPEDS

9. Completion Rate: 4-, 5-, & 6-year

Degree-seeking students entering the institution for the first time in fall semester indicated who have graduated from the same institution or another Texas public, independent, or career institution

Definition: First-time, full-time entering, credential-seeking, undergraduates who have graduated within 4, 5 and 6 years.

Source: CBM001/CBM009

10. Degrees Awarded

Number of degrees awarded

Definition: Number of degrees by race/ethnicity, level of award and gender. These numbers are duplicated, as a student may earn multiple awards during a school year. Certificates are not included.

Source: CBM009

11. Closing the Gaps Critical Fields

Degrees awarded in STEM fields

Definition: Include students in the same CIP codes as Closing the Gaps science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) (CIP 11, 14, 15, 27, 40 and 30.01). The total number will include that same awards as Closing the Gaps, which includes students who graduate with a certificate or associate's degree.

Source: CBM009

12. Degrees and Certificates in Nursing

Degrees and certificates awarded in nursing

Definition: Number of degrees and certificates awarded in nursing. The CIP codes for nursing are 5116 (2000 CIP Codes) and 5138 and 5139 (2010 Codes). The total number will include that same awards as Closing the Gaps, which includes students who graduate with a certificate or associate's degree.

Source: CBM009

13. Degrees and Certificates in Allied Health

Degrees and certificates awarded in allied health

Definition: Number of degrees and certificates awarded in Allied Health. The allied health CIPs, as in Closing the Gaps, are 51.02, 51.06, 51.07, 51.08, 51.09, 51.10, 51.18, 51.23, 51.26, 51.27, 51.31, 51.32, 51.33, 51.34, 51.99. The total number will include that same awards as Closing the Gaps, which includes students who graduate with a certificate or associate's degree.

Source: CBM009

14. Certification Exams for Teacher Education

Students taking and passing the certification exams for teacher education

Definition: Students taking and passing the certification exams for teacher education. Initial certification pass rate of a cohort of teacher education program completers. The initial pass rate is the percent of tests passed by a completer cohort through December 31 following the academic year of completion. The pass rate is based only on the tests required to obtain certification in the field(s) in which the person completed a program during the academic year. The rate reflects a candidate's success on the last attempt made on the test by December 31 following the year of completion. Formula: The number of successful (i.e., passing) last attempts made by the cohort divided by the total number of last attempts made by the cohort. A program completer is an individual who has completed all educator preparation program requirements including: course work, field work, program assessments, and degree requirements. A completer cohort is a group of candidates who complete an educator preparation program during an academic year (September 1 to August 31).

Source: SBEC

15. Baccalaureate Graduates Employed

Graduate status following graduation

Definition: Percent of graduates employed or placed in military service in the fourth

quarter of the calendar year in which the program (fiscal) year ends and/or enrolled in a Texas institution in the following fall after the school year in which the program year ends.

Source: UI Wage, federal records, CBM1, CBM9

EXCELLENCE -- KEY MEASURES

16. Student/Faculty Ratio

Full-time student equivalents (FTSE) divided by full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty

Definition: The full-time equivalent of the institution's part-time enrollment is estimated and then added to the full-time enrollment of the institution. This formula has been used to produce the full-time equivalent enrollment that is published annually in the Digest of Education Statistics. The full-time equivalent of part-time enrollment is estimated by multiplying the part-time enrollment by factors that vary by control and level of institution and level of student. The full-time-equivalent (FTE) of instructional staff is calculated by summing the total number of full-time instructional staff and adding one-third of the total number of part-time instructional staff.

Source: IPEDS

17. Professional Affiliations

Professional affiliations

Definition:

Source: Institutions

18. Licensure Data

Program licensure pass rate

Definition: Pass rates for programs whose graduates are required to pass a licensure exam to practice in the field, if the pass rate for each of the past three years is 90% or higher for three consecutive years (not a three-year average) and if the program has 15 or more graduates over the three year period. These are programs that have licensure pass rates of 90% and above for the last three years. This is not an average, but annual individual rates.

Source: Institutions

INSTITUTIONAL EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS -- KEY MEASURES

19. Tuition and Fees

Average cost of tuition and fees for full-time undergraduate for academic year

Definition: Tuition and fees (net of amount reported in allowances applied to tuition and fees includes the amount of tuition and educational fees, net of any allowances applied in the general purpose financial statements. Includes all fees for continuing education programs, conferences, and seminars.

Source: IPEDS

20. Operating Expenses

Instruction expenses as a percent of core expenses

Definition: Instructional cost represents total institutional expenses included the instruction expenses of the colleges, schools, departments, and other instructional divisions of the institution and expenses for departmental research and public service that are not separately budgeted. The instruction category includes general academic instruction, occupational and vocational instruction, special session instruction, community education, preparatory and adult basic education, and remedial and tutorial instruction conducted by the teaching faculty for the institution's students. (FARM para. 452.11) Include expenses for both credit and non-credit activities. Exclude expenses for academic administration if the primary function is administration (e.g., academic deans). Total operating expenses represents total expenses and are the outflow or other using up of assets or incurrence of liabilities (or a combination of both) from delivering or producing goods, rendering services, or carrying out other activities that constitute the institution's ongoing major or central operations or in generating revenues. Alternatively, expenses may be thought of as the costs of goods and services used to produce the educational services provided by the institution. Auxiliary enterprises are excluded.

Source: IPEDS

21. Academic and institutional support and student services

Academic and institutional support and student services as a percent of core expenses

Definition: Academic support – Includes expenses for support services that are an integral part of the institution's primary mission of instruction, research, or public service and that are not charged directly to these primary programs. Included are expenses for libraries, museums, galleries, audio/visual services, academic development, academic computing support, course and curriculum development, and academic administration. Include expenses for medical, veterinary and dental clinics if their primary purpose is to support the institutional program, that is, they are not part of a hospital. Student services - Includes expenses for admissions, registrar activities and activities whose primary purpose is to contribute to students emotional and physical well-being and to their intellectual, cultural and social development outside the context of the formal instructional program. Examples are career guidance, counseling, financial aid administration, student records, athletics, and student health services, except when operated as a self-supporting auxiliary enterprise. Institutional support – Includes all expenses for the day-to-day operational support of the institution. Include expenses for general administrative services, executive direction and planning, legal and fiscal operations, administrative computing support, and public relations/development. Total operating expenses represents total expenses and are the outflow or other using up of assets or incurrence of liabilities (or a combination of both) from delivering or producing goods, rendering services, or carrying out other activities that constitute the institution's ongoing major or central operations or in generating revenues.

Source: IPEDS

22. Institutional Revenue

Total Revenue

Definition: Total revenues and investment return is the sum of the following amounts: tuition and fees; government appropriations, grants and contracts; private grants and contracts; investment income and investment gains (losses) included in net income; sales and services of educational activities and auxiliary enterprises; and other revenue.

Source: IPEDS

23. Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees as % of Total Revenue

Definition: Revenues from all tuition and fees assessed against students (net of refunds and discounts and allowances) for educational purposes divided by the total revenue.

Source: IPEDS

24. State of Federal appropriations per student

State/federal appropriations per FTE student

Definition: The total of federal, state, and local appropriations, grants and contracts divided by the number of full-time equivalent student.

Source: IPEDS

25. Faculty

Faculty

Definition: Number and percent of full-time and part-time faculty by race/ethnicity and gender.

Source: IPEDS

STUDENT SUCCESS: MEASURES OF STUDENT SUCCESS

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History & Philosophy
Student Success
   Dean's List
   Retention & Graduation
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Measures of Student Success in Undergraduate Programs

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MEASURES OF STUDENT SUCCESS

Adult undergraduate students enroll at institutions like Golden Gate University for a variety of reasons. Personal edification, serving as a role model for other family members, improving career options and career advancement are only a few of the reasons. In the end, there is a single goal – to earn a Bachelor's degree. Along the journey to completing an undergraduate degree program students can often be derailed by career demands, family obligations, limited financial resources, and life in general. The higher education experience can also get in the way of a student's success – lack of support in academic advising and navigating university policies, a poor learning experience or a lack of customer service can also interfere with reaching a graduation goal.

With a firm commitment to providing appropriate support for academic and administrative guidance while delivering a challenging, quality learning experience, the faculty and staff of Undergraduate Programs pay close attention to a number of indicators that point to student success. Retention rates: the percentage of students who start a degree program and who consistently enroll over time to reach degree attainment, and graduation rates: the number of students who start and earn their degree as well as how long it takes to reach graduation, are important factors to determine how well we are serving our students.

STUDENT SERVICES

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UNDERSTANDING RETENTION & GRADUATION RATES

The student profile for those seeking a bachelor's degree at Golden Gate University is very different from a traditional, full-time, residential student profile we typically think of when considering retention and graduation rates. The Undergraduate Programs Student Profile consists of students who tend to enroll part-time while working more than 30 hours per week and managing a family. On average, our students transfer in 45 to 51 units of transfer credit but students can enroll at GGU with zero college units earned (with work experience) or as many as 93 units completed. All of these factors impact the enrollment patterns of our students including persistence in a program and time to graduation. There is very little national data to benchmark a "good" retention and graduation rate for this population, but we strive to improve our historical retention and graduation rates while continuing to research performance of like programs nationwide to benchmark the institution's performance.

The data will be updated each term to reflect the progress made by each cohort.

Questions or concerns with the data provided should be sent to Nate Hinerman, PhD., Dean of Undergraduate Programs.

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| 37% | 44% | 48% | 46% |

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The road to completing a bachelor's degree can often be a complex one. The faculty and staff in Undergraduate Programs want to provide you with the support you need to be successful while offering an outstanding educational experience. We'll help you figure out how to best handle transfer credit concerns, choose the right degree, find the best resources for success, and even deal with the pressures of managing work, family and homework.

Let us make Golden Gate University the last stop to earning your Bachelor's degree!

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS & FACULTY

Our undergraduate degrees have been designed to support a strong business curriculum while providing for generous transfer credit and prior learning experience opportunities. The faculty are committed to an educational model that focuses on the best blend of professional practice and theory. In addition to the business core, the bachelor's degree programs include a comprehensive General Education program that will focus on writing and communication skills, critical thinking, quantitative skills, and the breadth of a liberal arts education with a business viewpoint.

Learn more about GGU's Undergraduate Academic Programs and Faculty.

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Overview
History & Philosophy
Student Success
Departments

From our origins in the mid-19th century to present, GGU has committed itself to helping working professionals further their education with practical knowledge, flexible course times, and contemporary skill training. We have built our curriculum around the knowledge of working professionals' hectic schedules, allowing our graduates to excel in and out of the classroom without affecting their professional lives.

A FOCUS ON LEARNING

Navigating the ins and outs of a higher education institution can often get in the way of learning. The faculty and staff in GGU's Undergraduate Programs are committed to smoothing out the journey so you can focus on why you are here – learning a solid business curriculum that will make a difference in your career and personal goals.

Our undergraduate programs are designed to help students get the degree they've always wanted. We are not a traditional four-year undergraduate school; rather, our undergraduate programs are designed to help students finish their degree. Instead of the full time undergraduate program, students traditionally enter with transfer credits from other institutions and have relevant job experience that they bring to the classroom. GGU's undergraduates balance life, work, and family while taking advantage of our evening, weekend, and online classes to finish their degree.

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History & Philosophy
Student Success
  Dean's List
  Retention & Graduation
  Student Spotlight
Departments

GGU's program for undergraduate students is like no other. Whether it's the support you'll receive during the enrollment process, the guidance and coaching from our professional advisors while a student, or the outstanding faculty in the classroom, the GGU Undergraduate Programs experience will help you reach your academic, personal and professional goals. We've developed programs with a central goal in mind – our students' academic success.

COMMITMENT TO SUCCESS

The national call for assessment and accountability in higher education has not gone unheard at Golden Gate University. student's academic, professional, and personal goals are the foundation for every decision that is made in Undergraduate Programs and is done with thoughtful research and assessment. Whether it is a change in the academic curriculum or additional support services, the student's successful attainment of a bachelor's degree is our first priority. One way to measure the success of an academic program is to understand the retention and graduation rates of its students. GGU is committed to provide transparent access to student success data and welcomes you to dig a bit deeper as you are making the decision to enroll.

   Undergraduate Programs Student Success Data – Retention and Graduate Rates

LEARN MORE

Your input and insight is always welcome. If you have an interest in our efforts to ensure student success and would like to learn more, please contact Dean Nate Hinerman.

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Addressing the Needs of Underprepared Students in Higher Education
Does College Remediation Work?

Eric P. Bettinger and Bridget Terry Long

Abstract

Each year, thousands graduate high school academically underprepared for college. Many must take remedial or developmental postsecondary coursework, and there is a growing debate about the effectiveness of such programs. This paper examines the effects of remediation using a unique data set of over 28,000 students. To account for selection biases, the paper implements an instrumental variables strategy based on variation in placement policies and the importance of proximity in college choice. The results suggest that students in remediation are more likely to persist in college in comparison to students with similar backgrounds who were not required to take the courses.

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EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION AND POLICY ANALYSIS March 1, 2015 37:70-91
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AFT Higher Education

Student Success in Higher Education

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Foreword

THE MOST CRITICAL ISSUE FACING HIGHER education today is how to provide access to instruction and services that will enable many more students to fulfill their postsecondary aspirations. Education, being both a public and a private good, brings together many of the forces of change in our society and creates vast and unceasing debate. The paper you are about to read, prepared by the higher education leadership of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), states what we think needs to be done to help college students achieve educational success. The AFT is a national union of 1.5 million members that includes approximately 175,000 faculty and professional staff members in the nation's colleges and universities.

As chairwoman of the national AFT Higher Education program and policy council, I invite you to engage in our discussion and in activities that will result from it. As the president of AFT Washington, a previous president of AFT Seattle Community College, Local 1789 and as a part-time, then a full-time professor of English at my institution, I have had unique opportunities to observe faculty, staff, administrations, education bureaucracies and students at their work. I know that we want to work together for the common good—the good of our profession, our institutions and the people we teach.

As a leader of a representative union, I understand the union's responsibility to further the interests of our members. A large part of that consists of working to ensure that the labor of AFT members is well compensated and that their employment conditions are fair, secure and rewarding.

But that is far from all of it. The AFT is also a union which believes that advancing the interests of our members means furthering their professional as well as their economic objectives—and it is not an exaggeration to say that student success is what AFT Higher Education members are all about. Making a difference in the lives of students is why faculty and staff members choose to be in the academy, why they go to work each day, why they keep up with the latest scholarship in their disciplines, why they spend so much time meeting with students and assessing their work. Day in and day out, the nation's college faculty and staff demonstrate a high level of personal and professional commitment to students, to higher education, to their communities and to the future of the world we live in. The following report is issued in the spirit of that commitment.

SANDRA SCHROEDER
March 2011

Executive Summary

THE FOLLOWING THREE PAGES PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF AFT HIGHER EDUCATION'S PLAN TO HELP STUDENTS LEARN HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF THEIR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE.

I N 2010, AFT PRESIDENT RANDI WEINGARTEN AND THE union's college and university leadership began planning an initiative to demonstrate the union's ongoing commitment to place student success at the center of its higher education agenda. The initiative, still in its early stages, reflects and draws upon the work of our members, the frontline faculty and staff who make a positive difference in the lives of their students every day. It also draws upon what students tell us they want and need from their college experience, reinforced by the results of student focus groups conducted for AFT to launch the initiative.

College student success is a major issue today in government and policy circles. AFT members agree that a renewed emphasis on student success is critical because, as President Obama stresses, the number of students with a college education is not as high as it should be, and college student retention rates are not as high as any educator would want them to be. The gap in college student success among various racial and ethnic groups also is unacceptably large.

A major aim of the student success initiative is to more effectively bring the voice of frontline faculty and staff—along with their knowledge of pedagogy and their experience with students—into the growing policy debate over college curriculum, teaching and assessment. The work began by conducting the student focus groups and engaging with key policymakers and experts in the field. Other initial aspects of the initiative include the development of a national website and data center on student success issues (**www.whatshouldcount.org**) and an effort to help AFT Higher Education affiliates consider developing activities oriented toward student success on their own campuses. The report you are about to read is an important component of the initiative, representing the union's first effort to delineate key elements of college student success, to suggest ways to implement effective programs, and to outline the roles and responsibilities of all higher education stakeholders in achieving student success.

Origins—and Shortcomings—of the National Focus on Student Success

Much of the attention in higher education policy circles today is focused on how to help more students gain access to higher education and then succeed by attaining a degree or certificate. Over the years, most of the work focused on the access side of the equation, particularly on

ensuring an adequate level of federal student aid as well as state institutional support. Now, in the face of dwindling public resources, the policy debate has increasingly shifted from "access" to "success" issues, such as retention and evidence of learning outcomes—in other words, to what happens to students after they enter college. The general emphasis has been on holding institutions accountable for achieving measurable outputs—like high graduation rates and standardized test scores—and on developing various curriculum frameworks. However, AFT members believe there are some significant problems in today's public discourse about accountability and outcomes.

■ First, on the technical level, there are very serious problems with the federal formula for computing graduation rates and with the validity of various testing measures and their impact on the curriculum.

■ Second, too many policy discussions of student success avoid serious consideration of financial factors, as though investment in learning is not connected to student success. To the contrary—the at-risk population of nontraditional students who participated in the recent AFT focus groups demonstrates the intricate connection between student success and resources. These students report, for example, that paying for college is just about the biggest obstacle they face in completing their studies. Concerns about finances also lead students to work too many hours, which hampers their chances for success. Finally, students report that large class sizes, limited course offerings and difficulty in getting enough personal attention from overworked faculty and staff are key obstacles to their achievement.

■ Third, too many policy discussions about accountability have failed to incorporate the views and experiences of frontline faculty and staff. The AFT believes that the disengagement between workers on the ground and the accountability movement needs to be addressed if we are to achieve positive and lasting results for students.

Approaching Student Success

How, then, should the academy approach today's student success issues?

■ First, the work must begin with a shared understanding at the institutional level of how student success is to be defined. AFT members approach student success in broader

terms than quick degree attainment or high standardized test scores—they usually define student success as the achievement of the student's own, often developing, education goals. Our members not only teach students who may be on track to obtain degrees or certificates, but they also teach students who are looking primarily for job training without earning a formal credential or for the acquisition of professional skills to enhance their career opportunities. Other students are studying academic subjects strictly for learning's sake. Adding to the complexity, students often adjust their goals throughout their college years. For these reasons, measuring student success solely in terms of degree attainment reflects a misunderstanding of today's academy. To understand the realities of student success, we must begin to identify ways to elicit information on student goals throughout the educational process and to ensure that reliable data on student goals are fed back into the curriculum development and assessment processes. It is also important—and specifically called for by the students who participated in our focus groups—to ensure that students have multiple opportunities to assess and reassess their goals through a rich process of advisement or counseling.

■ Second, campus discussions on student success should be undertaken with a clear recognition of the thoughtful work on curriculum and assessment already going on at most campuses, and with a commitment not to be perpetually reinventing the wheel.

■ Third, once a broad understanding of student success is achieved, professionals at the institutional level need to collaborate systematically on curriculum and assessment in accordance with this understanding—, with faculty and professional staff in the lead. Because institutional missions and student bodies are so diverse, and because it is important to capitalize on the mix of faculty expertise particular to each institution, the AFT believes that planning for student success should be conducted at the institutional level rather than across institutions or at the state or national levels. In this regard, our members reject the idea that institutional outputs can be compared easily like the ingredients on a cereal box. The one constant in higher education is diversity, not uniformity, and diversity is also its greatest strength.

■ Fourth, collaboration should proceed with an understanding that frontline faculty members and staff should drive the processes of curriculum development, teaching and assessment to ensure that education practices are effective and practical in the real-life classroom.

The AFT student success report delineates a number of common elements of student success cutting across different programs and disciplines that the union believes can be viewed as a framework for the type of educational experience all students should have in some form. Those elements, described in greater detail in the report, include:

■ Exposure to *knowledge* in a variety of areas;
■ The development of *intellectual abilities* necessary for gathering information and processing it; and
■ *Applied skills*, both professional and technical. These elements are laid out in a chart on page XX.

In our view, these elements offer one acceptable framework (certainly not the only one) to focus professional thinking, collaboration and planning around curriculum, teaching and assessment. In any case, however, the specific categories and details are not the most important thing. The most important thing is to have a deliberative and intentional perspective among individual faculty members and the institution's body of faculty based on advance planning and collaboration—and also on the evidence from focus groups that students want and benefit from a high degree of clarity and interconnection in their coursework.

Implementation

To ensure that curriculum and assessment materials translate into real gains for students, the report recommends that:

■ Faculty should be responsible for leading discussions about how the elements of student success are further articulated and refined to help students at their institution succeed.

■ The implementation process should respect the principles of academic freedom.

■ Professional staff should be closely involved in the process, particularly with regard to how the elements will be articulated vis-à-vis academic advising and career counseling.

■ Implementing common elements for student success not only should respect differences among disciplines and programs, but also should strive for an integrated educational experience for students.

■ New curriculum frameworks, assessments or accountability mechanisms should not re-create the wheel;

■ Assessing the effectiveness of this process should focus on student success, academic programs and student services but should not be used to evaluate the performance of individual faculty or staff.

Roles, Responsibilities and Accountability

AFT members overwhelmingly favor reasonable accountability mechanisms; they also believe that accountability needs to flow naturally from clearly delineated responsibilities, including the responsibility faculty and staff have in the learning process. It takes the work of many stakeholders to produce a successful educational experience. Each stakeholder has unique responsibilities as well as a shared responsibility to work collaboratively with the other stakeholders. This report puts forward a listing of roles and responsibilities focused on four groups of stakeholders—faculty and staff members, institutional administrators, students and government. Under this kind of rubric, individual stakeholders have clear responsibilities for which they can be held accountable, and no individual stakeholder is solely responsible for achieving ends only partly in his or her control.

Retention and Attainment

Much of the policy debate on accountability has been tied to the idea that college attainment and completion rates are too low. Even though the measurement of graduation rates is deeply flawed, AFT members fully agree that retention is not what it should be and that some action must be taken to improve the situation. Our recommendations include:

1. *Strengthen preparation in preK-12 by increasing the public support provided to school systems and the professionals who work in them.* As noted earlier, college faculty and staff at the postsecondary and preK-12 levels should be provided financial and professional support to coordinate standards between the two systems and minimize disjunctions.

2. *Strengthen federal and state student assistance so students can afford to enter college and remain with their studies despite other obligations.* Again, students report that paying for college is an overwhelming challenge, and that they must work a significant number of hours to support their academic career, often at the expense of fully benefiting from their classes. We cannot expect to keep balancing the books in higher education by charging students out-of-reach tuition and dismantling government and institutional support for a healthy system of academic staffing.

