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ABSTRACT

An analysis is provided of trends and issues related to minority enrollment in urban community colleges. Following introductory comments, trends are examined in the areas of urban demography, elementary and secondary school enrollment, postsecondary enrollment, retention, major fields of study, degree attainment, and staffing patterns. The next section looks at ways in which urban community college trends parallel or diverge from those present throughout postsecondary education. Next, issues confronting urban community colleges as they endeavor to assure continued access and excellence to all of their constituencies are discussed, including the recruitment and retention of minority students; financial aid; academic preparation; sociocultural adjustment; minority student transfer to four-year baccalaureate institutions; the recruitment, retention, and promotion of minority faculty and staff; program and curricular development; community linkages; and research efforts to further expand both theoretical knowledge about the status and welfare of minority students and the practical applications of this knowledge. (UCM)

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# MINORITIES IN URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

## — *Tomorrow's Students Today*

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REPORT OF THE

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REPORT OF THE  
URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES COMMISSION,  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF  
COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he community college movement is in many ways the embodiment of the American ideal of democracy. Children of the postindustrial era, we were the first to proclaim higher education as an enfranchising vehicle—a right to be accorded to all Americans.

At the close of the twentieth century, we are entering an era in which the shifts in technology and demography are presenting the community college with the greatest challenge in its history. In the words of Secretary of Labor William C. Brock, “We are living in the fastest changing economy in the history of the world. The industrial revolution pales by comparison. It has forced us to rethink what we are, what we are about, and how we are going to prepare for that change.”

Indeed there is a new world emerging on the horizon, a world which will require training and skills, however, with 20 percent of our working adults shackled by functional illiteracy, the overall number of young people ready and able to enter the work force is decreasing. Minorities and new immigrants will form a large part of tomorrow’s work force. The problem of the future will not be a labor shortage, but a skill shortage, born of the mismatch between the needs of the labor market and the profile of the labor pool. It is precisely as a result of this mismatch that a new nation will emerge within our borders—a darker nation born in poverty—out-of-school, out-of-skills, out-of-hope—unemployed and unemployable. It is this nation which will comprise the next generation in our cities. It is this nation upon which the economic future of our urban centers will rest. It is this nation to which this monograph is dedicated.

Following an analysis of the trends in minority enrollment in our urban community colleges, the monograph goes on to explore the major issues related to the recruitment and retention of minority students, program choice, staffing patterns, transfer and articulation, and student support services.

The answers to the questions it raises are key to the integrity of our mission. We are faced with a great challenge, as well as a great opportunity. Our success is critical to the well-being of our society, for through the work of the urban community college can we give the greatest gift a free society can bestow on its citizenry—the right to be useful and productive citizens.

Special thanks is to be given to Dr. Donald Godbold for his contribution to the preparation of this monograph, and to Dr. Fred Stahl (Maricopa County Community College District) for his valuable assistance in editing and shaping the final product.

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# MINORITIES IN URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: TOMORROW'S STUDENTS TODAY

## INTRODUCTION

The challenge of dealing effectively with diversity now confronts American society and will be a major challenge in the decades to come. The new composition of immigration and changing patterns of migration within the country, the projected "coloring" of America in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and a world economy that grows progressively more interdependent are trends that mark diversity as a touchstone of social change in future American society.

The public schools of the United States are frequently perceived as central to the quality of American life. Over the past five years, numerous blue-ribbon national reports dealing with the status of education at all levels have focused attention on the goals, policies, and practices of public educational institutions, renewed general interest in education, and sparked debate on how schools could best be reformed. Especially since the publication of *A Nation at Risk. The Imperative for Educational Reform* in 1983, educators and the general public have been inundated with proposals purporting to stem mediocrity and calling for higher standards, more rigid requirements, and firmer, more accountable policies and procedures in all areas of higher education.

The convergence of these trends is illustrated in comments by Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, who has challenged American citizens and educators to find better ways of serving the nation's minority students or face a nation with a greatly weakened economic and social fabric. To Boyer, there is no greater challenge than dealing carefully and thoughtfully with regard to "how the growing diversity of students will affect our schools—and life beyond the classroom."

Boyer asserts that the major social issue facing the United States is "whether this nation can embrace a new generation of Americans and build a renewed sense of national unity while rejoicing in our diversity. Our response to this urgent and persistent challenge will have an impact far beyond the classroom and will reach into the future as far as anyone can see."

Serving more heterogeneous populations has required ongoing adaptations by community colleges. In serving their constituencies, community

colleges have been able to develop a foundation of understanding on issues related to access and equality, a reasonably comprehensive analysis of the basic needs of a broad range of student groups and a unique perspective on the operational impact of proposed "quality education policies" upon their students. These variables are especially relevant to the educationally, socially, and economically disadvantaged whom other institutions of education have neglected. Such an operational grasp is entirely absent in most reform proposals for higher education today. These proposals often fail to analyze the needs of differing student constituencies and to ascertain the impact of such new policies. More importantly, policy makers frequently neglect to attain input and perspective from representatives of the "majority minority" whom their proposals will ultimately impact.

