

Recruitment of Minority Students: An Integrated Approach

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The recruitment of minority students from high schools and community/junior colleges presents a major problem for higher education institutions, especially those which are predominantly white. Overcoming the barriers — real and perceived — to minority student college enrollment and graduation is an ongoing endeavor, requiring the motivation, cooperation, understanding and mutual trust of students and universities. In some important ways, the nature of those barriers has changed. No longer is the problem one of legal access. That goal was achieved through the long and difficult struggles of the Civil Rights Movement (especially by the NAACP), culminating in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Now that strict legal access is no longer the issue, barriers to participation still do exist; some initiated by students, some by institutions. Why is that so? To begin with, many minority students still do not see college as a realistic option for them; some see it as an out-of-reach dream. Seeing no relief from poverty and noting that mother and father did not go to college (and neither did anyone else in the family), they became discouraged. Lacking role models, they ask: "Why do I think I can? I'm not going anywhere, so why should I try?"

Confronted by too many examples of unemployed college graduates of all races/ethnicities, some do not see it as beneficial to their everyday, practical existence. "After all, if going to college won't help me get a job," they say, "what good is it?" Some see the racist and sexist practices of some schools and feel that, despite their ability, the educational deck may be stacked against them because of their race, ethnicity or gender. Some minority students also do not have the family support that is needed for successful, continued matriculation. That support may be financial, emotional or psychological. On the other hand, emotional and psychological support may be present but the family's financial situation may be weak. With decreases in federal financial assistance to education, minority students still may be forced to discontinue education and look for fast employment in order to supplement family income.

Other minority students who do enroll often find persistence to be a major problem due to the social and cultural isolation which they find on predominantly white campuses. This creates and reinforces problems of low self-esteem and low self-confidence for students who are too frequently reminded, in a negative way,

that they are "different," that they are merely tolerated, not wanted, and that they really are not intellectually capable of doing the required level of academic performance. The informal messages they receive, despite the formal rhetoric to the contrary, are "go away" and, before that, "don't come." Many universities have only recently become desegregated, such as those in the Adams states. Often at these institutions, minority students (particularly Blacks and Hispanics) either get lost or alienated, or both. The result is frequently a decision to drop out or at least transfer to another, more receptive institution.

Still many other minority students are tracked in elementary and high school out of the college preparatory curriculum. For these students, who have not taken the necessary courses to support college matriculation, the doors to higher education are closed early. These are not the students who are recruited by predominantly white institutions. Only DuBois' "talented tenth" seem to be sought by those universities. Perhaps it is time to widen the recruiting pool and consider that other 90 percent.

Enrollment Statistics

Let me illustrate the scope of the problem by sharing a few relevant statistics. In its **Fifth Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education**, the American Council on Education reported that black undergraduate and graduate student enrollment "declined significantly" between 1980 and 1984 (**Higher Education Daily**, October 8, 1986). The enrollment of minorities and non-minorities is highly disproportionate. Based on the 1985 population estimates, "whites represent 78.3 percent of the United States population but 80.3 percent of the enrollment. Minorities, on the other hand, represent 21.3 percent of the population but only 17 percent of the total enrollment in higher education" (**Higher Education Daily**, October 8, 1986).

Over the years, particularly heavy losses have been felt by colleges of agriculture. From 1975-76 to 1980-81, the percentage of black males who entered and earned bachelor's degrees at predominantly black institutions held steady at 57 percent; at the master's level, the percentage declined significantly from 54 percent to 21 percent. For black females during the same period, a slight increase was seen at the bachelor's level (from 54 percent to 57 percent) while a severe decline was seen at the master's level (from 33 percent to 10 percent) (Trent, 1985).

Colleges of Agriculture are in somewhat of a double jeopardy situation. Recruitment of minority students is difficult because of the perception that these

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students already have. They constantly perceive agriculture careers as related to the farm. The students are constantly reminded of the occupations of their ancestors—strictly farming and this occupation has always been associated with slavery.