3. *Institute or expand student success criteria along the lines of the student success elements described earlier (or an equally valid one).* This is best based on deliberate, multidisciplinary planning in individual institutions led by frontline faculty and staff. Given that another one of students' most called-for needs is assistance with developing a clear path toward their education goals, the aim is to provide clarity to the educational experience for students along with other stakeholders, including government and the general public.

4. *Coordinate learning objectives with student assessment.* The desire to compare learning across different institutions on a single scale is understandable. However, we believe that student learning would be diminished, not enhanced, by administering national assessments that overly homogenize "success" to what is easily measurable and comparable.

5. *Provide greater government funding and reassess current expenditure policies to increase support for instruction and staffing.* We cannot expect student success when institutions are not devoting resources to a healthy staffing system and are allowing students' education to be built on the exploitation of contingent labor and the loss of full-time jobs. The system of higher education finance needs to be re-examined so colleges and universities can fulfill the nation's higher education attainment goals.

6. *Improve the longitudinal tracking of students* as they make their way through the educational system and out into the world beyond. The current federal graduation formula is much too narrow. We need to look at all students over a more substantial period of time, and we have to take into account the great diversity in student goals if we are to account properly for student success.

In conclusion, the AFT believes that academic unions, working with other stakeholders, can play a central role in promoting student success. Making lasting progress, however, will have to begin at tables where faculty and staff members hold a position of respect and leadership. This student success report is scarcely the last word on the subject—it is, in fact, the union's first word on the subject, and we expect many ideas presented here to be refined in conversations all over the country. The important thing is that those conversations about student success start taking place in many more places than they are today.

The National Discussion

HALF A CENTURY AGO, THE UNITED STATES UNDERTOOK A HISTORIC COMMITMENT to make an affordable college education available to all Americans, regardless of their financial means. At the federal level, this commitment led to the establishment of a structure of student financial assistance that has grown more and more elaborate over the years. At the state level, the commitment to college access for all resulted in the opening and funding of thousands of public universities and community colleges. Hundreds of thousands of college students, most of whom would never have been able to attend college in another era, have taken successful advantage of these policies. The federal and state commitment to public higher education has been one of the clearest public policy successes in American history.

Today, more students than ever are attending community colleges and universities. There has been a recent upsurge in college enrollment spurred in part by the state of the economy from 2008 to 2010. At the same time, however, the ability of public higher education to accommodate growing enrollment has been handicapped in critical ways. College costs continue to rise. State and local governments have decreased their level of investment in public colleges and universities, and institutions have responded by cutting back the share of spending directed to instruction. Government disinvestment has resulted in higher tuitions which, in turn, have left students assuming unreasonable levels of debt to attend college and, worse, prevented many from enrolling altogether or persisting in their studies. Funding for federal student assistance, until just recently, failed to keep pace with rising costs, and the recent gains made to the federal Pell Grant program are always in danger of being rolled back. Students from racial and ethnic minorities and other first-generation college students have suffered most from these inadequacies.

With enrollments on the rise and without a comparable public investment in higher education, the capacity of public colleges and universities to serve students is now strained beyond the limit. Unfortunately, it is becoming commonplace to see academic programs curtailed or eliminated and corners being cut on student services in an attempt to maintain a "bare bones" budget. To meet the influx of students, instructional staffing is being built increasingly on a part-time and full-time corps of "contingent" faculty members without permanent jobs and without basic economic and professional supports. America is no longer the world leader in college attainment. Student retention rates are far lower than educators want or the nation should accept.

At the same time, one fact is still incontrovertible: Most people who complete a postsecondary degree or certificate program[1] do better in every aspect of their lives. In March 2004, the national average total personal income of workers 25 and older with a bachelor's degree was $48,417, roughly $23,000 higher than for those with a high school diploma. For those with an associate's degree, the average total personal income of workers 25 and older was $32,470, still $7,400 more than those with a high school

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1. See, for instance, The Investment Payoff: A 50-State Analysis of the Public and Private Benefits of Higher Education (2005) by the Institute for Higher Education Policy.

diploma .[2] Providing greater opportunities for students from all walks of life to succeed in college needs to be a top issue on the national agenda.

Recognizing the growing importance of a college education, it is not surprising that public discussion and debate about student success issues is at an all-time high. This has been driven in part by the strong priority placed on higher education by the Obama administration. Overall, the emphasis on student success is a positive development. Our members fully agree that student retention is not as high as it should be, and they are eager to play a leading role in improving conditions.

However, with growing alarm, many of us have been following today's policy debates about student success issues such as curriculum, assessment and accountability. Unfortunately, some of the fevered discussion on this subject has not been as constructive as it could be, nor as grounded in the experiences of frontline educators as it should be. When it comes to generating solutions to the problems facing students and colleges, we have seen too heavy an emphasis on solutions that are overly simplistic and fail to address the reality on campus.

Too often, AFT members see proposals put forward to measure things because they are measurable, not because they really tell us anything new or important about the educational program. For example, our members often witness the imposition of "pay-for-performance" formulas that define institutional success primarily in terms of a high graduation rate. This is problematic for a number of reasons: first, because the graduation formula is notoriously flawed (see inset) and also because pay-for-performance programs can create perverse incentives for institutions either to lower their educational standards (to achieve a higher graduation or job placement rate) or, conversely, to raise their entrance requirements so they can "cherry pick" students who are likely to give them high graduation numbers.

There are further issues. One is the proliferation of account-ability proposals designed around the perspective that higher education can be seen and assessed through the same lens as elementary and secondary education. In fact, the two levels of education are fundamentally different. Elementary and secondary education is mandatory and aimed primarily at producing a somewhat uniform set of education outcomes grade by grade. Higher education, on the other hand, is pursued and paid for by adults who choose

FEDERAL GRADUATION RATE FORMULA

THE MOST GLARING EXAMPLE OF THE DISTANCE between policy and reality is the current federal graduation-rate formula, which serves as the basis of a great deal of higher education policymaking. The problem is that the federal graduation formula fails to account for more than half of today's undergraduates and therefore presents a skewed picture of what is going on in the classroom, particularly at institutions serving large numbers of nontraditional students. No attainment formula could capture all the nuances of student attainment, but the federal graduation-rate formula would be much more accurate if it tracked students for a longer period of time and if it tracked part-time students, students who transfer from one college to another, students who do not finish their degrees within 150 percent of the "normal" time, and the many students who are seeking neither a degree nor a certificate but who attend classes to pick up job skills or for personal enrichment.

institutions and programs to meet their own very diverse education and career goals. This diversity is a great strength of American colleges and universities, and therefore our members are concerned that overstandardizing assessment would weaken rather than strengthen education.

In the same vein, a great deal of discussion about accountability seems to focus on producing exactly comparable data among all disciplines and all institutions. This perspective, in turn, has led to the generation of a number of standardized student assessments despite very mixed expert opinion of their reliability and value.[3] Too often, AFT members report that they are facing the imposition of standardized tests, which they believe to be divorced from the institution's learning program and insensitive to the variety of education objectives in different disciplines. For example, tests such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment may offer some valuable information pertaining to a particular sample of students in a specific time or place. However, questions have been raised about whether the CLA is a reliable assessment of the growth in student learning from one year to the next—our members are concerned about whether it is appropriate to draw sweeping conclusions

2. Ibid.

3. See Trudy Banta's "A Warning on Measuring Learning Outcomes" (2007): www.insidehighered.com/views/2007/01/26/banta

> **"What goes wrong with so many curriculum, teaching and assessment proposals is caused by the fact that classroom educators...are not often at the center of the program development process."**

from student samples and employ those conclusions to evaluate institution-wide student learning and teacher performance.

The AFT believes that a lot of what goes wrong with so many curriculum, teaching and assessment proposals is caused by the fact that classroom educators—along with their knowledge of pedagogy and experience with students—are not often at the center of the program development process. **The perspective of frontline educators should assume a much more prominent role in public discussion about student success and about the most appropriate forms of accountability for assessing it.**

Frontline faculty and staff can contribute greatly to the development of policies that expand student access and success while preserving the fundamental aspects of a successful college experience—a diverse offering of degree and certificate programs in which students can learn in ways that best suit them, one in which assessment and accountability mechanisms support student learning as the rich and complex experience we in the classroom know it to be. We do not want to be left with a major investment of resources that produces nothing more than a complicated, time-consuming maze of data that tells us little or nothing of importance about student learning but reorients college curricula to a lowest-common-denominator, teach-to-the-test curriculum.

Finally, it seems clear that policymakers, policy analysts and frontline educators are often talking past one another on issues of student success and accountability or, more frequently, not really talking at all. We need to break down these walls to search for the best solutions to the challenges facing our students. Educators and all the other higher education stakeholders need to talk more frequently and candidly about these issues with open minds and a willingness to consider different perspectives.

The Elements Of Student Success

EVERYONE AGREES THAT THE HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM, TEACHING, ASSESSMENT and accountability all need to be focused squarely on student success. At the same time, everyone does not agree on what student success actually means. Some analysts emphasize the achievement of a baccalaureate degree; others are engaged in a national drive to expand the number of community and technical college degrees. Still others emphasize the need to increase opportunities to attain formal training certifications.

AFT members, however, usually think of student success somewhat more broadly—defining student success as the achievement of the student's own education goals. Our members teach not only students who may be on track to obtain degrees or certificates, but they also teach students who are looking primarily for job training without earning a formal credential or to acquire professional skills to enhance their career opportunities. Other students are studying academic subjects strictly for learning's sake. Adding to the complexity, students often adjust their goals throughout their college years.

That is why we believe that measuring student success solely in terms of degree attainment reflects a misunderstanding of today's academy. To understand the realities of student success, the AFT believes we must begin to identify ways to assess student academic goals throughout the educational pathway and—specifically called for by the students who participated in our focus groups—ensure that students have multiple opportunities to assess and reassess their goals through a rich process of advisement or counseling. In short, we believe agreement needs to be reached among stakeholders on what student success encompasses and how information on student success can be acquired.

The next question, then, is how to continually strengthen the learning experience for students. Are there particular frameworks or ways of doing things that best promote success, given that the one constant in higher education is diversity, not uniformity? Over the last year, AFT Higher

Education leaders worked to uncover common elements of student success, cutting across different programs and disciplines, that can be viewed as a framework for the type of educational experience all students should have in some form. In doing so, we found that although there are many different curriculum rubrics going around education circles, there is actually a great deal of consensus about the elements of good learning. Those elements, we believe, include (1) exposure to **knowledge** in a variety of areas, (2) the development of **intellectual abilities** necessary for gathering information and processing it, and (3) **applied professional and technical skills**. The chart on the next page elaborates on this.

These elements, it should be noted, emphasize the importance of connecting theoretical and practical learning. The balance of academic material and the learning context obviously will differ substantially in different education settings, particularly between strictly academic and career-oriented programs. For example, a student studying computer-assisted design at a community college with the goal of attaining a one-year certificate will experience a different mix and depth of the elements than a student studying anthropology at a research university with the goal of attaining a master's degree. Even in the most training-oriented coursework, however, good programs will work to incorporate broad perspectives into the curriculum because understanding them will enhance the professional and personal success of students in any walk of life.

ELEMENTS OF STUDENT SUCCESS

KNOWLEDGE

All students should achieve an appropriate level of knowledge in a particular field of study and have a level of exposure to:

- Knowledge of the physical and natural world
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Civic knowledge and engagement
- Ethics reasoning

INTELLECTUAL ABILITIES

A broad set of intellectual abilities is crucial for all students, including the ability to integrate these skills and apply them in both academic and practical contexts. These abilities include:

- Critical inquiry
- Creative thinking
- Problem solving
- Independent learning
- Data manipulation
- Analysis and assessment of information
- Synthesis

PROFESSIONAL/TECHNICAL SKILLS

Students should gain the ability to apply the knowledge learned in a particular field of study and also have a broad set of skills that will serve them in both academic and professional settings. These skills include:

- Written communications
- Oral communications
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork skills

The elements of student success listed above offer one way (certainly not the only way) to focus professional thinking, collaboration and planning around the institution's teaching program and assessment. There are several other frameworks in play that address similar issues. The framework here is not posed in conflict or even in contradistinction to any other. The AFT hopes that our members and other stakeholders find this perspective helpful. The important thing, however, is not any particular rubric but to begin, continue or improve a deliberative and intentional process for achieving student success based on the evidence that students want and would benefit from a high degree of clarity and interconnection in their coursework.

Implementation

Although there appears to be much consensus on the elements of student learning, our members are concerned that most plans follow either a multi-institutional or top-down model (or both) in implementing student learning plans, and this makes for frameworks that cannot be carried out effectively on the ground. Because institutional missions and student bodies are so diverse, and because

it is always important to capitalize on the mix of expertise at each institution, our members strongly believe that the process of program development should be conducted at the college or university level, although guidelines developed by disciplinary organizations or other scholars may certainly inform the process. Frontline faculty members should drive this process in order to ensure that educational practices are effective and practical in the classroom. The union believes effective implementation needs to be based on the following guidelines:

1. Faculty should be responsible for leading any discussions about how the elements of student success are further articulated and refined to help students at their institution succeed.

2. The implementation process should respect the principles of academic freedom.

3. Discussions about implementation should begin within disciplines and programs and then expand to the wider institutional curriculum. This is essential because it makes much more sense to find commonalities at the disciplinary level and then work up toward the institutional level, rather than forcing a top-down fit.

4. Professional staff should be involved in the process, particularly with regard to how the elements will be articulated vis-à-vis academic advising and career counseling.

5. Discussions about implementing common elements for student success not only should respect differences among disciplines and programs, but also strive for an integrated educational experience for students.

6. Faculty and staff work on these issues constantly, so any work that already has been done must be acknowledged rather than approaching implementation as reinventing the wheel.

7. Discussions should include not only how to refine the elements to set appropriate goals for students in various programs and at the institution in general, but should also include curriculum design, teaching methods and assessments.

8. Assessing the effectiveness of this process should focus on student success, academic programs and activities as well as on student services, and not be used to evaluate the performance of individual faculty or staff.

"Our members strongly believe that the process of program development should be conducted at the college or university level."

Roles and Responsibilities for Achieving Student Success

IT TAKES THE WORK OF MANY STAKEHOLDERS TO PRODUCE A SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL experience. Each stakeholder has unique responsibilities as well as the shared responsibility to work collaboratively with one another. Below is a summary framework of the responsibilities of higher education institutions, faculty and staff members, government agencies and students themselves in producing a successful educational experience. These roles and responsibilities, in turn, can serve as the basis of evaluating the institution's success in meeting its goals.

Institutions of Higher Education

The organizational structure for advancing and certifying higher learning in our society rests with public and private institutions of higher education. The leadership of these institutions is responsible for building and continually replenishing the structures and conditions that promote student success. Institutional leadership, then, is responsible (and therefore accountable) for:

1. Securing adequate funding for the institution and once that funding is obtained, ensuring that it is targeted first and foremost to instruction and support services that help students advance toward their goals. At the same time, administrators should advocate to keep tuition down and take whatever actions are possible to ensure affordability, particularly by examining administrative costs.

2. Developing a structure and level of instructional staffing that advances student success and creates a secure professional environment for good teaching and scholarship. As noted earlier, colleges and universities have greatly diminished the proportion of full-time tenured teaching positions in favor of developing an instructional workforce largely made up of contingent faculty employees, particularly part-time/adjunct faculty members, who are accorded very poor pay, very little

professional support, few or no benefits, little or no job security, and few or no academic freedom protections. The problem is that these instructors often are not expected to perform many of the most essential duties of faculty—and, in the absence of a union contract, almost always not paid for performing them—such as meeting with students to provide support and counsel and mentoring. This structure is detrimental to students, particularly at-risk students who need informed, consistent assistance in making their way to degrees and certificates.

We must recognize that an important part of the institutional responsibility for student success consists of collaborating with government and other stakeholders to expand full-time faculty opportunities and to ensure that *all* faculty members have living wages, job security, office space, benefits, professional development, and fair and transparent evaluation practices.

3. Maintaining effective procedures to ensure that curriculum, teaching and assessment are faculty driven. Most particularly, institutions are responsible for ensuring that academic policy decisions are based on the principle of shared governance and that protections are in place to enhance academic freedom, including due process, job security and tenure or tenure-like protections. Given that contingent faculty are teaching most of the undergraduate courses in this country, access to shared governance

and protection of academic freedom must extend to all instructors.

4. Building support-service structures that advance student success. Strong student services such as advising and mentoring, professional development for faculty and staff, and technological support are critical elements in helping students succeed. Institutions should build structures that facilitate continual interchange between faculty and staff members in regard to sorting out responsibilities and following the progress of individual students.

5. Supporting and coordinating recurring institution-wide reviews of progress in carrying out the student success agenda. Student success should be an institutional priority. Institutions should commit to supporting annual (or more frequent) meetings at which faculty across departments can come together to share their best practices for improving student learning and ensuring student success. Frontline educators, obviously, should play the leading role in this process.

6. Maintaining and enforcing the standards of student responsibility listed below. Institutions should develop clear standards for holding students accountable for their own learning, and then communicate those standards in ways that are easy for students to understand and act on.

7. Ensuring public transparency on such matters as program and degree options, student attainment and course scheduling. Along these lines, institutions should not shrink from revealing information that uncovers problems, including budget and fiscal management problems, as well as information that might point the way to improvement.

8. Helping to improve pathways from preK-12 to college. College readiness is a significant factor in student success and sometimes falters because the two systems are administered separately. Institutions need to work with school districts; secure grant funds and other sources of aid to facilitate program development; and work with faculty and staff, through institutional procedures and collective bargaining contracts, to offer significant professional rewards for faculty and staff to undertake this work.

Faculty and Staff Members

Faculty and staff members are responsible for:
1. Working individually and collaboratively with their colleagues, tenured and nontenured, full-time and part-time, to develop challenging curricula that are academically strong and provide the tools students will need to be successful in their lives when they leave the institution.

■ As noted earlier, producing good educational results is strengthened when faculty members and staff have regular opportunities to think in a coordinated, "intentioned" way about their coursework. This includes the coursework's relevance to the world students will face outside academia, about the best methods to incorporate such skills into their teaching and how to assess the degree to which these goals are achieved.

Regular opportunities should be taken to obtain the views of stakeholders such as students and business representatives, disciplinary associations, civic leaders and other community organizations about the efficacy of the educational program although, in the final analysis, education decisions should be driven by educators.

2. Being available and providing proactive help to students in puzzling out the requirements of the academic program and the course subject matter. Here again, an academic staffing structure that limits the contributions of part-time/adjunct and other contingent faculty members precludes opportunities for students that can be crucial to their success. Accessibility and availability of instructors is a critical factor in student success, especially in the first year or two of college and especially for underprepared college students. At the same time, students and administrators alike should understand that the availability of either full- or part-time faculty members needs to be encompassed in a manageable, flexible workload.

3. Advising students on their career goals and the consequences of the choices they make (e.g., the number and nature of courses taken, the number of hours devoted to study, the number of hours worked to help finance their education, etc.) on the students' ability to meet their academic goals. This applies both to faculty members and to professional staff.

4. Offering early and continual feedback and formative and summative assessment of student progress. In particular, faculty should employ assessment tools that assess students' understanding of course content and learning styles early in the term, and create incentives for students to engage with faculty early and often during the course.

5. Participating actively in institution-wide reviews of progress in carrying out a student success agenda.

6. Pressing the college administration to ensure that policy decisions are based on the principles of shared governance, academic freedom and due process. Again, access to shared governance and protection of academic freedom must extend to all instructors.

7. Supporting individual faculty members in attaining professional development, improving their pedagogy and technological skills, and strengthening other aspects of the faculty skill set.

Students

To further their own success, students must be responsible, among other things, for:

1. Attending classes and keeping up with their coursework. Students must understand that the minimum time commitment required for success in their courses is generally two hours on top of every classroom hour.

2. Engaging professionals in discussions about students' coursework and their educational and career goals. It is imperative that students regularly seek out faculty, academic and career counselors outside of class. If students encounter difficulty gaining access to these professionals, they should make this known to the institution.

3. Periodically taking a hard look at their academic and career goals, the time commitments they undertake and the state of their finances to ensure that they develop a program of study that has a good prospect for success.

Government

Government's primary responsibility is to provide the financial support institutions and students need to, respectively, provide and receive a high-quality education. As we noted earlier, government, particularly state government, has not been fulfilling this responsibility effectively in recent years.

1. Public institutions need to be provided sufficient public funding to support institutional operations (traditionally a state responsibility) and to ensure that college is affordable for their students (both a state and federal responsibility). Instead, most states have pursued a policy of disinvestment in education and public services. This has left those of us in higher education facing impossible choices.

A real and lasting solution to the problems of college student retention and attainment will not be achieved without greater government support.

2. State governments need to make sure that colleges and universities are properly staffed to ensure student success. One of the most glaring failures of government policy over the last generation has been the failure to strengthen academic staffing so as to build the ranks of full-time tenure-track faculty or provide adequate financial and professional support to contingent faculty members. The AFT supports a comprehensive national campaign called the Faculty and College Excellence initiative (FACE) to address the staffing crisis through legislation, political action, collective bargaining, research and communications. (See our website at **aftface.org**.)

3. Government needs to put structures in place ensuring that institutions provide a high-quality educational program for their students. Traditionally, government has wisely avoided direct intervention at the institutional level, relying instead on an extensive, decentralized system of self-regulation by private accrediting agencies to fulfill much of this responsibility. However, the growth in attention to accountability issues during the past decade has led to a great many proposals—some from people in government, some from institutional organizations, some from individual academics, think tanks and foundations, some from accrediting agencies—to impose more direct and measurable quality criteria for curriculum, teaching and assessment.

Government has an obligation to hold institutions accountable for achieving demonstrably good results—our members believe this very strongly. However, there are more promising ways and less promising ways to achieve quality. In our experience, practices that rely on criteria developed without the participation of frontline faculty usually fail in practice because they are not connected to the realities of the classroom or tailored to the differing missions and strengths of individual institutions.

4. The states and the federal government both need to ensure that students are not subject to fraud and abuse. This applies with particular force to profit-making colleges that often appear to be more committed to taking student tuition dollars than giving students a high-quality education.

The College Retention Issue

AS WE NOTED BEFORE, MUCH OF TODAY'S PUBLIC DEBATE HAS FOCUSED ON IMPROVing college student retention. We have described many problems in the ways by which retention is tracked, but it is nevertheless true that college student retention is too low and is a source of great concern to AFT members. In the past, colleges and universities answered questions about retention by asserting that American higher education was the most expansive and highest quality in the world. That is still largely true. However, in recent years, concern about accountability has been fueled by newer data indicating that U.S. college attainment rates have fallen over time and in relation to other countries. In addition, there are ample data demonstrating totally unacceptable attainment disparities among students from different racial and ethnic groups and economic strata. Short of lowering academic standards, our members will do everything possible to address this national problem.