A context for discussing issues relating to the retention, recruitment, and successful transfer of minority students to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions may be attained by examining current demographic information such as precollege and college enrollment patterns, staffing ratios, curricular/programming paradigms, retention rates, degree attainment, and selected data concerning trends in major urban community colleges. Although issues relating to minority students in community colleges are deeply rooted in society as a whole, here they will be discussed primarily within the context of the public education system.

Data and trends regarding all of these areas have emerged from ongoing studies by various groups including but not limited to the American Council of Education's Office of Minority Concerns, the Ford Foundation, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, the Association of American Colleges, the College Board, and the Urban Community College Commission. Some of the most important findings are capsulized in the following pages.

An exploratory research study, authorized by the Urban Community College Commission and conducted under the auspices of Dr. Donald H. Godbold, Chancellor, Peralta Community Colleges, provides further important statistical and naturalistic data to be utilized as a basis for understanding and discussing important issues and strategies relating to minority student success in the urban community college, particularly concerning recruitment and retention. These findings are also capsulized in a later portion of this report.

Before beginning an examination of these accomplishments by data and trends, one note of caution must be raised. The recent emphasis on accountability and excellence has tended to focus national attention on the accomplishment of all students as opposed to individual groups or type of students. Much data is reported by various school districts, state agencies, and governmental units in broad, general aggregate categories.



When minorities are disaggregated into such broad subgroups as black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian, significant possible differences which exist between individuals who come from differing national origins are concealed. For example, the often encountered assertion that Asian Americans are the "model minority population" is based upon data from the majority Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Asian American population and does not reflect the sociological and educational situations of new immigrant Indo-Chinese populations entering the United States since 1965. When identified, such significant variances are noted in discussions of the data.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Five characteristics describing the ethnic and racial minorities who will soon comprise 33 percent of the United States population have special significance for public education, including the community college sector. They include: urban concentration, high unemployment, low-income levels, increased single-parent and no-parent homes, and relative youth.

Ethnic and racial minorities are heavily urbanized. Eighty-three percent of all Hispanics, 77 percent of all blacks, and 80 percent of all Asian-Americans live in urban areas.

Twenty-eight cities have black populations in excess of 100,000, New York and Chicago each contain more than a million black residents. The fifty cities containing the largest black population are distributed almost evenly throughout the northern and the southern portions of the nation.

Forty-eight percent of all Hispanics live within ten metropolitan areas. Seventy percent live in California, Texas, or the metropolitan areas of New York, Miami, and Chicago, five states (California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois) contain 75 percent of all Hispanics in the United States. In contrast to the geographic diversity of cities with large black populations, 33 of the 50 cities with the largest Hispanic populations are found in California and Texas.

Asian population is concentrated in Hawaii and six of the continental United States. California, Texas, Washington, Illinois, New York and New Jersey. Over 500,000 Indo-Chinese have resettled into the United States since 1979-1980. Although some of these new Asian Americans have been resettled to every state, 35-40 percent of this population now lives in California, concentrated in a belt lying between San Diego and San Francisco.

The extensive urbanization of minority groups indicates that major responsibility for providing pragmatic and effective solutions to educational and social problems must come from urban institutions, including the urban community college.

Another characteristic which must be taken into account is the working status of minority groups. Blacks continue to lead all groups in terms of unemployment, however, unemployment rates for blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are significantly above those of whites. As of 1983, the unemployment rate for blacks was twice the rate for whites, Hispanic unemployment was approximately 60 percent higher than that of whites. The unemployment rate for "new" Indo-Chinese immigrants to the United States varied from 25-85 percent of the working age populace, depending primarily on the time such individuals have been in the United States. Unemployment rates for minority teenagers follow a parallel pattern, but the levels of unemployment are significantly higher. The unemployment rate for black teenagers is approximately 2 1/2 times the rate for whites, Hispanic teenagers unemployment rates were 1 1/3 greater than those of whites.

In a similar manner, the economic positions of blacks, Hispanics and "new" Asian-Americans relative to whites are substantially lower as reported in the U.S. Bureau *Current Population Reports* on "Money Income and Poverty Status of Families and Persons in the United States, 1981 and 1982." Median black family income in 1982 was \$13,598 or 55 percent of median white family income (\$24,603). In the same year, Hispanic median family income (\$16,227) was 66 percent of white median family income (\$24,603). Although Asian Americans are usually perceived as the model minority, being better educated, occupying higher rungs on the occupational ladder, and earning more than both the general populace and even white Americans, 18-20 percent of Asian-Americans live at or below the poverty level. Again, traditional Asian-Americans such as Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans enjoy higher standards of living, education, and success than the new Indo-Chinese immigrants who are only now approaching economic parity with the other major ethnic/racial groups in the United States.

Given the high correlation between college attendance, college success, and socioeconomic status, the lack of parity between whites and minorities portends a serious problem for all of higher education, as well as society at large.