Early in the academic career of minorities, there should be an awareness of the dynamic industry of agriculture. The farming aspect of agriculture contributes to less than two percent of employment.

Minority Definition

At this point, I'd like to clarify one thing. For the purposes of this paper, when I speak of "minority students," I am referring to U.S. citizens, not international students. That is because the experiences of international students differ markedly from those of American born racial/ethnic minorities. Their historical orientations to the American educational system and to their host institution is different. The institution's responses to, and accommodations for them are also different. This is not to say that international students do not have valid issues; they do. My point is that those issues are not representative of the problems faced by students who are natives of U.S. It is the problems that are endemic to the interaction between minorities and higher education institutions with which I am concerned.

Now, what does all this mean in terms of recruitment? For one thing, it makes recruitment difficult for the major (i.e., predominantly white) state institutions. They seem to be reluctant to reach or have problems reaching minority students and convincing them that college is a viable option, and that matriculation at **their** college or university offers opportunity for positive academic and self development. Financial incentives, the cornerstone of much recruitment, often are not enough. An institution's image is often a very potent obstacle to minority enrollment and persistence. Changing the institutional climate becomes the key to minority recruitment, not public relations "hype," but active concern and commitment to making an institution a safe, receptive, diversified place to study and learn. Developing an appreciation for humanity's diversity and learning to become a functioning contributor to society do not usually happen in unfriendly educational environments. These should be major goals of a university.

Secondly, it means that minority student recruitment is essential for students, institutions and society. In order to break the established cycle of poverty, minority youngsters must be encouraged to pursue at least a college education. They must be assured that it is possible for **them**, that there are real benefits. They must know there are no financial guarantees, not for most students. They must be reminded, however, that the only guarantee is that without the college education, their chances for social and economic mobility are next to nonexistent. They must be taught that, despite the past or their present

condition, being "minority" is not, and need not, be equated with being poor and uneducated.

In the future for many institutions, minority students may often mean survival. Current and projected demographics tell us that the white college-age cohort is decreasing just as the minority college-age cohort is increasing. Blacks and Hispanics will comprise ever increasing percentages of the potential student population. They represent a formidable pool which colleges and universities would be wise to tap. Like the labor market principle of supply and demand, the rationale here is simple. College enrollments are driven by student markets. When the number of students is up (that is, when the demand is high) recruiting may be done, but it is not critical to institutional growth or maintenance. When the number of students is down (that is, when the demand is low) recruitment becomes an immediate institutional priority. The present reality of the student population dictates a need for institutional accommodation to the capabilities, interests and needs of minority students.

We must not, however, fall prey to the "doom-and-gloom" scenario described in the Carnegie Council's (1980) **Three Thousand Futures**. In that book, the authors described a situation in which declining enrollments prompted nervous institutions to yield to the temptation of irresponsible marketing techniques, just to get the warm bodies for funding purposes. We must recruit minority students not just so that we can count their warm bodies; we must also recruit with the goal of developing their minds and improving their (and our) life chances. We must recruit not just for the freshman year, but for graduation.