It makes no sense to implement a raft of curriculum and assessment mechanisms if they do not have a substantial impact on the problem you are trying to solve. In that vein, we have examined what we consider to be the most significant obstacles to college student success.

■ Inadequate academic preparation (a problem perceived more strongly by faculty and staff than by students);

■ Inadequate student finances and college affordability, particularly for adult and other nontraditional students;

■ Personal obligations such as a new child or an ill relative;

■ Uncertainty about academic requirements. Students report that they often feel somewhat at sea about what courses they should be taking, how those courses relate to their post-college goals and what they need to do to be successful in class;

■ Inaccessibility and inconvenience in terms of geography, the scheduling of courses and the availability of on-line options. At the same time, the community college students in our focus groups understood there is sometimes a trade-off between convenience, on the one hand, and high academic standards on the other—when trade-offs are necessary, the student focus groups overwhelmingly came down on the side of sticking with strong academic preparation.

■ Difficulty in gaining access to faculty or staff who can clarify course requirements, help students overcome problems and advise on career paths.

Given these issues, it is not hard to envision the solutions.

1. *Strengthen preparation in preK-12 by increasing the public support provided to school systems and the professionals who work in them.* As noted earlier, college faculty and staff at the postsecondary and preK-12 levels should be provided financial and professional support to coordinate standards between the two systems and minimize disjunctions.

2. *Strengthen federal and state student assistance so students can afford to enter college and remain with their studies despite other obligations.* Again, students report that paying for college is an overwhelming challenge and that they must work significant hours to support their academic career, often at the expense of fully benefiting from their classes. We cannot expect to keep balancing the books in higher education by charging students out-of-reach tuition and dismantling financial and professional support for a healthy system of academic staffing.
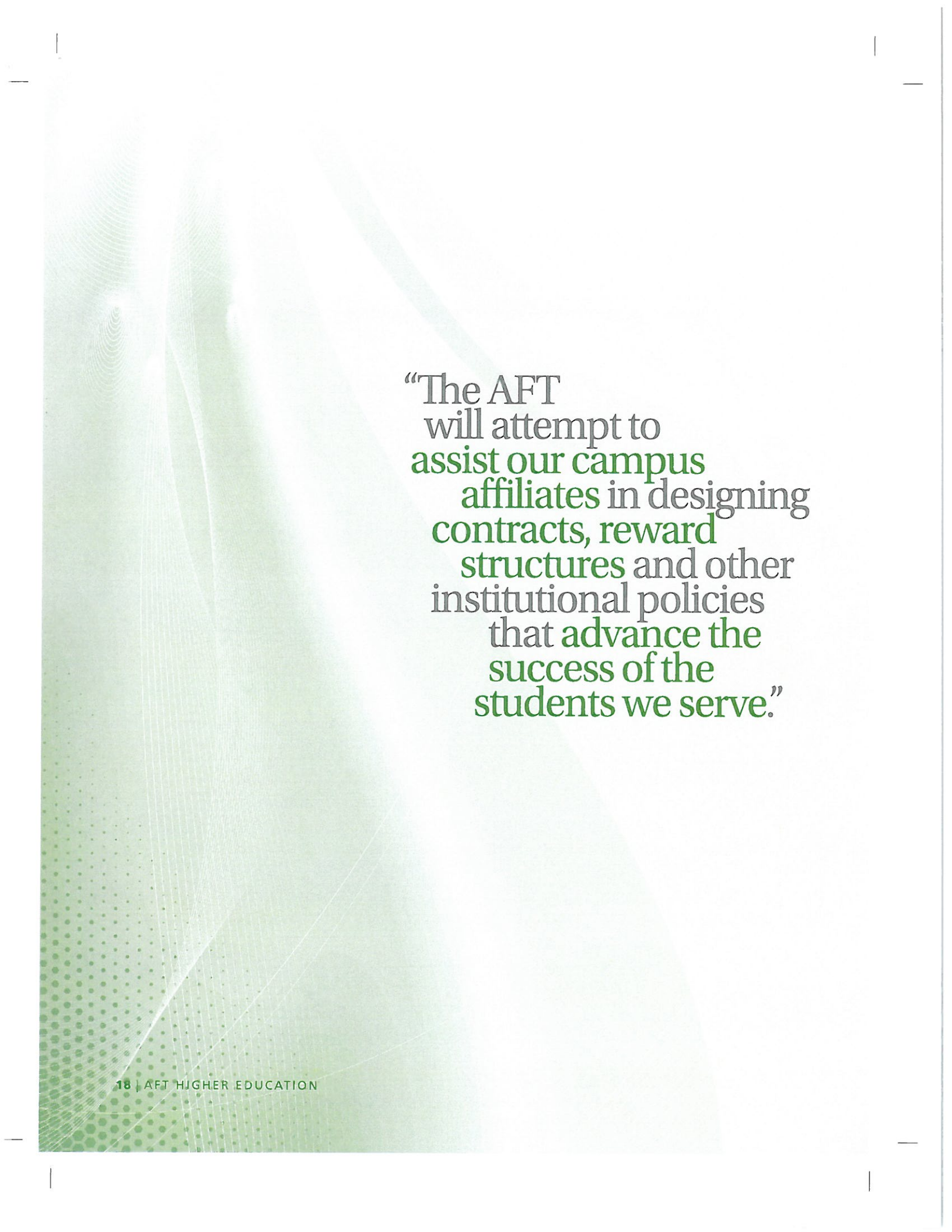
3. *Institute or expand student success criteria along the lines of the construct described earlier (or an equally valid one).* This is best based on deliberate, multidisciplinary planning at the institutional level. One of the aims is to provide the clarity students report they need to achieve their educational aspirations while providing greater transparency outside the academic community.

4. *Coordinate learning objectives with student assessment.* The desire to compare learning across different institutions on a single scale is understandable. However, we strongly believe that student learning would be diminished, not enhanced, by administering national assessments that overly homogenize "success" to what is easily measurable and comparable.

5. *Provide greater government funding and reassess current expenditure policies to increase support for instruction and staffing.* There must be an investment in a healthy staffing system rather than one built on the exploitation of contingent labor and the loss of full-time tenured faculty. The system of public higher education finance in the United States needs to be revamped so that colleges and universities have the capacity to fulfill the nation's attainment goals.

6. *Improve the longitudinal tracking of students as they make their way through the education system and out into the world beyond.* The current federal graduation formula is much too narrow. We need to look at all students over a more substantial period of time, and we have to account for the great diversity in student goals to account properly for student success.
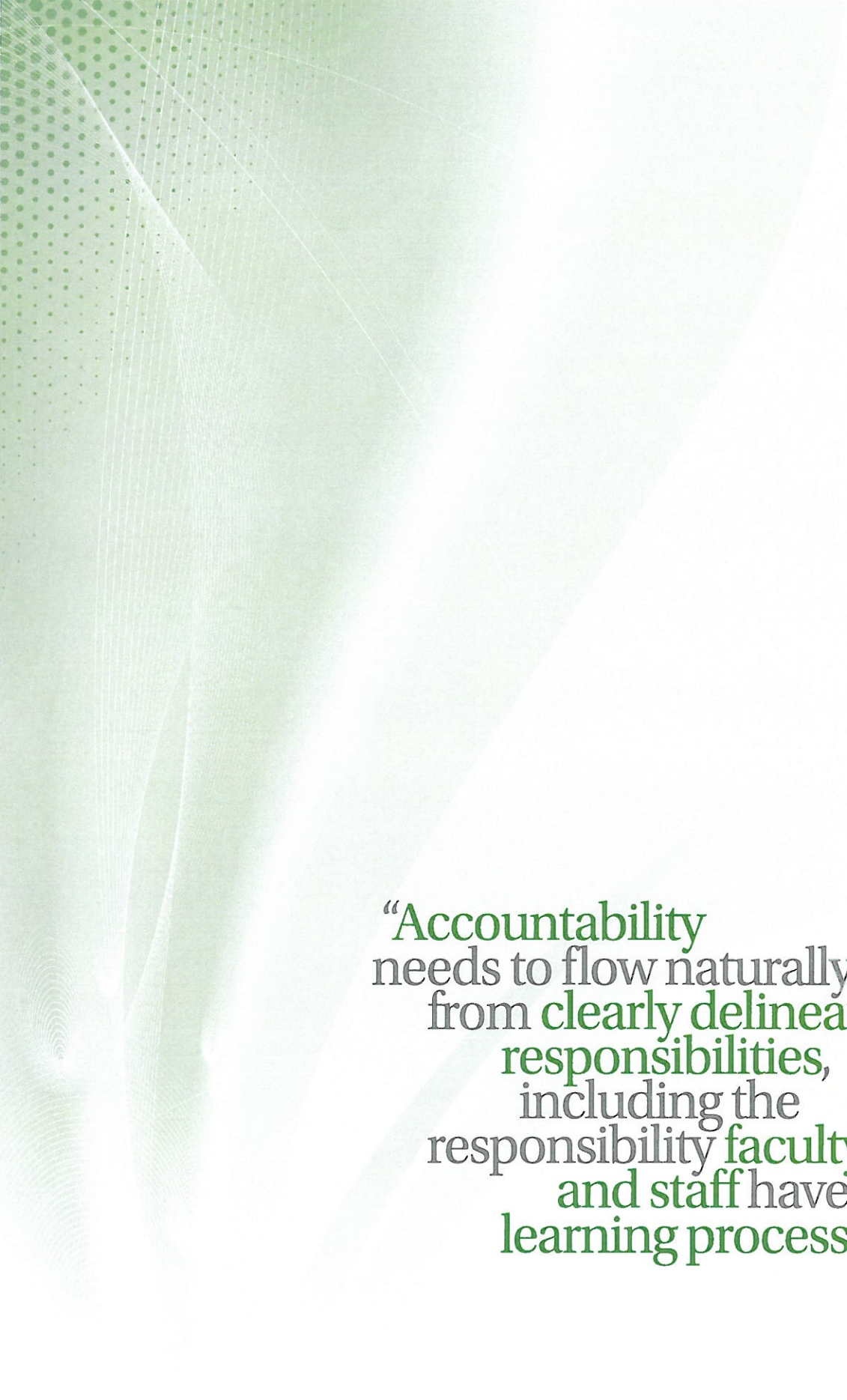
All of us involved in higher education need to keep our eye on the ball when it comes to student retention. The union and its members will join with other stakeholders to clarify learning criteria and connect them to effective assessment. At the same time, if we concentrate too much on developing ever more elaborate learning criteria without addressing the enormous financial and staffing issues that impede retention, we are likely to wind up with a lot of words and a lot of bureaucracy but very little concrete improvement for students.

"The AFT will attempt to **assist our campus affiliates** in designing **contracts, reward structures** and other institutional policies that **advance the success of the students we serve.**"

Conclusion

WE BELIEVE THAT TOO MANY OF TODAY'S policy discussions about higher education curriculum, teaching and assessment are not sufficiently connected to a clear set of understandings about what student success should look like or about what the appropriate roles and responsibilities of institutions, faculty and staff, students and government should be for achieving it. In this report, we have tried to offer a faculty and staff perspective that we hope will advance the national dialogue on these concerns. As this dialogue evolves, the AFT will welcome opportunities to continue engaging on these issues both inside and outside the union. The AFT will attempt to assist our campus affiliates in designing contracts, reward structures and other institutional policies that advance the success of the students we serve. We hope our members will be actively engaged in leading the discussion of student success issues at their institutions. Finally, we urge anyone reading this report to keep up periodically with AFT's What Should Count website at **www.whatshouldcount.org**.

"Accountability
needs to flow naturally
from clearly delineated
responsibilities,
including the
responsibility faculty
and staff have in the
learning process."

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Commentary

April 8, 2012

For Student Success, Stop Debating and Start Improving

By Hilary Pennington

Historically, higher education has fueled social and economic mobility in America. But today that contribution is at risk. Attainment gaps between high- and low-income students have doubled over the past 10 years. Only 9 percent of students from low-income households have earned any postsecondary credentials by the time they are 26, compared with more than 50 percent of students from higher-income households. We must do far more, and with far more speed, than we are doing now to close this gap. If we can ensure that the majority of today's low-income young adults earn credentials beyond high school, they will qualify for family-supporting jobs and set their children on a path of upward mobility—a powerful way to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

The United States has a long way to go to reach that goal—a problem not just for low-income families but for all of us. Completion rates have stayed stubbornly flat for the past 30 years, despite vastly increased access to higher education and increased spending. While there is promising movement, we are not pursuing change with anywhere near the urgency or focus required to make a real dent in the problem, especially compared with countries that have surpassed us in raising postsecondary completion rates for 25- to 34-year-olds.

My perspective on these issues grows from my work over the past five years leading the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's investments to improve postsecondary success for low-income students. I have seen up close the multiple challenges that face higher education in these times of budget cuts and increased public concern over the value and cost of college. Yet in my experience, three broad but unproductive areas of debate distract

us from solving the central challenges. Here's what ought to be happening:

1) Institutions should improve student success by focusing on practices within their control instead of blaming external factors.

When asked about the challenges they face in helping more students graduate, higher-education leaders tend to list external forces, such as budget cuts and poor academic preparation. Yet regardless of whether states or the federal government restore needed support, or our K-12 system produces better-prepared graduates, institutions can do more with mechanisms directly within their control to help the students they enroll.

Research has shown that institutional practices make a big difference in student success. Similar institutions (of comparable size, selectivity, and student composition) vary more significantly in their completion rates and success with underrepresented populations within segments than they do between segments—with high performers outpacing low performers by as much as 40 percentage points.

Institutions can directly affect student success by customizing learning and support, redesigning placement tests and developmental education, and reducing excess credits and the time it takes to get a degree. By decreasing excess time to degree and increasing completion rates, colleges could also achieve productivity gains and thus enroll and serve more students.

Effective strategies start with a clear vision of who today's students are. The majority are nontraditional in some way—they work and go to school; they don't live on campus; they take longer than expected to graduate. Equally important, the fastest-growing populations are those historically most underrepresented and underserved—first-generation students, low-income students, and students of color.

Higher education needs a culture shift that rewards colleges as much for innovating to improve success for those students as the current culture rewards them for improving their institutional

rankings. And let me be clear: This shift must involve the full spectrum of higher-education institutions.

We also need smarter collaboration among colleges because how students attend college has changed as well. The new norm is "swirl"—students attend more than one institution, sometimes simultaneously. They piece together credits and courses, often online. One-third of all students change institutions at some time before earning degrees, and 27 percent transfer across state lines. All trends indicate that we will see more swirl, not less, in the years ahead. In response, we need more-transparent information to help students stay on track, better ways to assess the quality of learning at different kinds of institutions, and clearer transfer pathways.

2) Give students more-structured academic programs that accelerate their progress toward degrees.

Five years ago, there was significant concern that increasing attention to completion would weaken commitment to access and quality. While those concerns remain, today's debate focuses more on how to define "success" so that it includes all three dimensions. Still, critics of the "completion agenda" worry that it will degrade quality by constraining choice, thus shortchanging liberal-arts learning and forcing students to forgo personal growth as they hurry through the undergraduate experience.

We are learning that structured (and often limited) choice works best for most students. Honors programs in elite colleges and professional education in business, law, and medicine embody structured choice. If this works for the best-prepared students, we should provide it to those who need it most. For example, a recent study by the Community College Research Center shows that community-college students who enter a specific program of study within their first year are much more likely to earn credentials and/or transfer than are students who enter a concentration a year or two later.

Programs of study in two- and four-year colleges do not themselves require narrowing. They can be designed to guarantee exposure to different subject areas, to promote critical thinking,

and to allow students to challenge assumptions and debate ideas. For example, in designing a new general-education associate degree in applied sciences, the faculty at Tennessee's community colleges collectively determined the required courses, including philosophy.

We need to help more students enter structured programs of study as soon as they can. But that will require institutions to make the trade-offs in what constitutes a high-quality program of study, rather than leave it to students.

3) Accept that preparing for work and pursuing a liberal-arts education are not mutually exclusive.

This is a pernicious debate, because it stereotypes institutions (liberal-arts colleges versus community colleges) and by extension, their students. Such stereotypes are at best ill-informed and at worst profoundly condescending.

Work is a path to dignity and self-esteem for most people. Most college students and their families seek preparation for gainful employment. Many need paths that start with modest steps that allow them to work and then advance. They have long lives over which to continue formal and informal learning.

Even aside from that, community colleges (which enroll 42 percent of all undergraduates in the United States) are not primarily about job training. The largest degree program (over half of all enrolled students) is the general-education-transfer curriculum. Large numbers of community-college students enroll in liberal-arts courses. According to Gail Mellow, president of La Guardia Community College of the City University of New York, more students take philosophy there than in all of the small, private liberal-arts colleges in New England combined—and in smaller class sizes, not large lecture halls.

Finally, it is not the case that students pursuing vocational training don't think about the big questions of justice, democracy, and citizenship. We should all be inspired by courses like Wick Sloane's English class at Bunker Hill Community College where refugees, immigrants, veterans, and low-wage workers discuss the Bill of Rights and Walt Whitman. Community colleges don't need

to develop exchange programs to help their students experience diverse cultures—they embody them.

Today's students need exposure to both liberal learning and vocational skills. The only way that shorter-term vocational preparation risks tracking students is if dead ends between programs make it harder for them to move forward.

What are we learning about the best path forward to solve the real problems? While critics worry that the Gates Foundation may try to force its agenda on higher education, we see our role as funding diverse approaches that allow higher education to create its own solutions. With that in mind, I suggest the following priorities for our concerted attention:

- Optimize the rich higher-education "ecosystem" we've got. America's vaunted higher-education system is not just about public and private nonprofit four-year colleges. Community colleges are an underresourced asset for states and students. The best for-profit institutions offer nimbleness, capacity, and innovation that the rest of higher education can learn from. We need a range of institutions, with better connections among them.
- Fundamentally rethink how we as a society finance the public good of higher education. The disinvestment in public higher education over the past two decades has shifted greater costs and risks to students and their families, and has especially hurt the open-access two- and four-year colleges that educate the majority of college students. Restructure funding streams to motivate institutions to offer, and students to achieve, high-quality credentials, at a reasonable cost and time to degree completion.
- Break the tyranny of the credit hour and ease transfers among institutions. We need the best researchers and the most gifted teachers in higher education to focus on these challenges—like Harvard's Eric Mazur, who has radically redesigned his physics course based on research showing that students in the traditional lecture format had not learned as much as he thought.
- Use all means to increase personalization and student success. The most powerful forms of technology are not simply putting traditional education online but are transforming the process to maximize learning and retention. The tools need not be high tech: Mentors dedicated to helping students navigate their degree programs, like those at Western Governors University, help students persist and succeed. That kind of differentiated role will especially be needed in an "unbundled" world of

free course content, where added value will come from figuring out how to support student motivation and progress.

- Accelerate innovations aimed at increasing value while decreasing cost. The Gates Foundation's third Next Generation Learning Challenge attracted strong proposals to create delivery models that can serve a minimum of 5,000 students at a cost of $5,000 or less, with completion rates of 50 percent or more.
- Build organizational infrastructures to guide colleges through this crucial transformation and develop a new breed of leaders to support it. Unlike K-12, which has a wide array of organizations and leaders dedicated to reform (New Leaders for New Schools, new approaches to talent development, technical-assistance providers), this is nascent in higher education.
- Welcome data and be transparent about results. You can't get better unless you know where you are. Institutions and states should focus first on using data to learn how to drive improvement, rather than move to premature accountability systems.

The increasing pressure on higher education to produce more degrees of a higher quality at a cost students can afford is both overdue and necessary. But in the end, the most-effective changes will come from institutions of higher education themselves.

Rather than top-down reforms, social movements may have more to teach us, for the matter is not so much about external pressure but about changing hearts and minds. We need to build common cause among communities of practice (faculty, courageous leaders) who can change the belief system in higher education, and to convince faculty, administrators, and trustees that it is everyone's job to improve every student's success.

Change will require multiple points of view and many people working on different dimensions of the problem over a sustained period of time. We should put counterproductive debates behind us, and set about the urgent business of the revolutionary improvement that students and our country need.

Hilary Pennington is an expert on postsecondary education, most recently serving as director of education, postsecondary success, and special initiatives at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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Improving student retention in higher education

Improving Teaching and Learning

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As a key performance indicator in university quality assurance processes, the retention of students in their studies is an issue of concern world-wide. Implicit in the process of quality assurance is quality improvement. In this article, we examine student retention from a teaching and learning perspective, in terms of teaching and learning approaches that have an impact on students' decisions to continue with or withdraw from their studies. The major need is to engage students in their studies, and in this article we discuss ways that student engagement can be facilitated through the teaching and learning programme in higher education currently.

Introduction

An issue of concern in higher education institutions across the world is the retention and success of students in their studies. This is a particularly pressing issue in the context of widening participation for under-represented student groups, increasing student diversity and educational quality assurance and accountability processes. As well as the personal impact and loss of life chances for students, non-completion has financial implications for students (and their families), and for society and the economy through the loss of potential skills and knowledge. There are also financial and reputational implications for higher education institutions. While students who do not complete may still benefit from skills developed, including increased confidence

and life experiences (Quinn et al., 2005), in the current competitive and globalised higher education market, the reputational fall-out of low student retention and high student attrition figures can be damaging for institutions (Yorke and Longden, 2004).

The importance of student retention in Australia is underscored by its inclusion via institutional statistics as a key performance indicator in educational quality and in the allocation of the Commonwealth Government's Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. Student attrition and retention rates are defined as '... the percentage of students in a particular year who neither graduate nor continue studying in an award course at the same institution in the following year' (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005). Retention statistics are also used to measure institutions' equity

performance which in turn determines their funding from the Higher Education Equity Support Program. In the UK there are two measures of retention, which are similarly narrow, and these are translated into institutional performance indicators:

'The first is the 'completion rate' – the proportion of starters in a year who continue their studies until they obtain their qualification, with no more than one consecutive year out of higher education. As higher education courses take years to complete, an expected completion rate is calculated by the Higher Education Statistics Agency... A more immediate measure of retention is the proportion of an institution's intake which is enrolled in higher education in the year following their first entry to higher education. This is the 'continuation rate' (National Audit Office, 2007, p. 5).

In the UK, these indicators are contextualised by a 'benchmark' for each institution, which takes account of students' entry qualifications and subjects studied, and thus suggests what the completion and continuation rates ought to be. These factors are also used to allocate funding to support the retention of students in higher education via the core grant.