Another important trend is the emergence of the single or no-parent family. The phenomenon has been most frequently discussed in relation to the black family and, indeed, most black children (57 percent) do not live in two-parent homes. However, 1980 Census data lead to assertions that 48 percent of all children born in or after 1980 would be raised in single or no-parent homes. Given emerging research on the learning difficulties experienced by children from single parent homes with reference to achievement and discipline, public schools, community colleges, and

universities may anticipate facing new and more extensive problems in assuring effective learning for students in the years to come.

A final important demographic characteristic is the relative youth of the minority population. The "baby bust," which impacted whites in the years between 1964-1978, did not occur in the United States' minority populace, leading to both increased numbers and increased proportions of minority youngsters now attending public schools. In addition to this factor, an examination of the post-1965 immigration patterns into the United States show that those individuals who are immigrating are proportionately younger than the native population of the United States. As Morrison Wong notes in his article, "Post-1965 Immigrants. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile," approximately 68 percent of immigrants are adolescents and young adults under age 34.

Important data concerning these elementary and secondary school enrollment trends are condensed in the following section of this paper

#### ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Currently, 23 of the 25 largest public school districts in the United States contain a majority of ethnic and racial minority students. By the year 2000, the 53 largest cities in the United States will have a majority of minority students enrolled in their public school systems.

Many major metropolitan areas, whether predominantly minority or white in overall population, have a majority of minority students enrolled in the public schools. In addition to cities with predominant minority populations such as New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Atlanta, and St. Louis, which also have a predominance of minority students enrolled in the public schools, there are numerous cities, such as Milwaukee, where the overall minority population is comparatively small (29 percent in Milwaukee) but where minorities constitute the majority (60 percent in Milwaukee) of the public school enrollment.

Overall, minorities in major urban areas find themselves in situations of greater segregation today than before the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision. Despite housing integration, minorities remain "spatially segregated." Minority "spatial segregation" from Anglos in the 1980s remains consistent with and parallel to patterns established after World War II. Blacks continue to be the most isolated, although both Asians and Hispanics experience significant levels of isolation and segregation.

Garcia's study of immigration issues in the urban ecology of Los Angeles in *Immigration Issues in Urban Ecology. The Case of Los Angeles* shows some representative examples in terms of the impact of segregation on public schools. 62 percent of minority elementary children attend

schools which range from 90-100 percent minority in enrollment. 25 percent of Asian, 54 percent of Hispanic, and 82 percent of black students attend public schools where Anglo enrollment is less than 10 percent.

Of similar importance is the assertion by Fernandez and Velez in *Race, Color, and Language in the Changing Public Schools* that even though many schools have become "desegregated," tracking systems reinstitute segregation by program type.

Minorities continue to be enrolled in predominantly non-academic programs composed either of vocational training courses or high school general studies. Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Asian Americans constitute the only minority subgroups where a majority of students are enrolled in academic programs (52 percent), 39 percent of all white students are enrolled in academic programs as compared to 24 percent of Native American students, 26 percent of Hispanic students, and 32 percent of black students.

Another 31 percent of black and Hispanic students, 29 percent of Native American students, and 18 percent of Asian American students are enrolled in vocational-technical programs.

Enrollment in high school general studies programs, which are frequently directionless, constitutes the placement of 35 percent of all black students, 41 percent of all Hispanic students, 29 percent of all Asian students and 44 percent of all Native American students. The fact that between 47-75 percent of all minority students are enrolled in "non-academic high school programs or tracks" poses serious problems in increasing college attendance and assuring equality of life after public school.

Moreover, less than 50 percent of minority students have been exposed to the academic preparation required for college admission, regardless of the program of study which they have undertaken in the public schools. This further intensifies the problem of achieving success and excellence in the urban community college.

There is also evidence to suggest that minority students begin to lose ground as early as the fourth grade and substantive evidence that significant numbers of minority students are effectively lost before they begin high school. Attrition and drop out continue at accelerated levels in many urban high schools. Astin notes in *Minorities in American Higher Education* that of those students who go to high school, only 72 percent of 18-19 year-old blacks and 55 percent of 18-19 year-old Hispanics graduate. Additionally, American Council of Education and Ford Foundation studies indicate that the trend of losing ground continues steadily throughout college and graduate school for minority students, especially blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans.

Numerous other trends emerge during the postsecondary educational years. The most significant are noted in the next portion of this report.

## POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

The most important trend for all postsecondary education is that minority students *tend to lose ground at each step of the educational pipeline* (high school graduation, college entrance, college graduation, graduate school entrance, and graduate school completion). *The fundamental disparity between white participation rates and those of minority students pervades all areas of postsecondary education.* White students are over-represented in all segments of public education while blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are severely underrepresented in academic and professional training. Only certain Asian-American subgroups such as Chinese and Japanese Americans approach or exceed proportional representation in overall enrollment, particularly in the academic and professional degree programs of baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

Both the 1985 and 1986 ACE Status Reports on *Minorities in Higher Education* emphasize the fact that despite a numerical increase in minority enrollment between 1980-1984, minorities remain significantly underrepresented in higher education. Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are especially underrepresented, particularly in professional and graduate programs. Additionally, many are turning from general graduate studies to enter the professions, which will impact the overall ability of our nation's colleges to obtain adequate minority representation in faculty and professional staff.