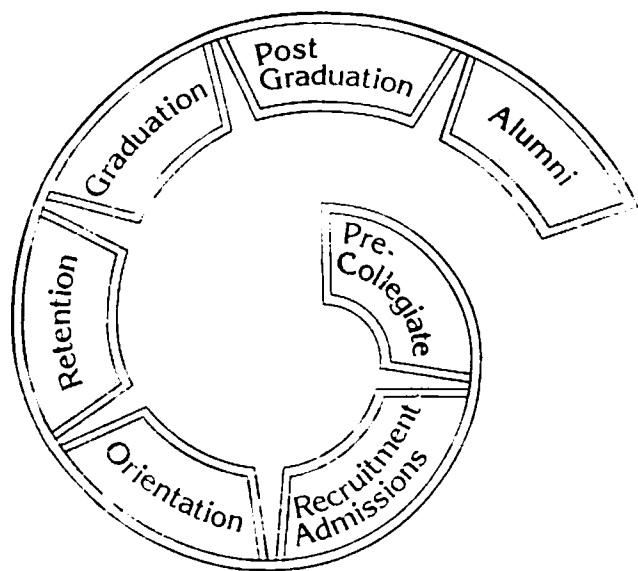
In terms of cost efficiency, minority student enrollment makes a lot of sense. Some people complain about funds for minority recruitment. Yet, it does not take a Ph.D. to realize that it costs society a lot more to provide food stamps, free or reduced medical care, free or subsidized housing, increased security to fight increased crime, and support for those who are incarcerated indefinitely. The costs for one person are prohibitive; for many unemployed, uneducated American citizens, the figure is truly astronomical and unnecessary. In addition, today we hear a lot about the jeopardy of the social security system. It is not much more cost effective to educate minority young people and help to make them contributing citizens than to help them remain dependent upon society? You see, minority recruitment makes good sense for everybody.

Yet, as minority enrollments decline, many professionals maintain that a related, and perhaps a more important issue, is not the recruitment of minority students, but their retention. Each problem is both a national concern and an issue for individual colleges and universities. It is important to remember that institutions can and will make the difference.

An Integrated Model

This presentation will examine recruitment from an integrated perspective. Although there are many

Figure 1. Model for Recruitment and Retention of Minority Student in Higher Education. From Taylor, Charles A. 1985. *Effective Ways to Recruit and Retain Minority Students*. Madison: NMCC Inc., Publications.



recruitment and retention models, this discussion will rely on the Taylor Retention Model (see Figure 1) which seems to provide an effective, holistic approach to minority recruitment and retention. This approach acknowledges the complexity of (1) students, (2) institutions as well as (3) the myriad of relationships between them. The following illustrates the integrated approach used by Taylor.

Pre-Collegiate Activities

Recent studies indicate that it's never too early to interest a student in attending college (Berryman, 1983) (Clewel & Ficklen, 1986). At an early age, students seek careers and colleges/universities. Therefore, for minority students, it is especially important to provide pre-collegiate activities. Educators, administrators and counselors must remember that education beyond high school has not been a family tradition for many minority students. Therefore, we must increase their awareness of advanced educational opportunities. One of the most successful pre-collegiate programs is Upward Bound type programs in which middle and high school students actually live on campus, take college courses, and interact with college students and faculty (Calvin, 1984). For the past two years, the writer has served as a presenter for a fifth-grade career awareness program at a local elementary school designed to increase students' knowledge of agriculture-related occupations.

Taylor's (1985) model begins by suggesting that effective recruitment begins with pre-collegiate activities. Three examples of these programs are found at Texas A&M University (Bryan-College Station Eagle, May 27, 1987).

1. Each summer, the Engineering College invites 100 Blacks, Hispanics and Native American Indian students to participate in

its Summer Enrichment Experience in Engineering. The students have completed their sophomore year of high school, spend a week on campus, attend special classes, work in engineering and computer laboratories, and live in dormitories.

2. Students interested in studying medicine spend three days touring the A&M campuses in College Station and Temple. The College of Medicine also sponsors a Health Careers Opportunity Program, a six-week research apprenticeship program for local high school minority students.
3. A long-range project which is to be launched this summer is the Minority Mentorship Program. Two professors have developed a mentorship program for local elementary minority students to link up with teacher education majors and the College of Education faculty.

Structured encouragement even during earlier years is also beneficial. For example, a 1984 study published by the High-Scope Educational Research Foundation of Ypsilanti, Michigan, found that "preschool programs help kids through life" (Taylor, 1985). For example, the study showed that youngsters who attended pre-school had higher employment, higher high school and college graduation rates, performed better on tests, were in less trouble with the law and, in general, contributed more to society. Even from universities, it is important to support these programs so that we can increase the number of students who can be recruited when they reach college age. It is not enough to hope that the students will be there because they always have been; dropping enrollments remind everyone that hope alone is not enough.