Students may not continue with their studies for a variety of factors. Research exploring the reasons for student withdrawal tends to conclude that there is rarely a single reason why students leave. In most cases, the picture is complex and students leave as a result of a combination of inter-related factors. Echoing the findings of an Australian study, (Long, Ferrier and Heagney, 2006), a synthesis of UK research on student retention (Jones, 2008) identified the following categories of reasons why students withdraw: poor preparation for higher education; weak institutional and/or course match, resulting in poor fit and lack of commitment; unsatisfactory academic experience; lack of social integration; financial issues; and personal circumstances. Thus, some students withdraw for reasons beyond the jurisdiction of the institution, including personal reasons and changed personal circumstances, wrong or 'second choice' course selection and movement to other courses that meet their interests and aspirations more directly.

From this perspective, while the value of statistics solely as a reflection of educational quality seems questionable, the concept of continual improvement is implicit in accountability and quality assurance processes and in funding via the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (Walshe, 2008). This then leads to consideration of the impact and effect of the quality

assurance activity (Stensaker, 2008), of how 'the core processes of higher education – teaching and learning – are improved' (Stensaker, 2008, p. 60) – and the impact this has on student retention and success rates.

Despite the unstated objective of improvement in quality assurance and in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, which aims to reward excellence, it is not clear how statistics might promote improvement (Walshe, 2008, p. 275). Stensaker (2008) has argued that to achieve quality teaching and learning emanating from quality assurance, there needs to be movement beyond definitions and technical processes, with attention placed on good teaching and learning practice, which should then underpin statistical improvement. For student retention, the more micro-level issues involve outlining the teaching and learning factors that promote student continuation with their studies. While factors such as the personal and course selection are largely beyond the power of the teachers, they may ask what they can do to enhance the possibility of students continuing with their studies.

The phenomenon of breaking student retention into its component parts from a teaching and learning perspective provides guidance for institutions and teachers in educational quality improvement. In this article we discuss factors that have an impact on student retention from the teaching and learning view, of which the most significant is the students' experience of university (Scott, 2005) and the need for students to be engaged in their studies. Drawing on the premise of our recent publication (Crosling, Thomas and Heagney, 2008) and that also espoused by Tinto (2005) of the range of factors in contemporary higher education that have an impact on students' retention. These include: pre-entry information, preparation and admission processes; induction and transition support; learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum development; social engagement; student support, including financial and pastoral services; and improved use of institutional data (Jones, 2008). The academic experience, and in particular the teaching, learning and assessment practices are within the control of teachers. We point out that what goes on in the teaching and learning programme is significant in student retention.

In Australia and world-wide, student engagement is generally acknowledged as a key factor in student retention, and enhancing student engagement is a fundamental strategy for improving student retention, success and outcomes (McInnes and James, 1995; Horstmanshof and Zimitat, 2007; Chen, Lattica and

Hamilton, 2008). Krause and Coates (2008) point out that in first year studies, it is crucial to encourage and assist student engagement as the foundation for successful study in later years. Student engagement is defined as a student's academic commitment and application (Horstmanshoff and Zimitat, 2007, citing Astin, 1984) and shown in time and energy devoted to activities that are educationally purposeful. This also connotes the quality of student effort and students studying for meaning and understanding (Marton and Saljo, 1984) thus reflecting a constructivist approach to learning (Lawrence, 2005).

However, engagement is not the sole responsibility of the student as it concerns students interacting with the learning environment (Bryson and Hand, 2007), rather than being passive within it. Thus managers and teachers have some responsibility to provide a setting that facilitates students' engagement and learning, that 'gets students to participate in activities that lead to success' (Kuh, 2003, cited in Kezar and Kinzie, 2005, p. 150).

In our publication (Crosling, Thomas and Heagney, 2008), we point out the value of student-responsive curriculum development as a means to promote student engagement. This refers to students being immersed in authentic curriculum contents and tasks that are challenging and relevant to students' lives and futures, appropriate orientation or induction procedures, and the integration of study skills. Concurrently, students benefit from collaborative learning situations, where learning is active and interactive between students and their peers in and outside the classroom, as well as with the teachers. Formative assessment is crucial, providing immediate and relevant information for students' academic development needs at the particular point in time.

Further to this, Chen et al. (2008) argue that academic success which underpins student retention requires more than acquisition of knowledge, and that the classroom is an important introductory point for helping students to begin to master key disciplinary concepts. In support of this, Meyer and Land (2005) put forward the pivotal role of students' understandings of what they call disciplinary threshold concepts for academic survival and success. The implication here is that the classroom needs to include active and interactive learning as the basis for developing understanding of core disciplinary concepts, and these underpin academic success with strong implications for student retention.

There is thus a 'dynamic interplay' (Brysen and Hand, 2007) between student engagement, the quality of student learning and the teaching and learning context. In support of this view, Chen et al. (2008) identify engagement as being composed of the two aspects of the degree of time and effort students use for education, but also the 'way an institution organises learning opportunities and services' (Chen et al, 2008, p. 340) so as to encourage students to take part in and thus benefit from activities. The curriculum in a broad sense, or the teaching and learning programme, provides an ideal forum for approaches and strategies that encourage students to engage, as it is experienced in one form or another by all students (Crosling, Thomas and Heagney, 2008).

Tinto (2000) also points out that the class room is often the only setting in which students meet other students and their teachers. Tinto (2000) expands on some conditions that underpin students' engagement and thus their persistence in their studies. These include the institution and teachers holding high expectations of students in their learning, but also recognising that many commencing students may not be adequately prepared for the rigours of academic study and the concurrent need for academic support, especially in disciplinary contexts, that help students to 'know the rules' (Tinto, 2000, p. 91). According to Tinto, feedback about academic performance is important for students in academic success, and involvement with fellow students in learning in the classroom (Tinto, 2000).

The current interest in student engagement has occurred in a climate where higher education has moved to a massified system with fewer resources so that over decades, there has been concern about the development of student learning in the higher education teaching and learning context. For instance, Kezar and Kinzie, (2005, p. 149) cite Altbach (1997) that these factors have contributed to increased movement towards the lecture method of teaching from the early part of the last century in America, which has led to less interaction between students and teachers, and several higher education commentators have noted

> There is thus a 'dynamic interplay' ... between student engagement, the quality of student learning and the teaching and learning context.

that learning is less likely to occur in such large, impersonal and passive learning environments (Astin, 1993; Chickering, and Gamson, 1987, cited in Kezar and Kinzie, 2005, p. 149). Supporting this, Brysen and Hand (2007) point out that engagement can be fostered by student-centred conceptual orientation compared with teacher centred content orientation in teaching.

Curriculum development

The curriculum is experienced by all students, albeit in different forms. Indeed, for many non-traditional student groups the formal learning experience is the majority or only part of their student experience. In other words, because they live off campus, study at a distance and/or part-time, and/or have work and family responsibilities, they might not be able to participate in extra curricular activities, social and sporting events and informal learning and socialising. There is a body of evidence from the US (and increasingly in other countries) that the more students interact with other students and staff, the more likely they are to persist (e.g. Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1997). Furthermore, both social and academic integration into a higher education institution have a positive impact on their sense of belonging to (Reay et al., 2001), and ultimately retention within, that environment (Thomas, 2002).

Despite different modes of delivery and forms across disciplines, the curriculum forms a platform for the implementation of approaches and strategies that engage students in their university experience. The notion of curriculum is used in divergent ways both within and across HE systems, and often without a shared understanding of its meaning (Fraser and Bosanquet, 2006). We are using the term here in a broad way, to include learning, teaching, assessment, academic support and induction, as well as programme contents. We view the curriculum as the primary way to engage students both academically and socially, and to build institutional commitment (Berger & Braxton, 1998) and belonging (Leathwood and O'Connell, 2003; Read et al., 2003; Thomas 2002).

Several factors are important in improving student retention and success:

Orientation and induction

Traditionally higher education institutions have offered new students a 'Welcome' or 'Freshers" week on arrival. Using teacher-centred methods of communication, the emphasis has been on conveying the status of the institution and overloading students with information. More recently, there has been greater recognition of the need to induct students into the wider higher education environment via more student-centred strategies to enable students to learn about and understand the expectations and culture of higher education (Yorke and Thomas 2003; Crosling, 2003). Some institutions are now introducing 'longer and thinner' induction that starts earlier and lasts beyond a week (Layer et al., 2002, Thomas et al., 2002b).

This provides a more effective opportunity for new students to assimilate and make sense of the information provided, to socialise with the staff and existing students through a range of activities and to feel that they belong in the higher education community at their institution (Thomas et al., 2005b). Early engagement could include the provision of timetables, course handbooks and reading lists, summer schools, or materials accessed via a virtual learning environment. Early engagement can benefit students by preparing them for their course, demonstrating what will be expected of them, and assisting them to feel a part of the institution. Institutions are increasingly interacting with students prior to entry to develop institutional and course commitment and engagement.

Integration of the induction process into the subject specific curriculum helps students to learn in the context of their discipline (Ward, Crosling & Marangos, 2000). For example, some institutions have an accredited first semester induction module, which is discipline based, and involves group work to explore aspects of the transition process. This can be assessed using transparent and formative approaches to allow students to develop the skills and understanding of learning in higher education, whilst also developing their subject-based knowledge. Such approaches to induction enable students to adjust their expectations of learning, teaching and assessment, and encourage staff to use learning and teaching strategies that enable students to engage and feel included in their studies. This requires a responsiveness to students, and a student-centred, rather than a teacher-centred, approach to the learning process.

Authentic curriculum

The curriculum is usually situated within a discipline, which determines the curriculum contents and the disciplinary norms and expectations that shape the academic culture and values and the ways of learning which are expected or assumed. A significant factor

in students' success or otherwise in their learning in higher education and in the disciplines is the intention with which they approach their studies (Marton and Saljo, 1976). This affects the degree to which the students engage with their subjects. If they study with a 'deep' approach, they are seeking understanding and meaning. Alternatively, with a 'surface' approach, students have the intention of rote-learning information, without linking knowledge and understandings. A strategic or achieving approach is one where the intention is to obtain a high grade (Biggs 1987). Arguably, students who are engaged, deriving meaning and understanding from their studies and therefore demonstrating a deep approach to learning, are more likely to continue.

It is argued that the curriculum ought to be culturally relevant to support widening participation and to prepare graduates for living and working in a diverse society (Crosling, Edwards & Schroder, 2008). For example, Dibben (2004) explores the influence of socio-economic background on students' experiences of studying music. A small number of students felt that they did not fit into the department, and believed the curriculum was 'too traditional' (as it focused on classical music). In relation to working class mature students Bamber & Tett (2001) recommend that relevant course material is used. Similarly, Haggis & Pouget (2002) suggest that to support first generation entrants, links need to be made between the curriculum and students' own experiences and views of the world. Houghton & Ali (2000) explore the development and delivery of a culturally relevant curriculum with Asian women, and encourage students to offer feedback about their educational provision to assist future development of the curriculum.

The curriculum can also be relevant to students' future aspirations – to help build institutional commitment (Berger & Braxton, 1998) by reinforcing how successful completion of the course will lead to, for example, a chosen career area. Blackwell et al. (2001) argue that the higher education curriculum should offer students the opportunity to reflect on employment and other experiences to explore the learning and skills development that is involved in these activities. Barrie (2005) similarly argues that the undergraduate curriculum from the first year onwards should assist students to develop 'graduate attributes', which, amongst other things, will assist them in future employment, and life more generally. The need for learning and teaching to develop personal, social and employability skills is supported by empirical research with 400 stu-

dents at the start of their course and following graduation (Glover et al., 2002). Glover et al. argue that the extension of partnerships between higher education and employers are essential to improve the employability of graduates.

Purcell et al. (2002) suggest that work placements offer both students and employers opportunities: students gain valuable skills and demonstrable competencies and employers are able to recruit graduates from a wider pool. In addition, students are increasingly engaged in part-time employment, and so this offers a way to capitalise on this experience, and better prepare students for graduation (not just in terms of employment but more generally). Thus, part of the learning experience should prepare students for graduation in the broadest sense and should contribute to the validity and authenticity of the curriculum for all students.

Student-centred active learning

There is a consensus that interactive as opposed to didactic teaching improves academic success and promotes the inclusion of learners who might feel like outsiders (Crosling, As-Saber & Rahman, 2008; Parker et al., 2005; Haggis & Pouget, 2002; Thomas, 2002; Bamber & Tett, 2001). Student-centred learning conceives of students as playing a more active role in their learning processes. Active learning is often associated with experiential, problem-based and project-based learning, and other forms of collaborative learning, and less reliance on the large lecture format. Kolb's (Kolb, 1984) work on the theoretical foundations of experiential learning can be seen to underlie all of these approaches to learning (Tight, 2002, p.106). Broadly, experiential learning relates to the knowledge and skills gained through life and work experience, but different interpretations have extended the notion of experiential learning to 'meaningful discovery' learning (Boydell, 1976). This has given rise to approaches such as problem-based and project-based learning, which are educational approaches that make use of the learning strategies suggested by the theories of experiential learning within the classroom context. These forms of teaching promote collaboration among students to solve problems, and by using realistic problems or situations for learning, a deeper understanding of the relationship between theory and practice can be developed and understood by students (Tight, 2002, p. 108).

The benefits of student-centred learning that includes greater staff-student and peer interaction can

Improving student retention in higher education, Crosling et al.

be understood in relation to the social and emotional dimension of learning. This engagement influences students' sense of belonging and their motivation and achievement (Thomas, 2002; Askham, 2004; Košir & Pecjak, 2005). Pedagogies that involve students as active learners, rather than as recipients of knowledge, show respect for students' views and experiences, and therefore diversity and difference is less likely to be problematised and more likely to be valued within a transformative model of higher education (Bamber et al., 1997; Jones and Thomas, 2005). Tinto found that students benefited from and enjoyed being part of 'learning communities', which forged interaction between students to facilitate their learning both inside the classroom and beyond (Tinto, 1998, 2000). Similarly Warren (2003) reviews existing literature and finds that student-centred, discussion-based and group-based learning activities promote:

- Enhanced student participation and interaction.
- More willingness by students to express their ideas.
- Improved communication among students in culturally diverse classes.
- Better adjustment to university study (for international and UK students).
- A shift towards deep learning as a space is created for learners to test out new concepts.
- Increased motivation, quality of discussion and level of analysis (from Warren, 2003, p. 3).

Student-centred interactive learning does not only have to occur in small groups, but methods can be developed and utilised to teach large classes too. Warren (2003) identifies different methods that have been employed with large groups of students:

- Collaborative learning groups (3–5 students) working on tasks during lecture periods.
- Group presentations and interactive lectures featuring discussion of concepts and application to practical exercises.
- Teaching via sessions that combine exposition and work on tasks in medium-sized groups (about 20 students), instead of whole class lectures.
- Resource-based learning in project study groups (6–10 students), culminating in a set of class debates to exchange knowledge gained. (From Warren, 2003, p. 4)

It is the development and utilisation of such learning and teaching strategies that promote a more active, student-centred approach to learning, which draws on students' previous experiences and interests, that helps to enhance student engagement, course commitment and retention on the programme. ICT can offer teaching staff new ways to develop problem-based and project-base learning activities.

Integration of study skills

There are different models of providing study skills and academic support. Warren (2002) identifies three ways of providing academic support: separate, semi-integrated and integrated curriculum models, and similarly Earwaker (1993) identifies traditional pastoral, professional and an integrated curriculum model as ways of providing both academic and pastoral support. Research on widening participation points towards the value of integrated models, particularly of academic support, with the provision of one-to-one support (Bamber & Tett, 2001; Comfort et al., 2002) and access to additional support as required (Comfort et al., 2002).

Similarly, Warren argues that a mix of semi-integrated and integrated models of curriculum provision offers better prospects for helping a wide spectrum of students to succeed at university. Integrated approaches are favoured as research shows that many students who would benefit from academic and other support services are reluctant to put themselves forward (Dodgson and Bolam, 2002), therefore a proactive or integrated approach helps to reach all students. Layer et al. (2002) found that many higher education institutions with a commitment to wider access and above benchmark levels of retention have one-stop-shop student services. This type of provision not only makes it easier for students to access academic and pastoral services, but it also encourages students to use the facilities by including services that all students may need to access and which are not stigmatising (e.g. accommodation office, sport and recreation, registry etc.) (see Thomas et al., 2002a).

Formative assessment

Many students struggle to make the transition from a more structured learning experience in schools and colleges to the greater autonomy in higher education. Pedagogical research, especially with non-traditional students, reports that formative assessment offers an integrated and structured approach to equipping all students with the information and skills they need to make a successful transition into higher education and to continue to succeed academically. For example, George et al. (2004) found that the nature of assessment used was significant to students' experience and

engagement with the course. They suggest that the incorporation of both summative and formative assessment helps to build confidence, a positive attitude towards learning and successful engagement with the cognitive demands of the programme. Similarly, Bamber & Tett (1999) found that non-traditional students, and particularly mature learners, benefited from formative feedback. For example, formative assessment can offer students:

- Space to explore, try out different approaches and develop their own ideas.
- An opportunity to become aware of their own progress and find out about themselves as learners.
- An opportunity to negotiate with tutors and/or peers on matters of assessment including the allocation of marks (Povey & Angier, 2004).

Formative feedback is integrated into the learning experience, and so does not detract from discipline-focused teaching and it reaches all students, not just those who have the knowledge and confidence to seek support. Furthermore, formative feedback provides a vehicle for interaction between students and staff, thus helping to develop student familiarity and confidence to approach staff for additional clarification and guidance if necessary. Feedback information can also be used by staff to realign their teaching in response to learners' needs. Formative feedback offers an integrated approach to providing students with clarity about what is expected of them, and a way of engaging with peers and teaching staff to discuss academic issues in a safe environment so that they develop the skills, understanding and integration they need to succeed. Furthermore, formative assessment can be used to promote an active approach to learning, as students are encouraged to reflect on the learning process, rather than just the outcomes.

> ... the development and utilisation of ... learning and teaching strategies that promote a more active, student-centred approach to learning, which draws on students' previous experiences and interests, that helps to enhance student engagement, course commitment and retention on the programme.

Teaching and Learning and students from under-represented groups

It can be argued that what goes on in the teaching and learning programme, that is the learning, teaching and assessment practices, play a even more important role in the retention and success of students from under-represented groups (Yorke in Ferrier and Heagney (eds) 2008). For many of these students, time constraints mean the classroom is the only element of university life they experience. In Australia this is particularly so for the large number of students with work and family responsibilities. A 2001 national study revealed that approximately 70 per cent of full time students worked nearly 15 hours per week (Long and Hayden, 2001). Consequently, it is in the classroom that the opportunity to engage students is either made or lost.

Teachers – know your students

This seems an obvious dictum but it is not always easy to achieve when much university teaching takes place in large lecture theatres. Whilst it is widely accepted that teachers can no longer assume all students have the same background knowledge, it is very difficult to structure classroom learning to incorporate the interests and experience of all students when teachers don't know their students. However, imaginative use of curriculum can go a long way to meeting this need.

For instance a lecturer at Monash Malaysia wished to develop the cultural understandings of his engineering students who came from many different backgrounds. He also wished to provide a setting in which they could improve their confidence in their English language and communication skills, both of which are important for engineering graduates once they enter the work force. He organised the students to work together in small groups and give presentations to the class on the cultural backgrounds of each of the members of their small teams. This gave them opportunities to make social connections while hearing about the diverse backgrounds of their classmates. The students developed increased tolerance of each other and a fuller understanding of cultural diversity as well as improved English language and presentation skills (Teoh, in Crosling, Thomas and Heagney (eds) 2008, pp. 52–6).

Programme organisation

When teachers know something of the lived experience of their students, they can organise teaching programmes which facilitate the students' maximum

participation. Questions which teachers can ask of themselves to effect this outcome include:

- Do you know which students have family responsibilities and which students have work responsibilities?
- Do you consider students work and family responsibilities when you schedule assignments and examinations? For example, are assignments and class tests due at the end of the school holidays when students who are parents have their school aged children at home with them?
- Do you arrange for all assignments to be completed at the same time assuming that students have all day and part of the night to do them?
- Do you organise guest lectures at times that suit students with work and family commitments?

Same classroom – different cultures

At another level, classrooms and lecture theatres provide teachers with opportunities to model inclusivity by eliminating local jargon from their speech, using global events to illustrate their points rather than references to the local football team or pub. In many cases a student's appearance can alert teachers to the fact that they need to employ these broader approaches to their teaching. But there are many students from diverse backgrounds whose appearance does not prompt teachers to make their teaching more inclusive.

Other cultural issues

The classroom provides lecturers with opportunities to link into students' values such as the value of work, struggle, persistence, and resilience.

Some students who are first in their family to access higher education also have overcome barriers such as poverty, poor primary and secondary education experiences to get into university. Many have extraordinary persistence and resilience which, if acknowledged by their teachers, can assist in engaging them in their studies. Similarly refugee students from war-torn countries may have exhibited great courage in re-locating to a new country. How often are their experiences outside the classroom acknowledged?

Practical issues

There are very practical strategies lecturers can employ in the classroom to assist students, particularly those from under-represented groups, to succeed and persist at university. By talking about student support services in their first lectures for the year, teachers can play an important role in linking students to relevant supports such as counselling, disability services and career advice. While equity group students tend to need and use support services more than non-equity group students, they often lack the confidence to go and seek them out for themselves

Conclusion

Quality assurance and accountability are integral to higher education in Australia and globally. One significant indicator of this is the retention of students in their studies. In this article, we point out that the collection of statistical data alone is limited in its impact on educational quality improvement, which is implicit in quality assurance objectives. One way to improve quality in regard to student retention is to identify influences and causes of student retention and attrition. Engaging students in their studies has been identified as important in retaining students and stemming attrition. Institutions have also shared responsibility to facilitate student engagement.

Various teaching and learning approaches to encourage students to engage with their studies and their institution have been surveyed in this article and include:

- Early engagement through pre- and post-entry induction activities.
- Greater understanding of the diversity of students, including where they have come from, what they are interested in and their aspirations. This in turn can inform the organisation of the programme and curricular contents.
- Authentic and relevant curricula, building on students' previous experiences, interests and future aspirations, and using inclusive language and relevant examples.
- Student-centred active learning designed to involve students in the learning process.
- Integration of study skills to support the success of all students, and signing posting students to access other support services as necessary.
- Formative feedback which is relevant and integrated into the learning experience in a timely and constructive way.