*Retention of minority students continues to be an area of significant concern*, primarily due to the fact that the lower socioeconomic status from which many such students come places them at maximum economic and social vulnerability during the college years.

While the percentage of degrees conferred by higher education institutions to minorities has increased in the past ten years, minorities remain severely underrepresented on the American educational scene, particularly in such crucial areas as mathematics, physical sciences, computer information systems, health services, and engineering. These areas are critical to the future of the United States and provide the greatest opportunities for achieving greater economic parity in the nation.

### RETENTION

Minority students tend to lose ground at every point along the educational pipeline. Levels of educational retention may be capsulized in the following statistics as reported by Astin in *Minorities in American Higher Education*:

- (1) 72 percent of all 18-19 year-old blacks graduate from high school.
- 55 percent of all 18-19 year-old Chicanos graduate from high school.

53 percent of all 18-19 year-old Native Americans graduate from high school.

(2) 29 percent of black high school graduates enter some form of postsecondary education.

22 percent of Chicano high school graduates attend some form of postsecondary education.

(3) 17 percent of Native American high school graduates attend some form of postsecondary education.

Significantly, when adjustment is made for socioeconomic factors, minority students graduate at a rate equal to that of white students. However, disproportionate numbers of minority students come from low-income/high-unemployment/poverty areas and are burdened with extensive problems. Only a small number of minority students attend college. When retention falls, it leaves only smaller numbers of minorities, hence the achievement of educational parity and the corresponding potential for equivalent life-styles for a majority of minority Americans continues to decline.

### MAJOR FIELDS OF STUDY

A review of the fields of study undertaken by minorities shows that while there has been increased enrollment in mathematics, engineering, computer science, physical science, health related and business fields in the past decade, minority enrollment continues to be concentrated in the less prestigious and lower-paying areas of social sciences, and humanities.

Of critical importance is the fact that minorities remain severely under-represented in the sciences. Data adapted from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, *Data on Earned Degrees Conferred by Institutes of Higher Education by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, Academic Year 1980-1981* and National Center of Education Statistics indicate that less than 10 percent of all degrees awarded in such fields as biology, computer science, mathematics, engineering, physical science, and health-related fields were attained by black, Hispanic, and Native American students. These fields represent a composite of the technological areas where the greatest growth and advancement is predicted in the United States over the next two decades. The continued lack of representation of minority students again indicates that equivalence in education and life-style will be difficult, if not impossible to achieve.

### DEGREES

The underrepresentation noted in terms of participation in higher education, achievement of scientific and technological majors, and in

postsecondary staffing is also found in the overall distribution of degrees.

National Center for Education statistics indicate that in 1980-1981 minority candidates earned 11 percent of all bachelor's degrees, 11 percent of all master's degrees, and 10 percent of all doctorates awarded throughout the country. This contrasts to an overall minority population of 21 percent in the United States, and an enrollment in higher education approaching 15 percent in the same time period.

### STAFFING PATTERNS

Projected national trends regarding teachers in the United States point to continued underrepresentation of minority educators in the United States. As is the case with college enrollment, minorities continue to be substantially underrepresented on college faculties, accounting for less than 10 percent of the teaching faculties at colleges and universities throughout the United States. Minority administrators are also significantly underrepresented, comprising approximately 10 percent of the total administrative cohort.

Teacher shortages in such areas as mathematics and science are already beginning to develop throughout the United States. In addition to shortages in these critical areas, the widening of professional and business opportunities to teachers in general and minorities in particular over the past decade has lured many of the best, most academically qualified individuals into fields of endeavor other than teaching/educational administration.

Two other significant trends must also be noted. the increasing exodus of black instructors from both secondary and postsecondary education (particularly in the southern states) and the increasingly stringent demands concerning subject matter competencies, usually verified through standardized tests, an area where minorities have usually performed less effectively than their white counterparts.

An analysis of such trends and others, including the "plateau" in the level of already severely underrepresented Hispanic teachers, a decline in the percentage of black faculty (even in historically black colleges), and the continued "virtual absence" of Native American and Asian-American faculty points to a situation in which the number of minority instructors being prepared will not be equivalent in quantity or in quality to serve as replacements for those individuals who were added to the teaching pool of colleges and universities as a result of the civil rights movement during the 1960s and are now moving toward retirement. Without some reversal in these trends, further declines in the ratio of minority instructors/administrators will occur with potentially grave consequences for higher education in the United States.

## URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRENDS

Urban community college educational trends parallel those present throughout postsecondary education. This has been substantiated by the findings of the Urban Community College Commission Study on Minority Representation.

Summarily, the heavy concentration of minority enrollment in urban community colleges, the high withdrawal rates of these students from urban community colleges, and the underrepresentation of minority faculty and administrators, including the virtual absence of Native American and Asian-American instructors, parallel general conditions found in other levels of urban public education.

The research study included sixteen responding urban community college districts. Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, Cuyahoga, Peralta (Oakland, CA), San Francisco, Metro (Kansas City) Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Wayne County (Detroit), St. Louis, State (East St. Louis), Compton, San Diego, Atlantic, Nassau, and Pima (Tucson) Community College districts.