Recruitment/Admissions

Fleming (1984) has suggested that, "Where minority students go to college will continue to be a matter of individual choice, dictated by family, finance, geography, educational readiness and personal preferences." Though there is some validity to this statement, it may be incomplete. There are many things that colleges can do to influence minority students in their choices of undergraduate and graduate matriculation.

If minority recruitment is a priority as most university administrators attest, then we must be able to answer three important questions regarding minority students and recruitment: Where do we find them? How do we recruit them? And, what things do we consider before they arrive? The responses to these questions will determine the success of both recruitment and retention. Taylor's model helps us to answer these questions.

Orientation

Begin here to acquaint the student with the campus and its offerings. Activities must be planned

according to students' interests. During this time, inform the students of offices and programs that are available to assist with various problems. Give guided tours of the campus; therefore, when students arrive they would already know their way around campus. Some possible activities might include scheduling visits to the Black Culture Center (if one is established) and the Office of Minority Affairs, pairing minority aides with minority students who reside in the dormitory and hosting a reception to acquaint minority students with various members of the university community, minority and non-minority students, faculty and staff.

Retention

The retention rate of minority students is still significantly lower than that of white students. Nationally, only about 42 percent of minority students entering college go on to complete their degrees compared with approximately 60 percent of white students (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, Feb. 3, 1982.) A goal would be to have the retention rates of minority students the same as those for non-minority students.

Taylor cited three major factors which are related to a decision to drop out of school: (1) academic preparation, (2) socio-cultural adjustment, and (3) financial resources. Frequently, minority students are simultaneously faced with two or three of the above.

What can institutions do to remedy the above factors? Consider the students' backgrounds and academic preparation prior to making course assignment. Remediation may be an alternative. Fleming's (1984) study confirms that the social environment of the campus affects the academic performances of students. We know that most minority students attend predominantly white institutions. Therefore, for any recruitment and retention program to be successful, it must address socio-cultural adjustment problems which minority students encounter on those campuses. We also know that most Blacks and Hispanics attend college with the aid of federal, state and/or institutional financial assistance. Financial aid is important for minority students. Financial aid offices must provide special counseling in order to reduce the many financial problems often faced by the minority student. Institutions must supplement federal and state monies in order to help students **remain** in school once they are admitted.

Graduation

Much emphasis is placed on recruitment and retention, however, educators and administrators must not lose sight of the ultimate goal — graduation. The intent must be to recruit with the goal of graduating minority students.

Minority graduates tend to be great recruitment tools for incoming minority students. Most students are concerned about the academic success of their peers. Successful recruitment efforts should emphasize graduation requirements as well as achievements.

Post Graduation

Minority students need to be motivated to aspire to the attainment of advanced and professional degrees. As such, positive minority role models on campuses are another great recruitment tool.

Since 1977, the number of Black PhD's has declined steadily. The declines are especially evident when one notes the enrollment of Blacks in professional schools. According to Taylor, (1985, p. 16) "both historically and currently Black schools have produced, and continue to produce a disproportionate number of Black master's and doctoral degree recipients."

Financial obstacles appear to be the leading reason for the lack of progress in minority participation in advanced study. The number of minority students receiving fellowships is so low that it raises serious doubts in regards to a national commitment to resolving this dilemma. The policies of the present (Reagan) administration reflect an unfriendly attitude toward financial aid for higher education (Calvin, 1984). This, of course, adversely affects minority students and their ability to pursue advanced degrees.

Graduate schools can do a better job of outreach by recruiting their own undergraduate students. The lack of minority professors, researchers, and graduate assistants is another issue which needs to be addressed. When minority students see more minorities in some of the above positions, they then have positive role models and can project their own educational/academic success.