There are many reasons why students leave higher education early, some of which may not be wholly negative, but there are usually financial implications for withdrawing students and there may be other personal consequences. Similarly, there are pecuniary and reputational implications for institutions. Some reasons why students leave are beyond the control of

institutions, but the organisation and delivery of the curriculum is an area over which universities and colleges have significant autonomy. Addressing student retention via learning, teaching and curricular developments has the advantage of meeting the needs of all students – not just those either identified as at risk, or who proactively seek additional support.

In the context of equality and diversity legislation, the requirement for institutions in the UK is to proactively make anticipatory changes, which promote the success of all students. In Australia, the mandate is for specialised provision but not necessarily anticipatory and higher education institutions provide tailored support for under-represented/disadvantaged groups of students. Both of these approaches help to shift the institutional response away from a deficit approach by implementing practices which assist all students to improve and prosper – irrespective of their starting position.

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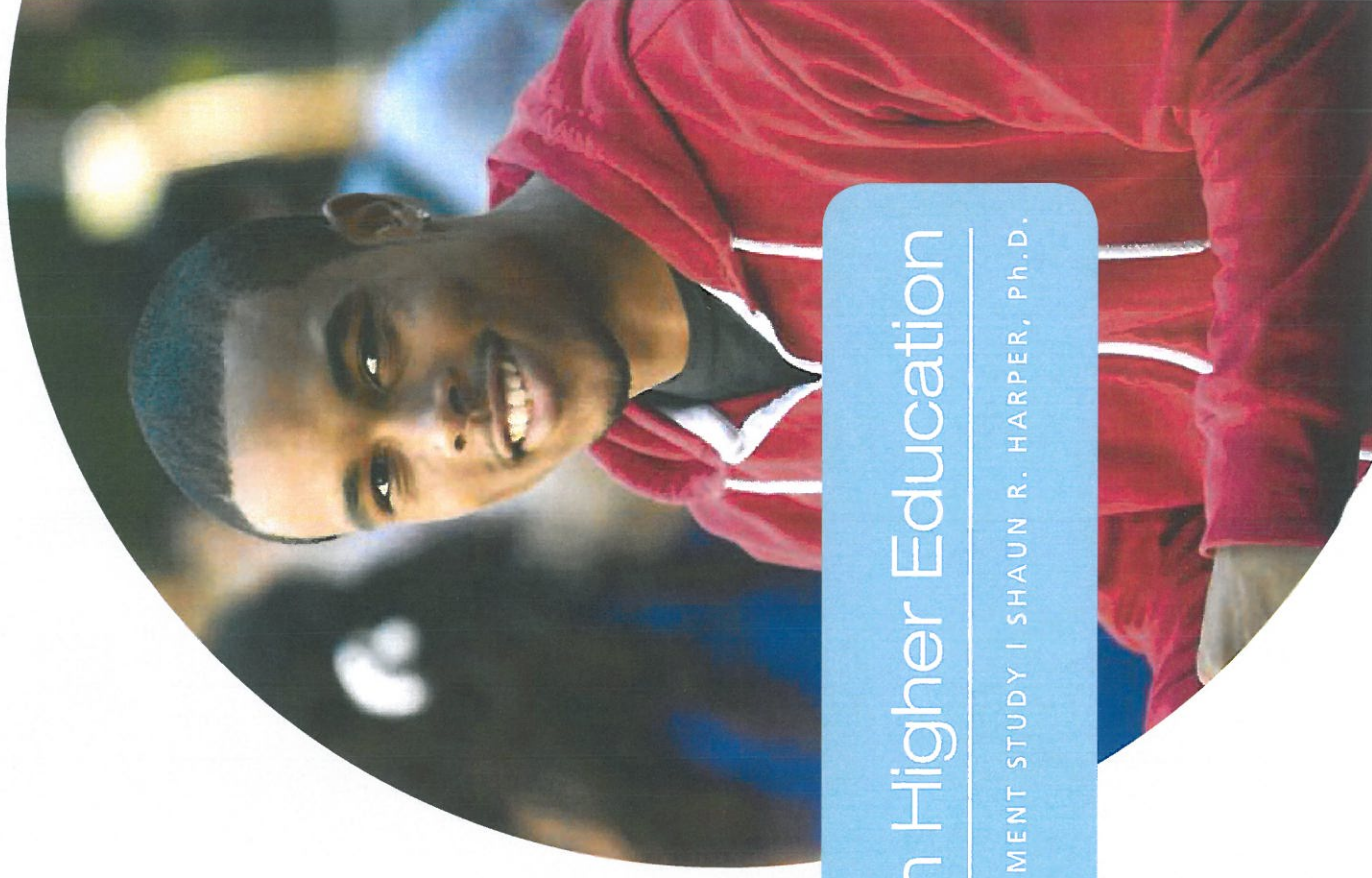
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Black Male Student Success in Higher Education

Graduate School of Education

Penn GSE

Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education

Table of Contents

Message from the Author

Black men's dismal college enrollments, disengagement and underachievement, and low rates of baccalaureate degree completion are among the most pressing and complex issues in American higher education. Perhaps more troubling than the problems themselves is the way they are continually mishandled by educators, policymakers, and concerned others. Amplifying the troubled status of Black male students at all levels of education has, unfortunately, yielded few solutions. Thus, educational outcomes for this population have remained stagnant or worsened in recent years. This is attributable, at least in part, to the deficit orientation that is constantly reinforced in media, academic research journals, and educational practice.

For nearly a decade, I have argued that those who are interested in Black male student success have much to learn from Black men who have actually been successful. To increase their educational attainment, the popular one-sided emphasis on failure and low-performing Black male undergraduates must be counterbalanced with insights gathered from those who somehow manage to navigate their way to and through higher education, despite all that is stacked against them—low teacher expectations, insufficient academic preparation for college-level work, racist and culturally unresponsive campus environments, and the debilitating consequences of severe underrepresentation, to name a few.

I am delighted to share with you this report from the largest-ever qualitative research study on Black undergraduate men. The National Black Male College Achievement Study is based on 219 students who have been successful in an array of postsecondary educational settings. I was fortunate to interview them on 42 college and university campuses across the United States. They had much to tell me about the personal, familial, and institutional enablers of their achievement. Offered herein are some of the most important things I learned from these achievers. Deeper insights into their journeys and undergraduate experiences are offered in my forthcoming book *Exceeding Expectations: How Black Male Students Suceed in College.*

Included in this report are details about the research design and methods; information on the full sample and participating institutions; profiles of a few students I interviewed; a summary of key findings from the study; and implications for educators, administrators, families, and policymakers.

This study was made possible through the support of seven research grants; each funder is listed on the inside front cover of this report. I will forever appreciate their generous sponsorship of the most intellectually exciting project I have ever undertaken. I am especially thankful to Lumina Foundation for its contribution to the production of this report and financing the next phase of my research on Black male achievement. My sincerest gratitude also belongs to the graduate research assistants, past and present, who have worked with me on data analysis, dissemination, and planning for this project: Keon M. McGuire, Dr. Tryan L. McMickens, Dr. Kimberly A. Truong, Dr. Andrew H. Nichols, Dr. Stephen John Quaye, and Dr. Christopher B. Newman. Most importantly, I salute the 219 Black men who each spent 2-3 hours telling me about their lives and educational trajectories. No one has taught or inspired me more than them.

Thank you for taking time to read this report; feel free to pass it along to others who may find it useful and instructive. Please direct your questions, feedback, and reactions to me via e-mail at sharper1@upenn.edu. This report and my other publications on Black male college achievement are available for download at www.works.bepress.com/sharper

Warmest Regards,

Professor Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D.
Director, Center for the Study of
Race and Equity in Education

Message from Dr. Robert M. Franklin

Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, the esteemed sixth president of Morehouse College, helped mentor an entire generation of young leaders on our campus – many of whom were, to quote the title of Dr. Mays's autobiography, "born to rebel." These students were educated not to assimilate to the status quo, but to challenge and compel it to change for the betterment of all. Mays observed that at Morehouse, "there is an air of expectancy" that every young man on campus was capable of becoming exceptional as a leader, as a professional, and as a human being. That is the spirit that animates this wonderful report on Black male student achievement in higher education.

This report is unique and important in many ways. It summarizes data that scholars and policymakers must engage to responsibly improve life prospects for young men of color. It also provides key findings that educators, families, community leaders, and other advocates can begin to replicate and adapt for young people. And it offers bright ideas and useful resources for additional study and understanding.

For years, Morehouse has understood and practiced many things that work and are highlighted in this wonderful document. What works? Messaging. Mentoring. Monitoring. Ministering. Money. We have seen the same young men whom others gave up on come alive here on our campus.

We know that providing positive success messaging, group mentoring, the careful monitoring of progress, compassionate ministering when wounds must be addressed, and the strategic investment of money to support academic progress work. We feel the burden of insufficient resources and the capacity to do more.

"It is conceivable, therefore, that some American youth, confused and frustrated, as I surely was, may get a glimmer of hope from reading these pages and go forth to accomplish something worthwhile in life in spite of the system"

— from *Born to Rebel*, the autobiography of Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays

One final note: I appreciate the photograph on the front cover of the report. Like similar documents, it shows a young African American boy who is full of promise and potential. It humanizes the cold sterility of statistics and facts. At the end of the day, we need to be reminded that we are dealing with human lives, and they belong to all of us.

I commend Professor Harper for this tour de force of knowledge, research, insights, ideas, and advocacy. Morehouse stands ready to advance the work in which we must all share to improve young Black men's lives and educational outcomes.

Most Sincerely,

Dr. Robert M. Franklin
President, Morehouse College

Beyond Bad News about Black Male Students

The purpose of this report is to provide an anti-deficit view of Black male college achievement. Therefore, little attention will be devoted to reminding readers of the extent to which Black men are disengaged and underrepresented among college students and degree earners. Here is a summary of problems and inequities that are typically amplified in public discourse, research journals, policy reports, and various forms of media:

- Only 47% of Black male students graduated on time from U.S. high schools in 2008, compared to 78% of White male students (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010).

- Black male students are often comparatively less prepared than are others for the rigors of college-level academic work (Bonner II & Bailey, 2006; Loury, 2004; Lundy-Wagner & Gasman, 2011; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009).

- In 2002, Black men comprised only 4.3% of students enrolled at institutions of higher education, the exact same percentage as in 1976 (Harper, 2006a; Strayhorn, 2010).

- Black men are overrepresented on revenue-generating intercollegiate sports teams. In 2009, they were only 3.6% of undergraduate students, but 55.3% of football and basketball players at public NCAA Division I institutions (Harper, 2012).

- Black male college completion rates are lowest among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups in U.S. higher education (Harper, 2006a; Strayhorn, 2010).

- Across four cohorts of undergraduates, the six-year graduation rate for Black male students attending public colleges and universities was 33.3%, compared to 48.1% for students overall (Harper, 2012).

- Black men's degree attainment across all levels of postsecondary education is alarmingly low, especially in comparison to their same-race female counterparts (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1:** Postsecondary Degree Attainment by Level and Sex, 2009

	BLACK MEN %	BLACK WOMEN %
Associate's	31.5	68.5
Bachelor's	34.1	65.9
Master's	28.2	71.8
First Professional[1]	38.0	62.0
Doctoral[2]	33.5	66.5

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education (2010)

- Black men's representation in graduate and professional schools lags behind that of their Latino and Asian American male counterparts. For instance, during a 30-year period (1977-2007), Black men experienced a 109% increase in post-baccalaureate degree attainment, compared to 242% for Latino men and 425% for Asian American men; the comparative rate of increase for Black women was 253% (Harper & Davis III, 2012).

- Black undergraduate men, like some other racial minority students at predominantly white institutions, routinely encounter racist stereotypes and racial

[1] For example, J.D., M.D., and D.D.S. degrees
[2] Only Ph.D., Ed.D., and academic doctorates
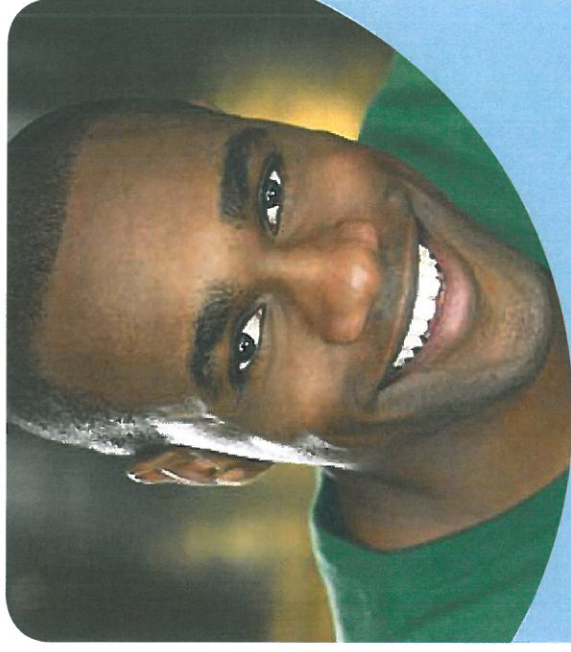
Anything but Bland
James R. Bland, Florida A&M University

Several hundred people follow @jrbland on Twitter. They know him as an actor, writer, director, and Co-President of Hometeam Entertainment, LLC. Most professionals in the film and entertainment industry choose to pursue only one role at a time—they either act or direct or lead the company, but rarely all three concurrently. But few people who knew James Bland when he was an undergraduate student at Florida A&M University would likely be surprised that he simultaneously plays four different roles in his profession. In fact, some might rightly observe that it was at FAMU that James learned how to effectively multitask and maximize his time. Only a few days after arriving on campus, he ran for and was elected vice president of the freshmen class. From there his campus involvement snowballed; it culminated with James being elected vice president of the entire Student Government Association his senior year. In the interview, he was asked to name three things he figured out during his first year in college about what it took to be a successful student. Becoming socially and politically connected and maintaining a disciplined focus on goal attainment were two of his responses. "I also learned that you have to grind, because if you don't hustle, somebody will come in right behind you to take what you want," he said. Surely, James took these lessons with him to Hollywood after college.

Reframing Black Male College Achievement

microaggressions that undermine their achievement and sense of belonging (Bonner II, 2010; Harper, 2009; Singer, 2005; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007).

- In comparison to their same-race female counterparts, Black men take fewer notes in class, spend less time writing papers and completing class assignments, participate less frequently in campus activities, hold fewer leadership positions, and report lower grades (Cuyjet, 1997; Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004).

These are pressing problems that indisputably warrant ongoing scholarly examination, aggressive intervention, strategic institutional leadership, greater transparency and accountability, and bold policy responses. However, also needed are instructive insights from Black men who have experienced college differently—those who actually enrolled, were actively engaged inside and outside the classroom, did well academically, graduated, and went on to pursue additional degrees beyond the baccalaureate. Who are they, and what can they teach us? Unfortunately, their journeys to and through college have been overshadowed by the alarming statistics reported in this section.

This national study moves beyond deficit perspectives on achievement by highlighting persons, policies, programs, and resources that help Black men succeed across a range of college and university contexts. Instead of adding to the now exhaustive body of literature and conversations about why Black male enrollments and degree attainment rates are so low, this study sought instructive insights from engaged student leaders who did well and maximized their college experiences. Emphasis in the study was placed on understanding how Black male achievers managed to gain admission to their institutions, overcome hurdles that typically disadvantage their peers, and amass portfolios of experiences that rendered them competitive for internships, jobs, and admission to highly-selective graduate and professional schools.

In the interviews, considerable emphasis was placed on the students' pre-college experiences and the role that family members, peers, and significant others played in the formation of their college aspirations. Questions then captured chronologically what the 219 men experienced, who supported them, and which interventions enhanced their educational experiences and enabled them to succeed. Understanding what compelled them to become actively engaged, both inside and outside the classroom, was chosen

over the popular approach of asking why Black men are so disengaged on college campuses. Likewise, instead of focusing on the resources, social and cultural capital, and pre-college educational privilege that some participants lacked, the study explored how they acquired various forms of capital that they did not possess when they entered their respective colleges and universities – this was especially interesting, as 56.7% of the participants came to college from low-income and working class families. The study also explored how these students negotiated popularity alongside achievement in peer groups and thrived in environments that were sometimes racist and often culturally unresponsive. Table 2 shows a sample of commonly asked questions that were reframed to amplify the upside of achievement.

Administrators (provosts, deans of students, directors of multicultural affairs, etc.) nominated and student body presidents helped identify Black male undergraduates on the 42 campuses who fit the profile described on Page 8 of this report. Each student participated in a 2-3 hour face-to-face individual interview on his campus, and some follow-up interviews were conducted via telephone. Only two of 221 nominees declined the invitation to participate in this study.
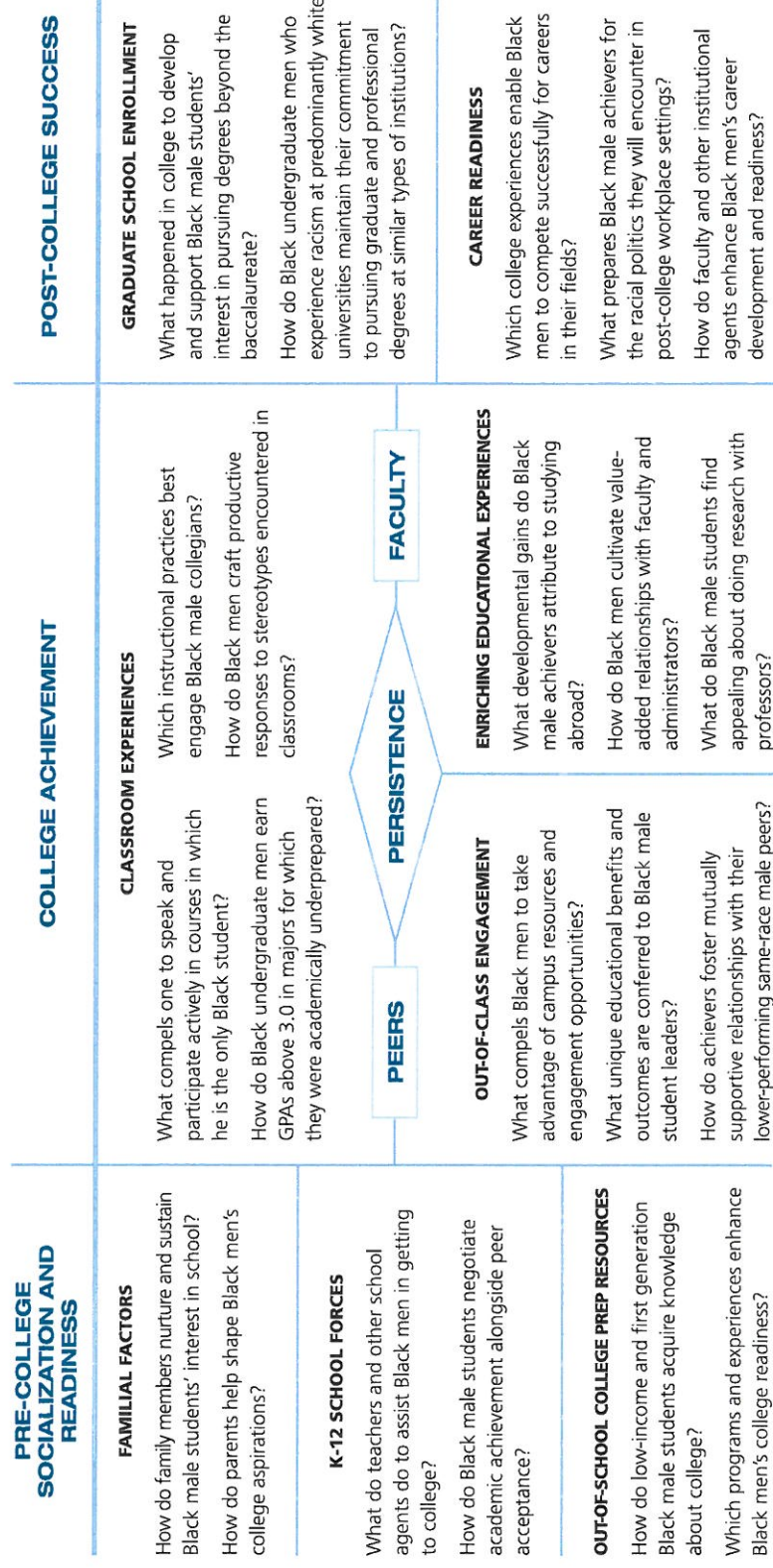
TABLE 2:

Deficit-Oriented Questions

- Why do so few Black male students enroll in college?
- Why are Black male undergraduates so disengaged in campus leadership positions and out-of-class activities?
- Why are Black male students' rates of persistence and degree attainment lowest among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups in higher education?
- Why are Black male students' grade point averages often the lowest among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups on many campuses?
- Why are Black men's relationships with faculty and administrators so weak?

Anti-Deficit Reframing

- How were aspirations for postsecondary education cultivated among Black male students who are currently enrolled in college?
- What compels Black undergraduate men to pursue leadership and engagement opportunities on their campuses?
- How do Black male collegians manage to persist and earn their degrees, despite transition issues, racist stereotypes, academic underpreparedness, and other negative forces?
- What resources are most effective in helping Black male achievers earn GPAs above 3.0 in a variety of majors, including STEM fields?
- How do Black men go about cultivating meaningful, value-added relationships with key institutional agents?

Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

Here is a framework that researchers, educators, and administrators can use to better understand Black male student success in college. It is informed by three decades of literature on Black men in education and society, as well as theories from sociology, psychology, gender studies, and education. The framework inverts questions that are commonly asked about educational disadvantage, underrepresentation, insufficient preparation, academic underperformance, disengagement, and Black male student attrition. It includes *some* questions that researchers could explore to better understand how Black undergraduate men successfully navigate their way to and through higher education and onward to rewarding post-college options. This framework is not intended to be an exhaustive or prescriptive register of research topics; instead, it includes *examples* of the anti-deficit questioning employed in the National Black Male College Achievement Study. Insights into these questions shed light on three pipeline points (pre-college socialization and readiness, college achievement, and post-college success) as well as eight researchable dimensions of achievement (familial factors, K–12 school forces, out-of-school college prep resources, classroom experiences, out-of-class engagement, enriching educational experiences, graduate school enrollment, and career readiness). Each dimension includes 2–4 *sample* questions. Given what the literature says about the significant impact of peers and faculty on college student development and success (see Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), particular attention should be devoted to understanding their role in the undergraduate experiences of Black male achievers. A version of this framework has been adapted for the study of students of color in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields (see Harper, 2010).

PRE-COLLEGE SOCIALIZATION AND READINESS

FAMILIAL FACTORS

How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students' interest in school?

How do parents help shape Black men's college aspirations?

K-12 SCHOOL FORCES

What do teachers and other school agents do to assist Black men in getting to college?