The average headcount of the responding districts was 28,930 students, with a range from 1,305 students to 91,779 headcount students (fall 1985).

Table 1 shows the composite percentage of district minority enrollments in fall 1985 for reporting institutions.

**Table 1**  
Urban Community College Commission Study on Minority  
Representation Urban District or College Minority  
Enrollment, Fall 1985

	Male	Female	Percentage
Asian American	10.3	3.7	14.0
Black American	15.2	24.2	29.4
Hispanic	7.7	8.0	15.7
Native American	.6	.7	1.3
Other	2.6	1.8	<u>4.4</u>
		Total	64.8

The composite enrollment of 64.8 percent minority students parallels the trend for urban public school systems to enroll a majority of minority students.

The limited representation of Hispanics and native Americans, the overall underrepresentation of women, and a high proportionate represen-



tation of Asian Americans parallel overall trends in higher education relating to minority underrepresentation.

Table 2 shows the percentage of each minority group in the responding community college districts and the percentage in the change in their enrollment from 1984-1985.

**Table 2**  
Urban Community College Commission Study on Minority  
Representation Percentage of Minority Group  
Enrollment, Fall 1985

	<b>Percent of District Minority Enrollment</b>	<b>Percentage of Change From Fall 1984</b>
Asian American	18.6	- 1.0
Black American	52.4	- 6.7
Hispanic	20.9	- 1.7
Native American	1.7	- 11.1
Other	5.9	- 2.3

The figures reflect a small but clear decline in minority enrollment from 1984-1985, indicative of the overall percentage decline in minority participation in higher education present over the past two decades.

Data presented in Table 3 reinforce the fact that the percentage of minority educators, even in institutions with a majority of minority students remains below parity at many institutions. Despite the fact that composite minority enrollment approaches 65 percent, 75 percent of reporting institutions indicate that minority faculty constitute less than 50 percent of the faculty. Furthermore, 50 percent indicate that the number

**Table 3**  
Urban Community College Commission Study on Minority  
Representation Percent of Minorities in the Faculty,  
Staff, and Administration

	<b>0-20 Percent</b>	<b>20-40 Percent</b>	<b>Over 40 Percent</b>	<b>Total Institutions</b>
Faculty	8	4	3	15
Staff	2	4	9	15
Administration	5	4	6	15

of minority staff members is not at parity with the current minority population of the United States. Similar figures for administrative personnel indicate that while parity with the minority population appears to have been achieved at all but 33 percent of the institutions, only 40 percent of the institutions have a minority cohort of administrators which approaches parity with the majority minority student enrollment.

Expository comments provided in response to questions in the study requesting detailed information describe the decrease of minority enrollments in individual districts. The comments reinforce demographic and enrollment trends previously noted dealing with minority enrollment, retention, and socioeconomic status. Of critical importance are those which relate to the socioeconomic conditions of the service area. These comments indicate improved economic conditions leading to higher employment, decreased financial aid, the necessity of imposing enrollment fees or increased tuitions, and/or severe budgetary impacts as having had a strong negative impact on minority enrollment.

Other comments reinforce the importance of focused recruitment strategies to deal with the unique potentialities and problems of the urban environment and of the critical need for strong minority academic support services. The nature and extent of some such exemplary programs are discussed at greater length in the last section of this position paper.

## **RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND TRANSFER OF MINORITY STUDENTS**

Numerous issues confront urban community colleges as they endeavor to assure continued access and excellence to all of their constituencies, particularly ethnic and racial minority students. Among the most crucial of these issues are recruitment and retention of students, the recruitment, retention, and promotion of minority faculty and staff, program and curricular development, the role of the community college in relation to minority students, and research efforts to further expand both theoretical knowledge and practical applications of such knowledge concerning the status and welfare of minority students.

### **RECRUITMENT**

Flemming's comment in his article "Special Needs of Blacks and Other Minorities," which appears in Chickering's *The Modern American College*, 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," reflects a traditional and widely ac-

cepted conventional viewpoint concerning the access of students to all of higher education.

However, access in and of itself is not the most significant issue for community colleges, as community colleges enroll the most substantial number of minority students who further their education beyond the high school years. Instead, access becomes irrevocably linked with value added definitions of excellence and success that de-emphasize narrow determinants such as numbers of participants and stress the importance of what R.C. Richardson has defined as the measurable impact of the community experience on the lives of the individuals who come into contact with community college educational programming.

The overall impact of the public school experience on minority students, particularly the extensive drop-out rates, demands that community colleges focus extensively on articulation with the public schools. They must also form linkages with other civic and social organizations within the community that deal extensively with socially and economically disadvantaged individuals in order to retain and attract not only the conventionally aged 18-20 year old freshman college student but other individuals who display significant ability to benefit from the community college experience.

Precollegiate articulation efforts such as Community College of Baltimore's endeavors to work with each of five city high schools to plan for and ease the transition of high school students to college, Compton Community College's identification and orientation of potential honors students for the college as early as the junior high school years, J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College's focus on tenth-grade vocational students, South Mountain Community College's extensive precollegiate orientation program conducted in and through area high schools, and San Francisco Community College District's with San Francisco's urban universities are all representative examples of this major early identification/early orientation approach to identification, recruitment, and preparation of minority students for community college.