Alumni

Minority alumni are a valuable asset in the recruitment and retention cycle. These former students have made their way through the educational system; they can serve as proof to other potential minority students that graduation is a possible achievement. Who can better sell a university than one of its former students? Also, minority former students may offer advice to students on ways to adjust to a new environment. They (minority alumni) could also be invited to deliver commencement addresses, to applaud the achievement of graduating minority students and to inspire them for life beyond college.

Summary

It is obvious from the research available and studied for this presentation that recruitment of minorities is indeed an important concern for all institutions. However, recruitment alone will not suffice. There is a great need for recruitment, admissions, orientation and academic and personal support during the undergraduate years and beyond. Recruitment, then, is much more than "getting students in college." It begins with years of preparation from early childhood throughout high school. It requires a commitment on behalf of the university or college to get students enrolled, to offer academic and personal support, and to graduate these students. Un-

fortunately, many institutions put all of the responsibility for minority students on minority affairs personnel. As Gary Mason, a recruiter for Davidson College noted, "The institution relieves itself of the responsibilities and the staff is usually overworked and understaffed." p. 31. (**Chronicle of Higher Education**, February 11, 1987). The fact is that minority recruitment and retention must be a sustained institutional priority and responsibility. If institutions, administrators and faculty members employ these tools of recruitment, there will be many more minorities entering and, more importantly, many more graduating from all our higher education institutions.

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Recruitment of Vocational Agriculture/FFA Students

Kenny Graham

In order to consider recruitment of high school students for your agriculture programs, it is important to reflect on your own experiences, which got you here and involved you in trying to teach students about agriculture at the college level. It is also important to reflect on what these root experiences have led you to imagine and to expect those high school students to be. Simply wanting to be a farmer when I was growing up is a far different expectation than the one I can see my high school students heading towards or moving away from.

Moreover, the background these students start from is also vastly different from many of the original farming experiences of their instructors at all levels. Let me use myself as a typical example of a standard issue agriculture instructor. I grew up on what was a traditional 240 acre Missouri farm. We had cattle, hogs, corn and put up a lot of hay in the summer. In addition, if I said I was a farmer, everybody I knew would have known that I lived in a rural area on a farm. However, that experience is obviously no longer one that I can routinely expect to be the experience my students will have had.

I have discovered through questioning them that they live in town and have had a small garden out back to have a project in order to be allowed in my classes. They are interested in agriculture, and some even wanted to work in the field of agriculture. Nevertheless, I had to adjust my thinking and realize that very few of those students were going to go back to a farm. They were not going to be farmers. In fact, unless

I did some careful work, many of the traditional farming students were not going to study agriculture, even in high school. While gaining a new group of students, we sure didn't want to lose our old ones. As a result, recruiting is both simpler and more time consuming than we may wish to deal with, but if we are going to recruit students into agriculture, we are going to have to deal with the students as they are.

When I started thinking and studying about the recruiting problem, I found that in the Midwest out of 23% of all in an ag-related occupation only 3% of those are involved in production agriculture. I started thinking, "What we don't need is a bunch of people going back to the farm; what we need is students from town who are interested in agriculture, who are willing to work in marketing and distribution of ag products."

I also started thinking of changing my whole program and my recruiting to what we still call a non-traditional ag school which would include students who live in town (young women in particular), and I found that it is difficult to change without recruiting these young people because they were interested. What was difficult was to maintain a coherent production ag program because these students needed to know more about cows and plows while the young men who came from the farm already had this experience. I then added into my program agri-business training, career awareness and leadership training which I thought needed to be emphasized.

Currently, I teach in a high school of about 1000 students grades 9-12. I did a survey this past year for the entire high school student body. I received about 90% response on the survey. I gave them some options of classes that I felt fitted in the ag program "What classes would you be interested in," I asked. I calculated the individuals' responses and there was at

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