How do Black male students negotiate academic achievement alongside peer acceptance?

OUT-OF-SCHOOL COLLEGE PREP RESOURCES

How do low-income and first generation Black male students acquire knowledge about college?

Which programs and experiences enhance Black men's college readiness?

COLLEGE ACHIEVEMENT

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

What compels one to speak and participate actively in courses in which he is the only Black student?

How do Black undergraduate men earn GPAs above 3.0 in majors for which they were academically underprepared?

Which instructional practices best engage Black male collegians?

How do Black men craft productive responses to stereotypes encountered in classrooms?

OUT-OF-CLASS ENGAGEMENT

What compels Black men to take advantage of campus resources and engagement opportunities?

What unique educational benefits and outcomes are conferred to Black male student leaders?

How do achievers foster mutually supportive relationships with their lower-performing same-race male peers?

ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

What developmental gains do Black male achievers attribute to studying abroad?

How do Black men cultivate value-added relationships with faculty and administrators?

What do Black male students find appealing about doing research with professors?

PEERS **PERSISTENCE** **FACULTY**

POST-COLLEGE SUCCESS

GRADUATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

What happened in college to develop and support Black male students' interest in pursuing degrees beyond the baccalaureate?

How do Black undergraduate men who experience racism at predominantly white universities maintain their commitment to pursuing graduate and professional degrees at similar types of institutions?

CAREER READINESS

Which college experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields?

What prepares Black male achievers for the racial politics they will encounter in post-college workplace settings?

How do faculty and other institutional agents enhance Black men's career development and readiness?

Participating Colleges and Universities

Interviews were conducted with Black male undergraduate achievers at 42 colleges and universities in 20 states across the country. Six different institution types are represented in the national study.

Knowing more about the overall status of Black men on each campus is essential to understanding challenges the 219 achievers successfully navigated. Collectively, the 30 predominantly white institutions in the study enrolled nearly 322,000 full-time undergraduates; only 2.9% of them were Black men. At the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (excluding Morehouse, one of three men's colleges in the study), undergraduate women comprised nearly two-thirds (63%) of Black student enrollments.

Across the 42 institutions, only 58% of Black men graduated within six years, compared to 70% for all undergraduates on the same campuses. At the time this report was written, all but two of the 219 participants in the study had earned their bachelor's degree; three have since received doctorates.

Here is a list of participating colleges and universities, along with data on enrollments and graduation rates for Black male undergraduates on each campus:

Highly-Selective Private Research Universities

41 PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF BLACK MALE UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MEN AS % OF FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MALE SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Brown University	171	3.0	85.7
Columbia University	236	3.7	77.5
Harvard University	252	3.5	93.5
Princeton University	156	3.2	88.9
Stanford University	309	4.7	88.0
University of Pennsylvania	307	3.0	91.2

Public Research Universities

32 PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF BLACK MALE UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MEN AS % OF FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MALE SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Indiana University	534	1.9	45.8
Michigan State University	993	3.0	57.0
Ohio State University	998	2.8	43.1
Purdue University	571	1.9	46.3
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	795	2.6	62.5
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	626	2.5	63.5

Private Historically Black Colleges & Universities

42 PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF BLACK MALE UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MEN AS % OF FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MALE SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Clark Atlanta University	813	24.1	39.5
Fisk University	173	23.4	43.2
Hampton University	1557	33.8	43.0
Howard University	1422	21.6	61.7
Morehouse College	2536	95.4	60.7
Tuskegee University	932	38.1	38.8

Comprehensive State Universities

25 PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF BLACK MALE UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MEN AS % OF FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MALE SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona	301	1.8	36.4
California State University, Long Beach	453	1.9	30.5
CUNY Brooklyn College	704	7.8	31.8
Lock Haven University	142	3.1	25.0
Towson University	484	3.4	64.6
Valdosta State University	737	8.9	35.4

Public Historically Black Universities

34 PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF BLACK MALE UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MEN AS % OF FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MALE SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Albany State University	1074	34.7	34.9
Cheyney University	525	41.6	23.8
Florida A&M University	3308	39.5	28.4
Norfolk State University	1501	34.7	22.1
North Carolina Central University	1607	31.0	32.9
Tennessee State University	1932	30.8	34.1

Liberal Arts Colleges

45 PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF BLACK MALE UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MEN AS % OF FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATES	BLACK MALE SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Amherst College	65	3.9	95.7
Claremont McKenna College	26	2.3	85.7
DePauw University	64	2.7	61.5
Haverford College	40	3.4	85.7
Lafayette College	71	3.0	57.1
Occidental College	50	2.7	77.8
Pomona College	54	3.5	77.8
Saint John's University	19	1.0	33.3
Swarthmore College	48	3.2	83.3
Vassar College	24	1.0	80.0
Wabash College	55	6.0	66.7
Williams College	82	4.1	100.0

About The Achievers

The national study included 219 Black male undergraduates who had earned cumulative grade point averages above 3.0, established lengthy records of leadership and active engagement in multiple student organizations, developed meaningful relationships with campus administrators and faculty outside the classroom, participated in enriching educational experiences (for example, study abroad programs, internships, service learning, and summer research programs), and earned numerous merit-based scholarships and honors in recognition of their college achievements. Tremendous diversity is represented in the sample, as evidenced by these participant demographics and family characteristics:

Class Standing

Freshmen	1.4%
Sophomores	17.3%
Juniors	35.2%
Seniors	46.1%

Average College GPA   3.39

Undergraduate Major

Business	20.7%
Education	2.6%
Humanities	12.9%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	32.7%
STEM[1]	23.3%
Other	7.8%

Born Outside the U.S.   8.9%

Attended High School Outside the U.S.   4.0%

High School Type and Racial Demographics

Public – Predominantly Black	28.6%
Private – Predominantly Black	5.9%
Public – Predominantly White	17.2%
Private – Predominantly White	16.1%
Public – Racially Diverse	27.4%
Private – Racially Diverse	4.8%

Immediate Post-Undergraduate Plans

Enroll in Graduate School	54.8%
Work Full-Time	31.1%
Unsure at the Time	14.1%

Ultimate Degree Aspiration

Bachelor's Degree	3.8%
Master's Degree	48.8%
Doctorate	47.4%

[1] Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.
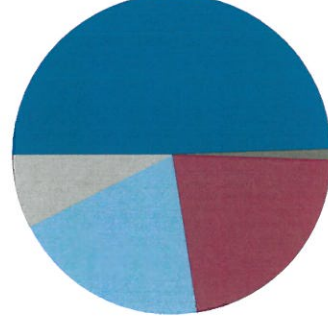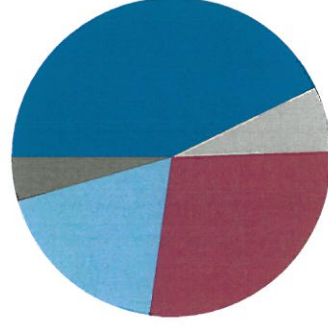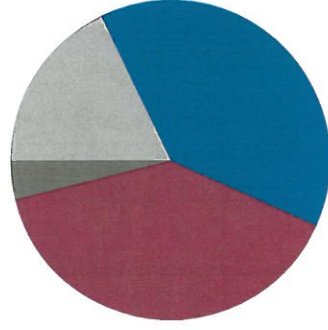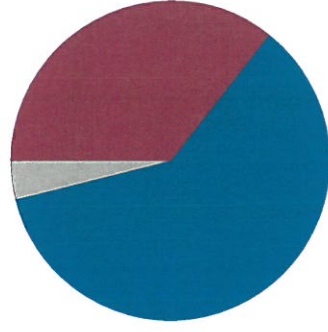
Father's Highest Education

No College Degree	49.5%
Associate's Degree	1.1%
Bachelor's Degree	22.0%
Master's Degree	19.9%
Doctorate	7.5%

Mother's Highest Education

No College Degree	43.0%
Associate's Degree	6.5%
Bachelor's Degree	27.9%
Master's Degree	18.3%
Doctorate	4.3%

Socioeconomic Status

Low Income	17.8%
Working Class	38.9%
Middle Class	39.5%
Affluent	3.8%

Family Structure

Single Parent	35.8%
Two Parents	60.5%
Other Caregiver	3.7%

Rubin Pusha III

B.S., Albany State University, 2007

M.S., Indiana University, 2009

Candidate for the Doctor of Jurisprudence Degree (J.D.), Indiana University Maurer School of Law

Key Findings

Interviews with the 219 Black male achievers yielded over 4,500 single-spaced pages of transcript data. Thus, furnishing details on everything found in the study is beyond the scope of this report. Instead, six categories of major findings are described in this section. A more elaborate presentation of data, including illustrative quotes from the interviews and more extensive participant profiles, are offered in my forthcoming book, *Exceeding Expectations: How Black Male Students Succeed in College.*

Getting to College

When asked, "Did you always know you were going to college?" the overwhelming majority of students responded, "Yes—it was never a question of *if*, but *where*." Parents consistently conveyed what many of the participants characterized as non-negotiable expectations that they would pursue postsecondary education. From boyhood through high school, parents and other family members reinforced to the achievers that college was the most viable pathway to social uplift and success. Interestingly, nearly half the participants came from homes where neither parent had attained a bachelor's degree. Although they had little or no firsthand experience with higher education, these parents cultivated within their children a belief that college was the only allowable next step after high school.

In the interviews, participants were invited to talk about what their three best Black male childhood friends were presently doing with their lives. Few achievers had a trio of same-race best friends who were all enrolled in college—some of their friends had dropped out of high school, others had gone to college but dropped out, and a few were incarcerated. When asked what differentiated their own paths from those of their peers who were not enrolled in college, the participants almost unanimously cited parenting practices. Their friends' parents, the achievers believed, did not consistently maintain high expectations and were not as involved in their sons' schooling. By contrast, most of the achievers' parents and family members more aggressively sought out educational resources to ensure their success—

tutoring and academic support programs, college preparatory initiatives, and summer academies and camps, to name a few. As noted earlier, 56.7 percent of the participants grew up in low-income and working class families. Hence, many of the educational resources parents accessed on their behalf were available at no cost.

The participants' early schooling experiences almost always included at least one influential teacher who helped solidify their interest in going to college. Several told stories about how a few educators went beyond typical teaching duties to ensure these young men had the information, resources, and support necessary to succeed in school. Noteworthy, however, is that some of these educators neglected to invest in other

Obama 2.0
Ryan Bowen, Occidental College

Both are smart, both are multiracial, both attended Occidental College, and both were elected president—one of the United States of America and the other of the student body at Oxy. During his first year of college, Ryan Bowen found himself constantly engaging questions related to his identity, as many of his White peers attempted to convince him that he "wasn't really Black." These and other experiences compelled him to organize numerous programs focused on race, identities, oppression, unity and solidarity, and social justice. In the interview, he said, "I think about race like most of the day, every day. I see things in racial and gendered lenses. Sometimes I get frustrated by being one of very few people who is willing to engage the complexities of race on this campus." Talking about these topics in semi-structured intergroup dialogue programs helped Ryan craft productive responses to the racism and racial stereotypes he encountered on campus. In addition, he was involved in meaningful photojournalistic and social justice projects in Haiti, Rwanda, Cuba, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Ryan says Barack Obama inspired him to pursue the presidency of the Associated Students of Occidental College. He was only the second Black person in the institution's history to be chosen student body president. Ryan presently owns a photography business in New York City. His work has been featured in the Huffington Post as well as on CNN, Fox News, and ABC.

Black male students in comparable ways. Put differently, the achievers benefitted from the favor of their teachers in ways that most of their same-race male peers did not. Many participants felt teachers (especially White women) were incapable of engaging meaningfully with more than one or a few Black male students at a time—only these teachers' favorites received such attention. Most considered themselves among the lucky few to have had teachers who, for some reason, thought they were worth the investment. It seems important to acknowledge here that the participants did not receive preferential treatment from teachers because they were among the highest-achieving students in their schools. In fact, fewer than 20 percent had participated in K-12 programs for the gifted and academically talented; only 49.3 percent had taken an Advanced Placement course in high school; and some graduated from high school with cumulative GPAs below 3.0. However, most participants were actively involved and held leadership positions in school clubs and campus activities, a theme that is revisited in a later section of this report.

Bryan Barnhill II, a low-income student at Harvard, attributed his college readiness to initiatives such as the Detroit Area Pre-College Engineering Program and the Summer Engineering Academy sponsored by the University of Michigan's Minority Engineering Program Office. Others in the study named several publicly and privately funded programs in their home states and communities that offer racial/ethnic minorities, first-generation college goers, and lower-income students early exposure to higher education. The participants, especially those from rural and urban areas, said these types of initiatives were extremely valuable. Without these programs, some achievers insisted that they would not have been prepared to compete for admission to college. Moreover, early exposure to higher education via programs hosted on college and university campuses helped participants form their expectations. That is, many entered their freshman year with a set of expectations for how college would be and what was required to succeed.

Choosing Colleges

As noted earlier, this study was conducted at six different institution types—small liberal arts colleges, large public research universities, highly selective private research universities, comprehensive state universities, private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and public HBCUs. The participants cited myriad factors that influenced their choices of where to apply and ultimately enroll.

Those who chose liberal arts colleges and highly selective research universities often did so because they had the academic credentials to gain admission and, more importantly, because they were granted financial aid that enabled them to afford tuition at those institutions (more details are offered in the next section).

Despite their legacy of providing access to students who might otherwise have few or no other postsecondary options, HBCUs were deliberately chosen by many participants in this study. Put differently, they were not these men's only college options. Some applied exclusively to HBCUs because the institutions have upheld longstanding reputations for providing supportive educational environments to Black students. Others, especially those who attended predominantly white high schools, applied and were admitted to a range of institutions, but ultimately decided a Black College experience would be best. A few participants were offered admission to Princeton and Stanford, but instead chose Morehouse or Howard. There were some noteworthy differences by the types of HBCUs participants chose. Those at the six private HBCUs were much more likely to have applied to a range of institutions, whereas men at the six public institutions were more likely to have applied to only one institution or exclusively to public HBCUs in their home states.

Similarly, participants who chose comprehensive state universities often pursued a smaller and more local or regional set of college options. Men at the public research universities often chose them because they were perceivably the best and most affordable institutions to which they were admitted; most were in-state residents. Many of them also applied to comprehensive state universities and public HBCUs, but thought that attending a public flagship university would offer a wider array of post-college career options.

When asked who helped them most in searching for and choosing a college, most participants named their parents, extended family members (for example, cousins who had gone to college), and high school teachers. Surprisingly, few said their guidance counselors. After this was brought to their attention, the overwhelming majority of participants explained that their counselors were more harmful than helpful. Accordingly, some counselors told these students that applying to elite private institutions like Williams College or Brown University was pointless because they stood no chance of being admitted. Instead, they were encouraged to apply to comprehensive state universities and HBCUs. Several students at the 18 elite private colleges and universities said that they would not have been at those institutions had they taken seriously the advice their guidance counselors offered. Some others on those same campuses reflected on how their counselors discouraged them from applying to HBCUs. Similarly, students at the HBCUs who had also been admitted to predominantly white institutions said their guidance counselors tried to convince them that attending a Black College would somehow disadvantage them. When asked about the race of their counselors, the overwhelming majority of participants indicated they were White. Many who attended public high schools had limited access to their guidance counselors because the student-to-counselor ratio was so large. As noted earlier, more than 73% of participants in this study graduated from public

high schools. Some students at the liberal arts colleges and elite private research universities had the benefit of participating in programs like Prep-for-Prep that gave them access to counselors who could advise them on their college searches, and those who attended private high schools often enjoyed a larger supply of guidance counselors.

Paying for College

Two-thirds of Black men who start at public colleges and universities do not graduate within six years, which is the lowest college completion rate among both sexes and all racial groups in higher education (Harper, 2012). Explanations for this are complex and attributable to an expansive set of factors. One problem that has been well documented in the Journal of College Student Retention, the Journal of Student Financial Aid, and other publications is that many students drop out of college because they cannot afford to pay tuition and other educational expenses. Across all six institution types, men in the national study attributed much of their success to being able to pursue their bachelor's degrees without the burden of financial stress. For example, overall, fewer than half (47.8%) of Black men at the private HBCUs in the sample graduate within six years. Participants on those campuses reported that many of their peers withdrew for financial reasons or transferred to less expensive public institutions.

Men at the comprehensive state universities and public HBCUs were considerably more likely than were participants elsewhere to work off-campus jobs. This might help explain, at least in part, why Black male six-year graduation rates were lowest on those campuses (37.3% and 29.4%, respectively). Low-income and working class students at the Ivy League universities, Stanford, and the liberal arts colleges often benefitted from campus policies that permit students whose parents earn below a certain income threshold (for example, $50,000) to attend at no cost. Moreover, achievers who attended DePauw University, Lafayette College, and other institutions that host the Posse Scholars Program found tremendous relief in knowing their tuition and fees were covered by their fellowships. At other institutions, especially the public universities,

participants financed their undergraduate education by applying for as many scholarships and fellowships as possible, working in paid summer internships away from their campuses, and by pursuing paid student leadership positions on campus (for example, being a resident assistant or a cabinet-level officer in student government). Common among the 219 participants was an aggressive habit of applying for as many opportunities as possible, including those that helped them alleviate financial stress during their college years.

Transitioning to College

Participants believed they were successful in college because they got off to a good start. Some entered their institutions through summer bridge programs that brought them to campus 6-8 weeks before the start of their freshman year. These programs allowed them to take introductory courses, become acquainted with resources their institutions offered, and get acclimated to predominantly White environments before thousands of their White peers arrived for the start of fall semester. Bridge programs made large institutions feel smaller and easier to navigate, the participants recalled. They also allowed newcomers to interact with faculty and administrators, as well as older same-race students who served as peer mentors.

Black male student leaders also played an important role in helping the achievers transition smoothly to their colleges and universities. In the interviews, several participants named same-race peers, namely juniors and seniors, who reached out to them early in their first semester at the institution to share navigational insights and resources, connect them to powerful information networks, and introduce them to value-added engagement opportunities on campus. Several achievers agreed that these peers were more influential than were their assigned academic advisors, who often helped only with their course selections. It was peers, mostly older Black men, who helped the achievers figure out how to succeed. "I started with this macho mentality that I could do everything on my own and I wasn't going to ask for help," one participant confessed. But he went on to tell how he learned in a Black men's discussion group led by older students that

asking for help was not a sign of weakness. "They told me I would really look weak if I quit college because I was too proud to ask for help. They also made sure I knew exactly where to go to get exactly what I needed to be successful. Now, I say the same things to Black male freshmen when they join our group."

Matters of Engagement

In our 2009 book, *Student Engagement in Higher Education*, University of Maryland Professor Stephen John Quaye and I cite over 30 years of research that showcases educational benefits conferred to students who are actively engaged on college and university campuses. Researchers such as George Kuh, Alexander Astin, Nancy Evans, Vincent Tinto, Marcia Baxter Magolda, Ernest Pascarella, and Patrick Terenzini have found that active engagement produces educational benefits and gains in the following domains: cognitive and intellectual development, moral and ethical development, practical competence and skills transferability, racial and gender identity development, and college adjustment. Not surprisingly, these and other scholars have also found that students who devote more time to academic-related activities outside of class earn higher grade point averages. One of the most widely acknowledged profits of engagement is its nexus with college student persistence. "We know one thing for certain: Students who are actively engaged in educationally purposeful activities and experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, are more likely than are their disengaged peers to persist through graduation" (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 4).

Participants in the National Black Male College Achievement Study were all extensively engaged student leaders on their campuses. Because of the well-documented benefits associated with educationally purposeful engagement, having a lengthy record of leadership in multiple student organizations, developing meaningful relationships with campus administrators and faculty outside the classroom, and participating in enriching educational experiences (for example, study abroad programs, internships, service learning, and summer research programs) were all criteria for participation in the study.

The achievers attributed much of their college success to their engagement experiences. Out-of-class experiences had spillover effects on academic performance for almost all the students interviewed. That is, the men believed they earned higher grades because they had less time to waste, interacted frequently with academically-driven others, and had reputations to uphold. Moreover, establishing relationships with faculty who advised clubs and organizations in which they held membership compelled the achievers to work harder to impress those same professors when they took their classes. Also, participants felt these faculty members treated them better in class because of their substantive interactions outside the classroom. Additionally, being a highly engaged student leader also introduced the achievers to networks of peers (within and beyond their same race) who shared notes, study strategies, and other resources that proved helpful in difficult courses.

In addition to naming the same benefits noted in the higher education and student affairs research literature, the 219 participants in this study cited at least seven race/gender-specific gains and educational outcomes associated with engagement. These are listed in Figure 2 and have been written about in the publications cited therein.

Despite their own high levels of leadership in student organizations and campus activities, participants almost unanimously asserted that their same-race male peers were considerably less engaged. Instead, the majority of Black undergraduate men devoted their out-of-class time to playing video games and sports, pursuing romantic relationships, and gathering socially with others in designated hangouts on campus. The achievers believed disengagement was a major factor in explaining poor academic performance and high rates of attrition among Black undergraduate men at their institutions. Their comparatively higher rates of engagement not only influenced how the achievers approached their academic endeavors, but also afforded them opportunities to compete successfully for jobs and internships, study abroad programs, and coveted slots in highly selective graduate and

Figure 2: Race/Gender-Specific Gains and Outcomes

Active Engagement Specifically Helps Black Undergraduate Men:

- Resolve masculine identity conflicts (Harper, 2004)

- Negotiate peer support for achievement (Harper 2006b)

- Develop political acumen for success in professional settings in which they are racially underrepresented (Harper, 2006c)

- Develop strong Black identities that incite productive activism on predominantly white campuses (Harper & Quaye, 2007)

- Acquire social capital and access to resources, politically wealthy persons, and exclusive networks (Harper, 2008)

- Craft productive responses to racist stereotypes (Harper, 2009)

- Overcome previous educational and socioeconomic disadvantage (Harper, 2007; Harper & Griffin, 2011)

professional schools. Many participants recognized ways in which they had been privileged at the expense of their lower-performing, less engaged Black male peers on campus. Because there were so few Black men with academic and engagement records comparable to theirs, the achievers were recurrently rewarded with experiences that conferred upon them additional developmental outcomes and educational benefits.