Most urban colleges have also realized the importance of recruiting minority students within and to the total environment of their communities. Many colleges employ minority recruiters who understand the needs, problems and expectations of minority students, are knowledgeable of the communities where they live and work, and who personally work with and through a variety of service and civic organizations to contact and inform individuals concerning the potential of community college education, serve as role models and mentors for the students while attending college, and assist them in university transition. Representative examples include the extensive outreach programs at South Mountain Community

College, San Diego College, Los Angeles Mission College, Laney College, San Francisco Community Colleges, and Nassau Community College.

In every case, the thrust of both precollegiate and community linkages is to assure meaningful access and opportunity to minority students throughout the institution, the first step in assuring persistence and the ultimate achievement of personally determined goals.

## RETENTION

In the past two decades, retention has replaced access as the predominant issue in open-door community colleges. Community college staff are aware that for a very high proportion of minority students, especially black and Hispanic students, the community college is the college of first choice. Moreover, there is awareness and deep concern that vestiges of institutional racism and socioeconomic status will stratify our institutions. Increasing concerns are expressed that the "open door" is at least partially closed, particularly to sophisticated, "elite" programs such as nursing, electronics, and high technology/engineering programs which frequently require either extensive preparation, specific prerequisites and/or high standardized test scores for admission. Finally, there is a strong awareness that attrition rates of black and Hispanic community college students remain high and that degree attainment and transfer rates to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions are low. Community colleges are concerned that the "open door" does not represent the "revolving door," and that they meet the responsibility to assure that every student has the resources and the support to meet "standards," acquire access to programs, "excel and succeed," as determined by a value-added definition, of excellence and success. Carefully planned and innovative retention strategies are the key to the achievement of this goal.

Nationally, three major factors have traditionally been associated with dropping out from school. Lack of financial resources, academic preparation, and sociocultural adjustment.

## FINANCIAL AID

Research has long documented a strong correlation between financial aid and access to higher education. Many students could not attend college without aid. Offering aid also impacts the student's decision concerning where to apply. Similarly, dollar amounts of aid affect institutional choice, ultimately increased aid tends to produce a differing composition of the student body. Finally, studies point to the lack of financial aid as the principal reason students consider dropping from school.

With the advent of the Reagan administration, concerted efforts to reduce funding for postsecondary education programs were initiated. Additionally, changes in eligibility requirements have made it more difficult for some students to receive financial grants and other forms of assistance. National Center for Education statistics point to a decline in the percentage of students receiving financial aid, to a drop in the percentage of students receiving the Pell grant, to a decrease in the amount of Pell grant awards, and to a smaller number and percentage of students receiving National Direct Student Loans. The impact of new initiatives such as Gramm-Rudman are yet to be fully felt and analyzed. All have had or are projected to have a more extensive impact on low-income and minority students than on the predominantly white middle class.

Given the disproportionate number of minority students at or below poverty income levels who are attending or desire to attend urban community colleges, the lack of adequate financial aid resources to support minority students is a critical barrier. When linked to the increasing tuition costs that many urban colleges are now being forced to impose, the lack of adequate financial aid looms as one of the most formidable barriers which community colleges face, both in assuring initial access and in aiding student retention.

High demand for funds, low grant availability, and the pragmatic need not to burden students from lower socioeconomic strata with unrealistic levels of debt require that community colleges address and formulate new strategies for obtaining and disbursing financial aid to students as a major thrust to increase retention.

## ACADEMIC PREPARATION

The predominant placement of minority students in vocational and general education programming instead of "academic, university preparatory" curriculums has been discussed previously. Poor preparation of incoming minority students has been found to be a key factor affecting student persistence by numerous authors, notably Alexander Astin. Community colleges *can respond to inadequate preparation* in a manner that has a direct influence on retention.

Three strategies proposed in the *Action Plan for the California Community Colleges, '79* illustrate key concepts that may be efficiently and effectively implemented. (1) extensive, proactive counseling and student services, (2) expanded support services and special programs, and (3) improved faculty, staff, and student awareness of minority students and their preferred modes of learning.

Counseling must begin at the high school level and continue through

the community college years. Through effective counseling, students can be made aware of course requirements, their own potentialities, the wide array of possibilities and alternatives available to them, the supportive services on campus that will help them, and structured decision-making and time-management skills that are compatible with their desires and objectives.

Greater development of supportive services and programming must extend throughout all areas and enterprises of the institution. Blake, in *Helping Minority Students Succeed*, points to four critical areas to assure that such programs succeed. (1) institutional commitment or the degree to which top administrative leaders demonstrate interest and support of a project, (2) inspired, imaginative, and innovative leadership, (3) program conceptualization or the degree to which project design is correlated and understood in the context of the complexity of the problem(s) being addressed; (4) the level of faculty participation in the project.

In a more elaborate retention paradigm, Anderson has suggested several guides which may be successfully used in minority retention. In addition to emphasizing factors already discussed, such as commitment from top college officials, alliances with feeder institutions, and proactive, comprehensively conceptualized and designed programs, he suggests that sound retention begins with a recruitment program. Such programs should be based upon an "ethically conducted recruitment program based upon documented characteristics of persisters," the need for thorough orientation, focused on the greatest areas of potential student frustration, i.e., finances, academic skill deficiencies, career plans, adjustment strategies, relevant, "consumer-oriented programs," and a developmental perspective focusing on value-added constraints of achievement and success.

A final component of utmost importance is the involvement of faculty, staff and students directly in retention efforts. Programs that involve faculty and other members of the college community, such as the use of minority faculty serving as role models for minority students and the involvement of "advanced" minority students in peer support and counseling have positive impacts on persistence and retention. In addition, programs that make faculty more aware of the values of various cultures and how such cultural values and differences may both impact approaches to learning and influence learning itself aid significantly in minority retention.

## **SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

Community colleges are highly complex, fluxing social systems. Many minority students face difficulty in "integrating" into this system and become frustrated in trying to adapt to the social environment which seems

to exist in much of higher education, including community colleges.

It remains an unfortunate fact that strong vestiges of racism exist throughout American society. Despite continuous efforts to eradicate discriminatory factors from community college campuses, the continued existence of such elements in the academic environment mar the capacity of minority students to succeed and for community colleges to achieve true excellence.

Therefore, community colleges must be careful to assure that extensive efforts are made to assure that cultural pluralism exists both in the administration of the institution and the implementation of the curriculum overall. Such steps as assuring meaningful minority representation on committees, adequate coverage and pictorial representation of minorities in institutional publications, implementation of rules and guidelines that reflect the cultural diversity, heritage, and values of minority students, and perhaps, most importantly, utilization of teaching materials and development of curriculum in which minority experiences are an integral part of all fields of study enhance the probability of understanding and positive response on the part of minority students.

Research also points out that academic achievement is highest for students who experience favorable faculty relations. The lack of parity in many urban community colleges in terms of faculty has already been noted. This lack of minority role models who can exhibit creativity, intellect, and talent represents a major problem. The impact may be diminished by the presence of sensitive and caring instructors of all races and backgrounds who have an understanding of the needs and cultures of the various students, who challenge all students to excel in the context of their personal needs, goals, and values, and who accord all students respect and meaningful assistance. To this end, community colleges must design programs and opportunities that will not only sensitize faculty to their leadership role in retention but afford them the opportunities to learn about minority cultures and values and also about the special problems that minority students face.

A third area of concern and controversy relates to the use of standardized tests and to minimum competency testing, now legislatively mandated in some states. Numerous educators argue that such tests exhibit cultural biases, that they lack substantiated validity for minority groups, and that results frequently lead to the misclassification and exclusion of minority students.

An articulate condemnation of minimum-competency testing by Gerald Bracey, director of research, evaluation, and testing for the state of Virginia, as reported by Linda Darling-Hammond in *Equality and Excellence. The Educational Status of Black Americans*, asserts that such tests

do not "measure the conceptual preparation or performance abilities of students, that the tests are not 'basic' and do not enable the development of higher order skills, and that they 'force teachers to regress even more than usual into an ineffectual, didactic mode of teaching' . . ." Bracey alleges minimum-competency testing programs are racist in impact because they emphasize "the teaching of discrete, obsolete skills to those students who most need an enriched program of instruction."

The potential benefits and detriments of standardized testing and minimum competency testing as approaches to improving educational quality must, at the very least, be evaluated carefully in the context of such elements as their impact on pedagogical strategies, their influence on subsequent student options, and, most importantly, in terms of what they measure in comparison to desired "educational behavior." Community colleges should use extreme care to assure that standardized testing or minimum-competency testing is never *the single determinant of access to higher education* or *the sole determinant of success*. In addition, community colleges that choose or are obligated to use standardized tests or minimum-competency tests should structure a program of supportive services to assure that such tests are used in appropriate ways and that minority students receive assistance in test-taking skills and procedures.

Another major area which community colleges must address concerns the need to be certain that all students have the opportunity to be involved in the mainstream of college life. Research indicates that students who become involved in campus activities achieve greater academic performance and are more likely to persist. Furthermore, the interpersonal skills learned in extracurricular activities enhance the students' abilities to deal with the complex bureaucratic hierarchy present in any complex institution.

Community colleges face the problem that students frequently embrace multiple roles and lead "dual lives" as they move from the community college environment to their homes, families, and jobs. Community colleges must be certain that minority cultural programs which appeal to persons of varying needs and interests are encouraged and integrated into the overall fabric of the service area. Moreover, community colleges must assure that the overall program of extracurricular events is relevant and interwoven throughout the college and the service area to insure maximum persistence and retention.

### **MINORITY STUDENT TRANSFER TO FOUR-YEAR BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTIONS**

Previous indication has been made of the intertwined nature of recruitment and retention strategies and the need for increased retention of



minority students at every stage of the educational pipeline. While few, if any, community college spokespersons would argue that minority student transfer should be the sole or even the primary criterion upon which the success of community colleges should be evaluated, none would disagree that one major value-added dimension which community colleges must meet with excellence is the transfer of minority students to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

The importance of increasing success in this area is heightened by community college awareness that they are the crucial points of access for many students desirous of pursuing higher education opportunities. Indeed, community colleges are the major points of entry for minority and low-income students, for the new immigrants to the United States, and for thousands of working men and women.