Responding Productively to Racism

In our 2011 article published in the Journal of College Student Development, co-authors and I introduced the term "onlyness," which we defined as "the psychoemotional burden of having to strategically navigate a racially politicized space occupied by few peers, role models, and guardians from one's same racial or ethnic group" (see Harper et al., 2011, p. 190). Nearly all the participants who attended one of the 30 predominantly white institutions in the National Black Male College Achievement Study had been in classrooms where they were the only Black student. Some liberal arts colleges enrolled fewer than 50 Black undergraduate men; hence, several achievers said they could count on one hand the number of Black male students they saw on campus in a given week. Onlyness engendered a profound sense of pressure to be the spokesperson or ambassador for people of color in general and Black men in particular. Being one of few Black men with whom White students and professors interacted led to a set of common experiences that threatened the participants' achievement and sense of belonging. Despite being among the most visible and actively engaged student leaders on campus, men interviewed for this study were not exempt from racism, stereotypes, and racial insults. Several participants were presumed to be academically underprepared. Therefore, their White peers picked them last (if at all) for group projects, and professors were surprised (and sometimes skeptical) when they did well on assignments. Even those with near-perfect high school and college GPAs talked about

how their White classmates made remarks like, "The only reason you got into this university is because of affirmative action." Consistent with findings from other research on Black achievers in college (Bonner II, 2010; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Strayhorn, 2009), participants at the predominantly white institutions felt pressure to prove they were admitted because of their intellectual prowess, not their race. The achievers also described how they were constantly asked which sport they played. Some had grown accustomed to being congratulated repeatedly on Mondays if the football or basketball team beat its weekend opponent. Moreover, numerous White students seemed certain that the achievers were rap and hip-hop music connoisseurs, spoke and understood slang, could teach them how to dance, or knew where they could purchase marijuana. Regardless of their backgrounds, it was usually assumed by peers and professors alike that the participants grew up in high-poverty urban ghettos and fatherless homes. A few were even called niggers on campus. Being student body president, for example, did not afford immunity from these and other racist encounters. With the exception of the affirmative action claims, these experiences were as common at highly selective institutions as they were at comprehensive state universities, and on urban and rural campuses alike.

Claude Steele, eminent psychologist and dean of the Stanford University School of Education, has written extensively about the anxieties some students experience as they think about confirming negative stereotypes regarding their racial/ethnic groups, which in turn affects their academic performance; this has been termed "stereotype threat" (see Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotypes are especially harmful when students internalize and agonize over them; those who identify most closely with academic achievement are especially vulnerable to stereotype threat (Steele, 1997; Taylor & Antony, 2001). Most participants in the national study

consciously resisted the internalization of racist assumptions that peers and others had about Black men. Instead, they often responded by asking perpetrators to explain the basis of their presuppositions—for example, one participant at the University of Illinois asked a White classmate, "I'm not even tall, so what made you assume I was on the basketball team?" The strategy was to make perpetrators do the work of confronting their own assumptions and biases.

The achievers decided against responding in anger or waiting until hours later to reflect on a racist encounter; many became skilled at simultaneously embarrassing and educating their peers through the thoughtful act of calmly questioning their misconceptions. This was one of many racism response strategies that had been taught by their same-race peers, usually through predominantly Black or ethnic student organizations, during summer bridge programs or minority student orientations, and via Black men's discussion groups (for example, Black Men United at the University of Pennsylvania and H.E.A.D.S. at the University of Michigan). These clubs and organizations were also spaces where other students of color shared stories about racist experiences and collaboratively strategized ways to respond effectively to similar situations. Furthermore, these were also venues in which the participants' intellectual competence and sense of belonging were affirmed. Interacting meaningfully with other academically talented Black student leaders confirmed their individual and collective talents, the achievers reported. This proved useful when they encountered stereotypes and onlyness in various spaces on campus, including classrooms.

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Additional Findings

Presented in this section are short responses to eight questions readers may have about the Black male achievers who participated in this study. Each response will be explained in greater detail in my forthcoming book, *Exceeding Expectations: How Black Male Students Succeed in College.*

▸ What was the most surprising finding?

Most surprising and most disappointing is that nearly every student interviewed said it was the first time someone had sat him down to ask how he successfully navigated his way to and through higher education, what compelled him to be engaged in student organizations and college classrooms, and what he learned that could help improve achievement and engagement among Black male collegians. As noted earlier, 219 of the 221 men who were nominated for this study agreed to participate; this alone confirms that achievers are willing to share insights into success if they are invited to do so.

▸ What differentiated the achievers from their Black male peers?

Participants did not deem themselves superior to or smarter than their less accomplished, disengaged same-race male peers. In fact, most believed lower-performing Black male students had the same potential, but had not encountered people or culturally relevant experiences that motivated them to be engaged, strive for academic success, and persist through baccalaureate degree attainment. In many interviews, achievers asserted, "The only thing that makes me different from them is that I was lucky enough to have [parents who maintained invariably high expectations, an influential teacher, access to a college preparatory program, a peer mentor who shared the secrets of success, or life-changing opportunities to travel or establish meaningful relationships with college-educated adults who possessed tremendous social capital]." The achievers thought it was unfortunate that more Black men in their home communities and on their college campuses had missed these same opportunities. In many instances, they claimed it was serendipity, not aptitude, that largely determined which Black men succeeded.

And the First Ph.D. Goes to...
Cullen Buie, The Ohio State University

As an undergraduate student at Ohio State, Cullen Buie was president of the National Society of Black Engineers, academic excellence chair for Lambda Psi honor society, a peer mentor for the Office of Minority Affairs, a founding member of the Association of Black Leaders for Entrepreneurship, a new student orientation leader, and the student representative on several university committees. He spent his summers interning with Polaroid, Proctor & Gamble, and Dow Chemicals, and participated in a research exchange program in Brazil during the fall term of his senior year. Moreover, he devoted many hours to doing research with Dr. Gregory Washington, a Black male professor in the OSU College of Engineering. Cullen now spends his time studying microfluidics, microbial fuel cells, and biofuels; his research has been published in scholarly venues such as the International Journal of Heat and Mass Transfer and the Journal of the Electrochemical Society. After earning his bachelor's degree, Cullen accepted a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow- ship that paid for his pursuit of a master's degree and Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering at Stanford University. Though several others are presently enrolled in graduate programs, Cullen was first of the 219 participants in the National Black Male College Achievement Study to earn a doctorate. After attaining his Ph.D., Dr. Buie began a tenure-track faculty position at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Professor Buie now holds an endowed chair at MIT, where he teaches, mentors students, and does research.

What about structured mentoring programs?

Several participants were involved in structured mentoring programs sponsored by Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the YMCA, alumni chapters of historically black fraternities and sororities, and other entities before they went to college. However, none said anything about their postsecondary institutions' structured mentoring programs as they named people, experiences, and resources that aided their college success. Put differently, no participant attributed even a fraction of his college achievement to a program that systematically matched him with faculty, staff, or peers with whom he was to routinely meet. Instead, they reflected mostly on relationships they cultivated with professors and high-level administrators (for example, the university president or dean of students) through engagement in clubs and enriching educational experiences. Student leadership positions gave these men access to campus officials on whom they could rely for advice, recommendation letters, advocacy, and insider knowledge about institutional policies and procedural loopholes. Such people became mentors to the participants, but the relationships were not fostered via a matching service coordinated by an office on campus. Furthermore, students who had done collaborative research, service learning, or study abroad trips with faculty spoke extensively about how those instructors played mentoring roles in their lives. Working closely on educationally purposeful tasks outside the classroom afforded the educators and achievers substantive opportunities to learn about each other, which added value to the students' achievement trajectories in myriad ways.

How many were in Historically Black Fraternities?

Sixty-five of the 219 achievers (29.7%) held membership in one of the five National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) fraternities—Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Phi Beta Sigma, or Iota

Phi Theta. A few campuses, particularly the liberal arts colleges, had no Black fraternities; this partially explains why there were not more fraternity men in the sample. However, the majority of participating colleges and universities had two or more active NPHC fraternity chapters. Given their espoused purposes (scholarship, achievement, leadership, brotherhood, community service, etc.), it seems that the fraternities should have been ideal engagement venues for men such as those who participated in the National Black Male College Achievement Study. But several students thought their time and talents were better invested elsewhere. Many felt that the current members' behaviors contradicted the purported principles of their fraternities. For example, a participant at Purdue University noted that each NPHC fraternity had a cumulative chapter GPA below 2.7; his was 3.78. Others believed they could develop their leadership skills or do community service through one of the several hundred other clubs and organizations on campus. Most unattractive were reports of physical hazing. When asked, "Why haven't you joined one of the Black fraternities on campus?" the overwhelming majority of non-members responded that they had no interest in being hazed.

Were they religious or spiritual?

Nearly all were Christians; three were Muslims. Two participants were ordained ministers, some were sons of pastors, a few sang in their colleges' gospel choirs, and others led weekly bible study for their peers on campus. The majority of achievers attended church during their time in college, though doing so was difficult amid their academic and campus leadership commitments. While their religious engagement sometimes wavered, most participants said they prayed often and had become noticeably more spiritual in college. One of the most interesting findings in the study pertains to attribution for their success. Several achievers had what I have termed a *spiritual locus of control*, meaning they believed their lives, academic

Chaney Goes to the NBA

Chris Chaney, Princeton University

Chris Chaney loves sports, especially basketball. When he was not engaged in planning the annual Princeton University State of Black Men in America Conference, developing his communication and leadership skills alongside others in the Black Men's Awareness Group, or working hard to keep his GPA above 3.0, much of what was left of Chris's time was devoted to sports. The Princeton Varsity Club presented him its Distinguished Undergraduate Athletic Service Award as well as the Spirit of Princeton Award for his contributions to the University community. Chris did not aspire to become a professional athlete, but instead focused his career ambitions on the business side of sports. As an undergraduate student, he founded and later became executive director of The Ivy Sports Symposium, an annual sports business conference that rotates among Ivy League schools. Immediately after graduating from Princeton, he accepted a full-time job in Global Marketing Partnerships at the National Basketball Association, where he worked with clients such as Coca-Cola and Nike. This role at the NBA inspired Chris to launch Chaney Sports Group (now Chaney Sportainment Group), a boutique sports and entertainment agency of which he now serves as president and chief executive officer. His internationally focused agency engages in a broad range of corporate consulting projects, including sports mergers and acquisitions, merchandising and licensing, marketing strategy, and sponsorship sales. Chris presently resides in Germany, though his work takes him all around the world. In December 2011, *Forbes* magazine named him one of the top 30 entertainment executives under the age of 30.

Most surprising and most disappointing is that nearly every student interviewed said it was the first time someone had sat him down to ask how he successfully navigated his way to and through higher education, what compelled him to be engaged in student organizations and college classrooms, and what he learned that could help improve achievement and engagement among Black male collegians.

accomplishments, and destinies were predetermined by God. On the one hand, they recognized that certain choices they made (for example, studying instead of partying all weekend) influenced their outcomes. Yet, on the other hand, they attributed their success to God's favor and plan for their lives. Even in describing things that parents, mentors, and influential others did that positively affected their college success, several men quickly followed up by saying God had placed those people in their lives as part of some larger purpose. Almost without exception, the achievers spoke extensively about God "working things out," "ordering their steps," and "directing their paths." They credited God for their high GPAs, scholarships and honors, leadership positions to which they had been elected, and the unusual opportunities they had been afforded.

What were their views on masculinity?

Unlike what much of the literature reports on young Black men's gender performance, participants in this study did not define their masculinities through acquiring material possessions, the number of women with whom they had sex, or dominance in competitive activities with their male peers (drug trafficking, sports, weightlifting, video games, etc.). Instead, most achievers felt the true measure of a man is his willingness to assume responsibility for leading his family and community. Student leadership roles, especially those that involved advancing Black communities, offered the achievers a platform to exercise this version of manhood. Competitiveness was evidenced in their pursuits of top leadership positions on campus. Though theirs was seemingly more productive than other expressions

of masculinity, some may rightly observe that the participants in this study subscribed and aspired to traditional, hegemonic gender scripts.

How were their relationships with Black women?

Every participant spoke favorably of his friendships with Black women. In fact, many reported that their same-race female peers were hugely influential in their college success. They also spoke fondly of collaborative relationships they had established with women through study groups and planning campus activities, community service initiatives, and student protests. Despite this, many achievers held misogynistic views of Black women. Some were in romantic relationships with Black women, but the overwhelming majority of heterosexual men in the sample were single. With the exception of the three men's colleges, participants elsewhere described a shortage of Black couples on campus; in most instances, they could be counted on one hand. When asked why they and so few other Black heterosexual men were in serious romantic relationships with Black women, numerous participants unashamedly asserted there was a shortage of attractive Black women who were worthy of dating. They also believed Black women were too interested in relationships that would lead to marriage; they just wanted to have fun, which usually was a codeword for sex.

Were any of them gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning their sexualities?

Only six participants were openly gay when interviews were conducted. No achiever said he was transgender. Some men (fewer than 10) decided against disclosing their sexual orientations while the digital recording device was on, but talked about questioning their sexualities or being gay or bisexual once the interview ended. These men, as well as heterosexual and openly gay participants, believed there were enormous social risks associated with being gay and out on campus. Most suspected that other Black students would ostracize them, vote against them in campus elections, or discredit their leadership. These fears were expressed least often among participants on the liberal arts campuses, and were most pronounced at the Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Non-heterosexual Black male students were perceivably less supported by same-race peers at institutions with higher numbers of Black students. Hence, participants reported that many men who had sex with men claimed to be strictly heterosexual.
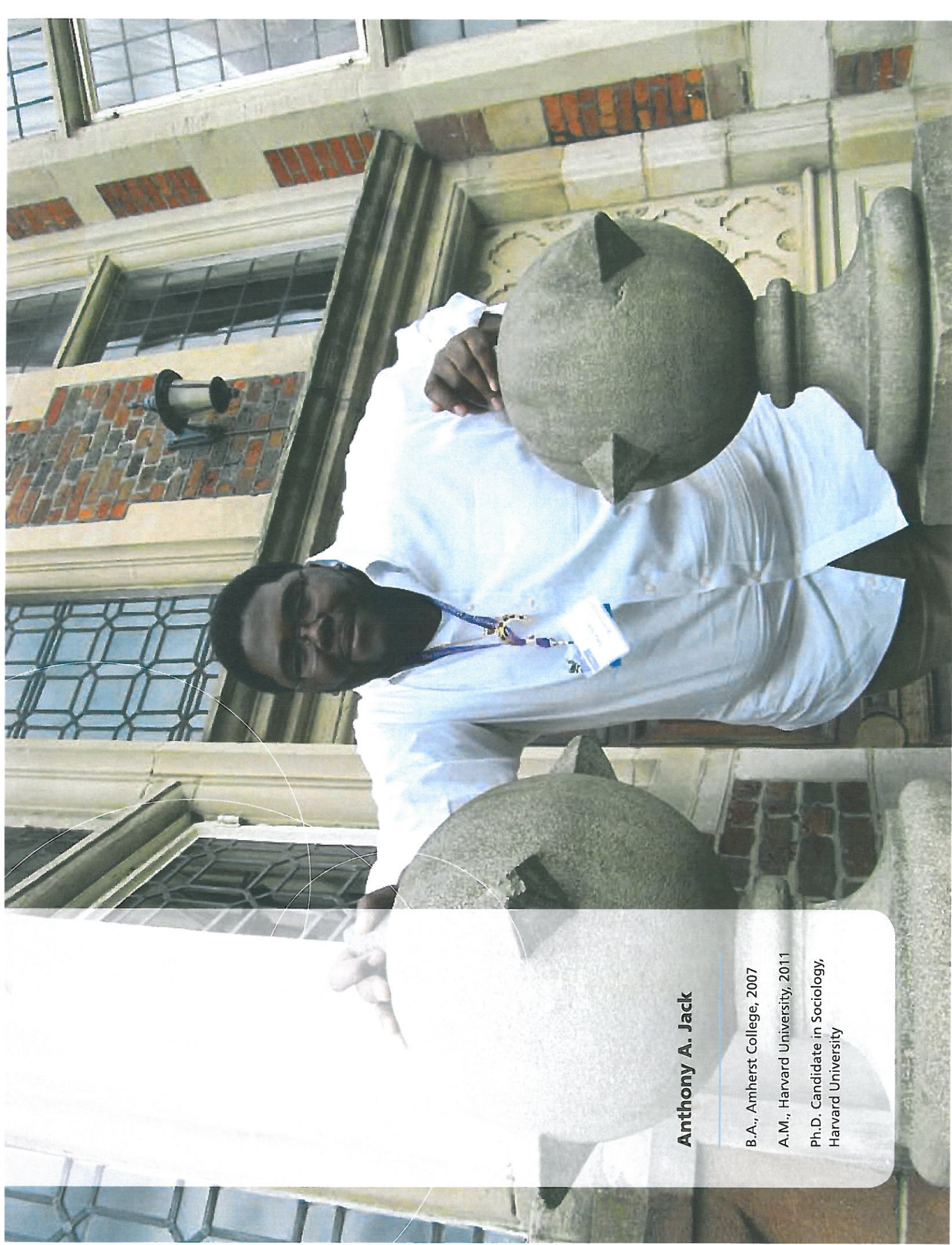
Anthony A. Jack

B.A., Amherst College, 2007

A.M., Harvard University, 2011

Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology,
Harvard University

Recommendations for Improving Black Male Student Success in College

In its 2010 publication, *A Stronger Nation through Higher Education*, Lumina Foundation commits itself to "The Big Goal" – increasing the proportion of American adults with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025. President Barack Obama, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The College Board, and others have joined Lumina in advancing efforts to improve rates of postsecondary education attainment in the United States. Getting more people to college is a necessary, yet insufficient step. Ensuring that those who enroll actually complete degree and certificate programs is the only way to actualize the big goal. As noted in an earlier section of this report, across four cohorts of undergraduates, two-thirds of Black male students who began baccalaureate degree programs did not graduate within six years, which is the lowest college completion rate among both sexes and all racial groups in higher education (Harper, 2012). High rates of attrition among this population undermine current efforts to increase the number of college-educated adults in our nation.

Postsecondary educators, leaders, and policymakers must do more of what works to enroll, retain, educate, and graduate Black male students. But they cannot do so without better understanding what helps these men persist through degree attainment. Over a five-year period (2004-2009), nearly a quarter million bachelor's degrees were conferred to Black men in the U.S., a number that is undeniably insufficient. Perhaps more problematic, though, is that few of these 249,294 college graduates have likely been invited to explain how they successfully navigated their way to and through the institutions they attended. Hence, asking those who have been successful to talk about what helped them succeed is the most powerful recommendation I have for anyone who endeavors to improve the status of Black male students. As mentioned in the previous section, the most disappointing finding in the National Black Male College Achievement Study was that few participants had been consulted for helpful and potentially instructive insights into success.

Popular responses to the Black male college achievement problem include starting a structured mentoring program (a matching service), forming a committee to determine why Black men are so disengaged and why they

drop out in such high numbers, and hosting a daylong Black male summit on campus. Unfortunately, these efforts have done little to improve educational outcomes and degree attainment rates. Moreover, they did not emerge as noteworthy contributors to achievement and persistence among the 219 men who participated in this study. There are no simple solutions to problems such as those described on Page 3 of this report. As such, most institutions continually struggle to eradicate educational inequities that disadvantage Black male students.

Offered in this section are recommendations for parents and families, educators, administrators, policymakers, and others who wish to improve Black undergraduate men's educational outcomes and degree attainment rates. Several dozen useful implications could be derived from this 42-campus research study. But the 12 presented below align best with findings summarized in earlier sections of this report. Additional recommendations for policy and practice are included in my forthcoming book.

Consistently High Parent Expectations

Parents and family members must convey to Black boys as early as possible that college is the most reliable pathway to success. Even parents who have not experienced college firsthand should consistently articulate to their sons a non-negotiable expectation that they will enroll in a postsecondary institution immediately after completing high school. As the study participants noted, the question was never *if*, but *where* they would attend college. Hearing this repeatedly from an early age helps young men craft future aspirations that minimally include attaining a bachelor's degree. In families and communities where there are few college-educated role models, it is especially important that boys know there are more 18-24 year-old Black men in college than in prisons, the number of Black men graduating from college has more than doubled over the past 30 years, and the overwhelming majority of degree earners have experienced sustainable success in their lives and careers.

Equipping Families with College Knowledge

Policymakers and foundations should invest in community-based initiatives that help parents, particularly those who did not attend college, better

understand what is required to strengthen their children's readiness for higher education. Nearly all the Black male students in this study were successful because their family members somehow figured out what questions to ask about college, wisely enrolled them in college preparatory programs (most of which were available at no cost), and recognized how maintaining high expectations could enhance the development of college aspirations. Free education courses for family members that focus on these topics are needed in low-income communities. These could also be sites where families learn about differences between various types of colleges and universities, as well as Prep-for-Prep, the Posse Scholars Program, college scholarship opportunities, and income threshold financial aid initiatives that enable students from low-income backgrounds to attend expensive postsecondary institutions at no cost. Additionally, these programs could assist parents in thinking strategically about ensuring their children not only get to college, but also graduate within six years of enrolling.

The Preparation (and Remediation) of K-12 and Postsecondary Professionals

K-12 teachers, high school guidance counselors, and postsecondary faculty and administrators share at least one thing in common: they graduated from college. In fact, many have completed master's and doctoral degree programs that supposedly prepared them for their current roles. Moreover, Whites comprise the overwhelming majority of educators and administrators at all levels of education. Achievers interviewed for this study said these professionals often engaged in practices that had harmful effects on Black male students' aspirations, college choice processes, and educational outcomes. To be fair, it is unlikely that many of these educators were challenged by their former instructors to critically examine their assumptions about Black men and communities of color. For example, guidance counselors who deem certain Black students "too good" to attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities probably never had conversations about the racial implications of this perspective when they were students in counselor education programs. Likewise, most college faculty took few (if any) courses in their Ph.D. programs that adequately prepared them for teaching generally and engaging diverse student populations specifically. As a result, they entered college classrooms with unconscious biases concerning Black men and taught in ways that alienated students of color.

Programs that prepare teachers, counselors, K-12 and higher education administrators, and postsecondary faculty must add to their curricula more courses that prepare these professionals to do more of what is required to reduce racial inequities in education. Also necessary is the remediation of bad educational practices employed by current professionals who have already graduated from degree programs that insufficiently prepared them to work effectively with racial minority students. Professional development programs, journaling and reflective self-study exercises, and facilitated discussions are some ways this can be done. Also, the University of Southern California Center for Urban Education's collaborative, reflective, and data-driven Equity Scorecard process could help educators recognize how their individual and collective actions undermine equity in general and disadvantage Black male students in particular (see Harris III, Bensimon, & Bishop, 2010).

Renaissance Man Turned College Administrator

Jonathan Michael Cox, Hampton University

Jonathan Michael Cox was a college student-athlete, an activity in which he found tremendous satisfaction and accomplishment. Despite his athletic talent, this Hampton University student refused to have a one-dimensional undergraduate experience. Instead, he boldly committed himself to being a scholar, actively engaged campus leader, and student-athlete, a trio of roles that some may view as impossible to balance. Jonathan helped coordinate campus events, traveled for athletic competitions as well as student leader retreats, joined Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, did community service, and ultimately graduated from Hampton with a 3.92 cumulative grade point average. When asked what he gained from approaching college this way, he replied, "Most immediately, I think I've gained a future career because I've always struggled with deciding what I want to do in life. I've always been a person who is good at many things, but rarely exceptional or especially terrible at anything." As he predicted during his interview, Jonathan went on to pursue a master's degree in college student affairs administration at Penn State University and a subsequent career in higher education. He presently serves as assistant director of multicultural affairs at Wake Forest University. But unlike most busy university administrators, Jonathan somehow finds time to write and perform poetry, sing in front of live audiences, cook, exercise, tweet, blog, and travel. He plans to begin a Ph.D. program (and who knows what else) in Fall 2012.

Committing more public resources to educating Black men instead of incarcerating them is one sensible policy proposal.

Connecting Black Male Teens to Effective College Preparatory Experiences

Parents should seek out precollege preparatory programs for their sons (for example, university-sponsored Saturday academies), as many Black male achievers said these initiatives enhanced their college readiness. Cautionary note: not all college prep programs achieve the same results. Best are those that include all the components that Perna (2002) found to be effective predictors of college enrollment. Many of these initiatives presently exist, but there are at least two noteworthy shortcomings. First, they are often underfunded, which limits the number of students who can participate in the no-cost versions. Federal, state, and local governments, as well as foundations, corporations, universities, professional athletes and other philanthropists, can help expand participation rates by investing more money into programs that show evidence of effectiveness. Second, many of the programs that target low-income families and students who would be the first in their families to attend college are disproportionately female. Thus, program administrators should strive for greater gender balance by marketing more strategically to parents of Black boys.

Removing Financial Barriers to College Success

The overwhelming majority of participants in this study had time to be engaged in enriching educational experiences because they did not work off-campus jobs. Also, because their financial aid packages were sufficient enough to cover the cost of attendance, most did not accrue significant student loan debt. Financial aid officers should help students find alternatives to loans and off-campus work. For example, the achievers applied for numerous external scholarships, which ultimately paid educational costs not covered by Pell Grants, work study, and other common forms of aid. It seems important to highlight the nexus here between financial aid and student engagement. Put simply, these students were able to compete successfully for external scholarships and well-paid summer experiences because they had strong GPAs, impressive records of campus leadership and engagement, and stellar recommendation letters from faculty and high-level administrators who knew them well. Black men are typically underrepresented in paid student leadership roles (Harper, 2006c; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006) and resident assistant positions that come with free room and board (Harper et al., 2011). Administrators in student affairs and residence life should use differentiated marketing approaches to creatively entice more Black men to apply for these positions that would alleviate financial stress and simultaneously produce a well-documented set of developmental gains.

One participant said he applied to Stanford because he accidentally discovered that he could attend at no cost since his parents' combined income was less than $35,000. Colleges and universities that offer loans-free and income threshold institutional aid initiatives, as well as those that

host the Posse Scholars Program, should do a better job of ensuring that Black male achievers and their parents, high school guidance counselors, and leaders in Black communities (pastors, NAACP and Urban League chapter presidents, 100 Black Men of America, alumni chapters of Black fraternities, college prep program directors, etc.) know these opportunities exist. Targeted outreach campaigns and information sessions held in predominantly Black communities could help increase awareness and ultimately applications to these institutions. Lastly, in the current era of declining state support for public institutions of higher education and proposed reductions to federal spending (which would negatively affect Pell Grants), policymakers should more thoughtfully consider how these choices undermine efforts to increase postsecondary attainment rates in our country. Committing more public resources to educating Black men instead of incarcerating them is one sensible policy proposal.

Building Summer Bridges to Student Success

More institutions should create programs that effectively bridge Black male students' transitions from high school to college. The version of these programs participants spoke most favorably about cost them nothing, occurred the summer between their high school graduation and first year of college, lasted 6-8 weeks, were residential, and targeted racial minority, first generation, and low-income students. These programs should allow students to take a pair of credit-earning introductory-level courses; expose students to resources, important institutional agents, and engagement opportunities; and include peer mentors who can advise newcomers on effective ways to navigate the campus, cope effectively with onlyness, respond productively to racism and stereotypes, and identify funding opportunities (internal and external) to help offset their college expenses. At some institutions, these bridge programs were part of TRIO Student Support Services, a federally-funded initiative. Hence, policymakers should make certain the federal budget includes ample funds to support and expand participation rates in TRIO programs. As with other initiatives advocated in this section, bridge program directors should employ differentiated outreach techniques to ensure gender balance.

Assuming Institutional Responsibility for Black Male Student Engagement

In defining *Race-Conscious Student Engagement*, I argued the following:

The popular approach of only determining what students do to become engaged must be counterbalanced by examinations of what educators do to engage students. Put differently, questions concerning effort must be shifted from the individual student to her or his institution. Effective educators avoid asking, what's wrong with these students, why aren't they engaged? Instead, they aggressively explore the institution's shortcomings

and ponder how faculty members and administrators could alter their practices to distribute the benefits of engagement more equitably. (Harper, 2009b, p. 41)

Presently, the onus for Black male student engagement is placed almost entirely on the student. In a self-directed fashion, he is expected to seek out resources, engagement opportunities, and enriching educational experiences that will best prepare him for post-college success. It is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect that the majority of students (Black, male, or otherwise) will engage themselves in this way. This misplaced onus for engagement helps explain, at least in part, why only 48.1% of all undergraduates who enroll at public postsecondary institutions graduate within six years and why completion rates are nearly 15 percentage points lower for Black undergraduate men.

Although the 219 participants in this study took it upon themselves to become engaged, they confirmed that the majority of their same-race male peers did not feel as comfortable or motivated to do the same. The achievers believed most other Black male undergraduates were smart enough to be actively engaged inside the classroom, but were intimidated by the threat of confirming stereotypes concerning their intellectual aptitude. Moreover, they suggested that others would have enjoyed doing culturally-relevant research with faculty, but did not have the confidence to approach professors about these and other potentially rewarding engagement opportunities outside the classroom. Given this, postsecondary educators and administrators must assume greater responsibility for engaging this population. Instead of waiting for Black men to find their way to the Office of International Programs, for example, professionals from that office should go to Black

men's groups and ethnic student organization meetings to do presentations on study abroad opportunities. Similarly, instead of expecting the lone Black male student to initiate a conversation after class, the professor should invite this student to her office; express genuine interest in knowing more about him and his aspirations; and find ways to connect this young man with substantive out-of-class engagement experiences that will advance his goals. Given the well-documented nexus between engagement and student retention (see Harper & Quaye, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), institutional agents must assume greater responsibility for engaging undergraduates who complete college at low rates.

Supporting Ethnic Student Organizations

Campus administrators should ensure that Black Student Unions, undergraduate chapters of the National Society of Black Engineers, and other ethnic student groups are funded at levels that enable them to thrive. Numerous Black male achievers first developed their communication and leadership skills in these groups before branching out to more mainstream activities and organizations. Reliable advisory support also increases the effectiveness of these organizations and allows students to cultivate valuable relationships with faculty and administrators beyond the classroom. Lastly, campus officials should help defend the necessity of these groups when their existence is questioned or they are accused of promoting separatism. Without them, even fewer Black undergraduate men would be engaged and retained.

Venues for Brotherly Bonding and Peer Support

Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) and groups like the Harvard Black Men's Forum bring students together

in comfortable spaces that allow them to validate each other's experiences, seek and share advice, and talk about topics relevant to Black men on campus and in larger social contexts. Many undergraduates also locate same-race peer mentors in these groups. In my view, every campus I have visited could benefit from having some structure that unites Black men. The design and activities of these groups vary—some are entirely discussion-based, while others do social programming and cultural activities. In any case, participants reflected fondly on how these groups increased their sense of belonging and offered them occasions to fellowship with others whom they may never see in classrooms or elsewhere on campus. These groups function best when they have a Black male faculty or staff advisor who helps facilitate dialogues and ensures the members know about valuable resources and opportunities. One shortcoming of Black male student groups is that they tend to not be viewed as welcoming or affirming spaces for gay male students and others whose behaviors may seem inconsistent with hegemonic masculine norms. Advisors and group leaders should challenge members to foster a culture that is inclusive of all masculinities and forms of diversity among Black undergraduate men.

Addressing Toxic Campus Racial Climates

Racism and racial stereotypes pose serious threats to one's sense of belonging, engagement, academic achievement, and persistence. Instead of suggesting that educators equip students of color with resistant response strategies such as those employed by Black men interviewed for this study, I insist here (as I have done elsewhere) that campus leaders must do more to enact espoused institutional values concerning equity and inclusion. This demands honest discussions about the realities of race on campus, systematic climate assessment activities, widespread dissemination of

assessment data, collaborative planning and programming, and accountability at all levels of the institution. Moreover, inviting Black men and other students of color to speak publicly about stereotypes and racist encounters on campus would make these issues more transparent. But institutional agents must then be willing to assume individual and collective responsibility for addressing institutional practices and norms that cyclically reproduce racial inequities. The responsibility for addressing toxic racial climates should not belong to the chief diversity officer, the office of multicultural affairs, or people of color—it must be owned by all units and every person on campus. Attempting to improve the status of Black undergraduate men without confronting racism in predominantly White campus environments is likely to produce few, if any, measurable gains.

Remembering Masculinities

In our 2010 book, College Men and Masculinities, San Diego State University Professor Frank Harris III and I argue that sending "college-educated men into the world with troubled masculinities, underdeveloped gender identities, and erroneous assumptions concerning women and other men with whom they co-occupy society makes contemporary institutions of higher education one of the guiltiest culprits in the perpetual maintenance of patriarchy, sexism, and homophobia in America" (p. 13). A complete Black male student success agenda therefore must focus equally on getting young men to college, through college, and ensuring they become better people in the process. Poor help-seeking tendencies and disengagement are often byproducts of troubled masculinities. Similarly, the misogynistic perceptions of Black women expressed by participants in this study, as well as those in Kimbrough and Harper's (2006) research, are attributable to problems in male students' prior gender socialization. Black men's groups are ideal sites for engaging these issues. Most especially, these should be settings where advisors and peers disrupt sexist and other problematic perspectives on women. In individual interactions, counselors, advisors, faculty, and others must be mindful of how prior masculine socialization and perceived threats to one's manhood may be affecting his attitudes, behaviors, choices, and aspirations.

Creating Affirming Spaces for Gay, Bisexual, and Questioning Students

As noted on Page 3, Black undergraduate men already encounter numerous threats to their college achievement. Being ostracized by one's peers for being gay or bisexual also undermines engagement and sense of belonging, two key predictors of persistence. Postsecondary educators and administrators must consciously construct safer, more affirming environments to support these students. Gay and heterosexual men alike at the HBCUs were certain that peers, faculty, and administrators would be staunchly opposed to having openly gay students serve in major leadership roles on campus. In Fall 2009, HBCUs enrolled a total of 78,347 Black male undergraduates. The reality is that more than a few of these students are gay, bisexual, or questioning; some may even be transgender. Therefore, campus leaders must work more responsibly to ensure these Black men are treated respectfully and receive the support required for high achievement. Beyond the HBCUs, study participants elsewhere, to varying degrees, reported that men who had sex with men often claimed to be heterosexual because they were afraid of the social ramifications of disclosing their sexualities. Energies one invests into pretending to be something he is not could be redirected to more academically purposeful endeavors that lead to degree attainment and post-college success. Given this, educators and administrators should facilitate dialogues about homophobia for their colleagues and students; bring Black gay, lesbian, and transgender speakers to campus; and consider ways to better support gay and bisexual students who may desire to pursue leadership roles on campus. Moreover, diversifying the institution with more LGBT faculty and staff could increase sense of belonging among LGBT students.
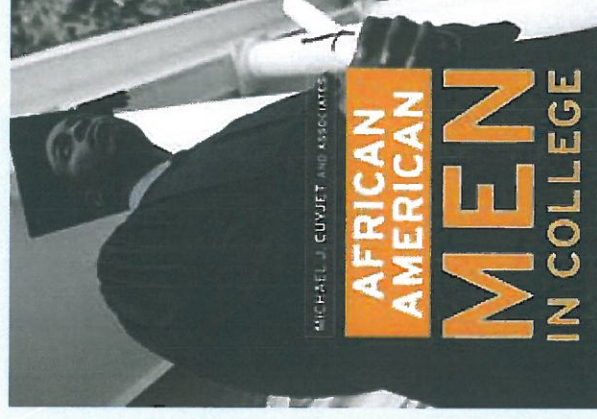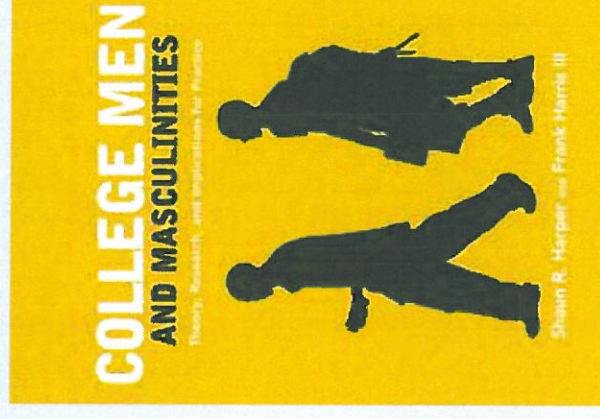
Ruben G. Alexander

B.S., Morehouse College, 2007

M.D., University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, 2011

Resident, Penn Medicine Department of Surgery

BLACK MEN IN COLLEGE
Implications for HBCUs and Beyond

Edited by
ROBERT T. PALMER and J. LUKE WOOD

MASCULINITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
Theoretical and Practical Considerations

EDITED BY
JASON A. LAKER AND TRACY DAVIS

Conclusion

If nothing else, this report confirms there are Black male students who succeed in and graduate from college – James Bland, Rubin Pusha III, Anthony Jack, Ryan Bowen, Raymond Roy-Pace, Samuel Alemayehu, Professor Cullen Buie, Chris Chaney, Dr. Ruben Alexander, and Jonathan Cox were among them. Since interviewing these ten achievers and the 209 others, I have met hundreds (if not thousands) of Black men who had similar records of college achievement – some are my friends, fraternity brothers, undergraduate mentees, graduate students, research collaborators, and faculty colleagues. These men exist, but their stories of achievement are rarely solicited. This must change if educators, policymakers, and concerned others are to make serious progress in improving rates of success among this population. No one is a better source of instructive insights on what it takes for Black men to succeed in college than Black men who have actually succeeded in college.

Like the 219 students who participated in the National Black Male College Achievement Study, there are undoubtedly others on campuses across the country whose transcripts, résumés, and post-college ambitions completely contradict popular narratives of Black male hopelessness. They are somehow debunking longstanding caricatures of Black undergraduate men as lazy, unmotivated, underprepared for college, intellectually incompetent, and disengaged. Find them. Ask them how they got there. Understand what keeps them enrolled at the institution from year-to-year; why they are so engaged inside and outside the classroom; what strategies they employ to earn good grades and cultivate substantive relationships with professors; and how they manage to transcend environmental, social, cultural, economic, and academic barriers that typically undermine achievement for others like them. Invite them to give voice to the racism, severe underrepresentation, and low expectations they and their same-race male peers routinely encounter in classrooms and elsewhere. Find out how they sustain confidence, resilience, and goal commitment. Try to understand from their points of view what the institution must do to foster a greater sense of belonging and improve rates of academic success among Black male students. Their perspectives are guaranteed to be useful.

The data on which this report is based were collected one campus at a time, in face-to-face interviews with one individual student at a time. As Morehouse College President Robert M. Franklin so eloquently wrote, "we are dealing with human lives" in education. Concerning Black men's lives in college, each deserves to be more responsibly handled by educators, social scientists, journalists, and the American public – the achievers, dropouts, disengaged, low performers, campus leaders, student-athletes, heterosexuals and gay men alike. It is my hope that this report helps advance a better understanding of an important population of Black men whose lives are often overlooked.

My plea for a paradigmatic shift in the way achievement is studied could be misunderstood as a call to discontinue longstanding efforts to raise consciousness concerning Black male disadvantage. For sure, more anti-deficit research is needed, but so too are additional studies that help explain in far more complex ways why Black male students perform lowest on most traditional measures of achievement, why many white educators expect so little of them, and how social forces (for example, poverty and access to healthcare) impact their educational outcomes. In sum, I advocate a more balanced and multidimensional understanding of Black men's lives in schools and other social contexts.
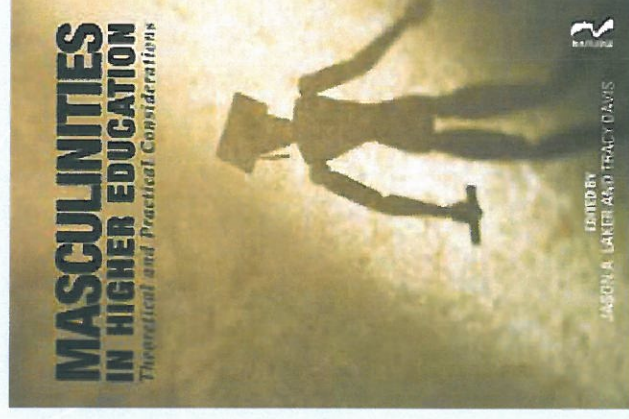
Neither this report nor my forthcoming book (Exceeding Expectations: How Black Male Students Succeed in College) is intended to be a final statement on Black male college achievement. Much more remains to be written and critically examined. While several important insights and recommendations are offered herein, useful others are yet to be discovered.

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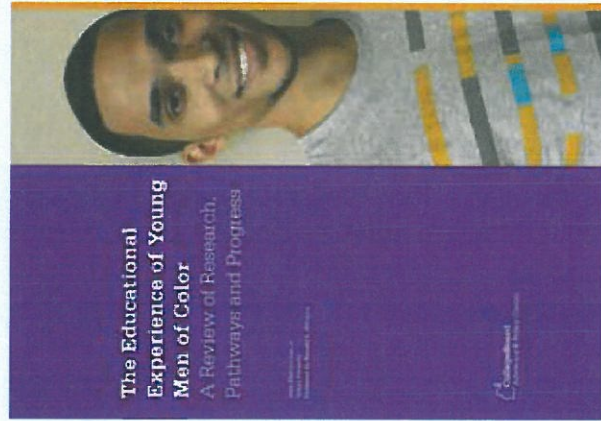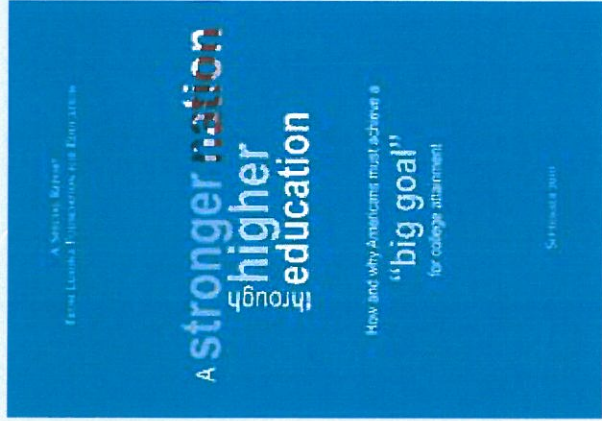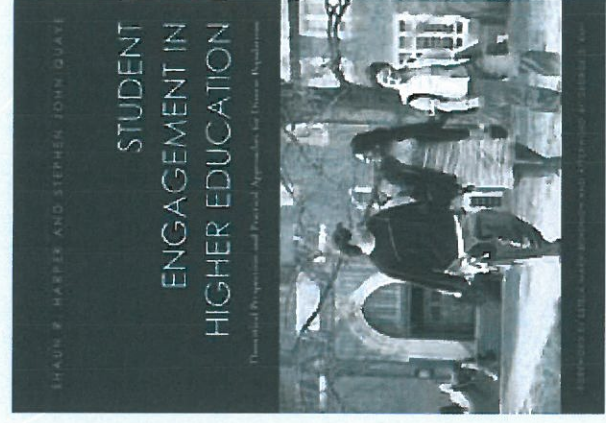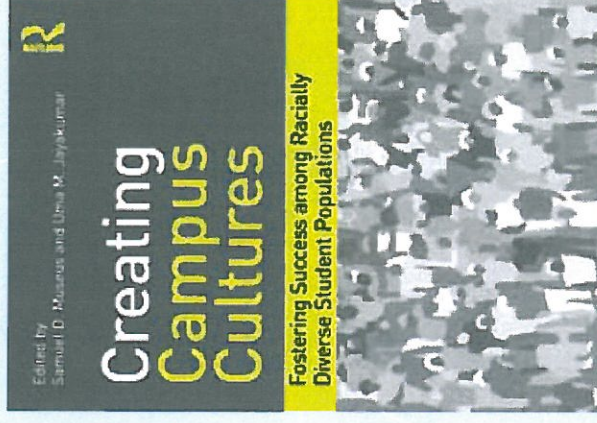Bonner II, F. A. (2010). *Academically gifted African American male college students*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

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Dr. Harper is also the author of more than 80 peer-reviewed journal articles and other academic publications. *The Journal of Higher Education, Review of Higher Education, Journal of College Student Development, Journal of Men's Studies, and Teachers College Record* are among the journals in which his research is published. He is editor-in-chief of the Routledge Book Series on Race and Racism in U.S. Higher Education. Additionally, he has delivered over 40 keynote addresses and presented more than 125 research papers, workshops, and symposia at national education conferences. Several associations have praised his scholarly work, including the Association for the Study of Higher Education (2008 Early Career Award), the American Educational Research Association (2010 Early Career Award, Division G), and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2010 Outstanding Contribution to Research Award). In September 2007, Professor Harper was featured on the cover of *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* for his National Black Male College Achievement Study, the largest-ever empirical study of Black undergraduate men. He has received grants from Lumina Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and numerous other sources to fund his research.

Dr. Harper earned his bachelor's degree in education from Albany State, a Historically Black University in Georgia, and Ph.D. in higher education from Indiana University.

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The Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education unites scholars from schools of education and other academic departments who do research on race, racism, campus racial climates, and topics pertaining to equity in education. Center staff and affiliates collaborate on funded research projects, environmental assessment activities, and the production of timely status reports. Principally, the Center aims to publish cutting-edge implications for education policy and practice, with an explicit focus on improving equity in P-12 schools, colleges and universities, and social contexts that influence educational outcomes.

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