In the past five years, community colleges have become increasingly aware of the many problems surrounding the transfer function. Many transfer and articulation processes within states and between institutions remain erratic or nonexistent. Coordinated curricula and equivalent competencies between community college and university courses remain exceptions, not the rule. University course equivalences, degree requirements, and support services remain arcane mysteries to "junior level" community college transfers because many baccalaureate degree granting institutions focus orientation programs on freshman students. Yet other students have traditionally been locked into vocational curricula because of a lack of career advisement and a dearth of curricular ladders between high schools, community colleges, and baccalaureate degree granting institutions. All of these factors impact minorities disproportionately.

A major impetus to the study of variables effecting transfer to the university has been the Ford Foundation Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program. Now in its third year of operation, the program represents one portion of a multimillion dollar Ford Foundation commitment to support policy studies and college efforts to study transfer and articulation, develop advocacy efforts for low-income and minority students, and mainstream new research efforts into the curriculum.

Diverse approaches to the problem of transfer opportunities for minorities have been developed and are now evolving and being defined. Representative examples include Community College of Philadelphia's reformulated transfer program, piloting work in the development of curricular ladders at Cayuñoga Community College, Laney College's emphasis on programs to facilitate articulation and student transfer, Los Angeles City College's integrated academic, skill, and counseling courses, Miami Dade's continuing work with an integrated curriculum designed to improve cognitive and effective skills, and South Mountain Community College's

interinstitutional orientation and mentoring experiences, and San Francisco Community College District's *Transfer Opportunities Program and Services (TOPS)*.

These multiple thrusts to improve transfer education will result in greater adeptness and efficiency in improving minority transfer rates in years to come and hopefully to increased social, economic, and educational parity for all low-income and minority groups in the United States. They will also provide colleges with a rich pool of models from which to formulate their own programs.

### **FACULTY/PROFESSIONAL STAFF RECRUITMENT**

Three important considerations regarding minority faculty have been noted in earlier portions of this paper. (1) significant underrepresentation of minority faculty at all levels of education, including community colleges and universities, (2) a gradual decrease in the number and percentage of minority faculty who are entering or remaining in the educational profession at all levels, and (3) the vital role that faculty, especially minority faculty, play in enhancing minority student retention, persistence, and achievement of academic goals.

Given the dramatic changes that are now taking place in the education profession, it is imperative that community colleges take innovative and thoughtful steps to maximize minority participation in both teaching and administration at the community college level.

The factors impacting faculty and professional staff are similar at all levels within education. In general, the low salaries and low prestige associated with teaching positions, increasingly successful working environments, and societal changes that have broadened the professional and economic horizons for all potential teachers have major ramifications for urban community colleges.

A major study conducted in Arizona under the auspices of the Arizona Association of Chicanos for Higher Education developed an extensive list of issues impacting Chicanos and Chicano higher education in the State of Arizona. Although addressed to the Chicano situation in Arizona, these issues are broadly representative of conditions influencing minority faculty and staff recruitment and retention in other states and throughout numerous colleges. They include: underrepresentation of minority faculty and staff, a dearth or undervaluation of theoretical and applied research projects by minority staff relating to the status and success of minority students, diametrically opposed trends toward either extremely "casual" or extremely "literal" interpretation of federal and institutional affirmative action laws or plans, rather than systematic endeavors to adhere to the

spirit and/or intent of such policies; a lack of recognition of the extensive demands placed on minority faculty members in terms of counseling and working with minority students; the lack of cohesive, well-thought out plans for recruitment of new minority faculty and administrators; the massive use of visiting staff, drawn from community pools of professionals in which minorities are also disproportionately underrepresented; an unrecognized need for internship programs to introduce minority faculty members to other opportunities in community college/higher education; and the lack of programs that recognize achievement or contributions to institutions relating to minority issues and concerns.

Urban community colleges have recognized and addressed, to varying degrees, many of the aforementioned concerns. However, only through continued action to create a positive environment can community colleges hope to attract the best and brightest of minority professionals to consideration of teaching and administration. They must enhance salaries, working conditions, and opportunities for advancement within their institutions. Furthermore, they must increase the rewards for contributing to the advancement of the institutions through the enhancement of both individual minority cultures and institutional cultural pluralism.

One other major concern regarding the recruitment of qualified minorities to the urban community college must be mentioned, although its immediate impact on the community college remains undefined at this point in time. That issue is competency testing for admission to or continuance in the teaching profession. Currently, some 30 states have mandated some form of competency testing for teachers. The concept is under active consideration in twelve others. Many of these states propose achieving minimal competency as determined by standardized tests as a requirement to enter the teaching profession despite the fact that current research shows no consistent relationship or correlation between test scores and minimal classroom competency.

Given the lack of correlation between test scores and later classroom performance and the fact that minority failure rates on these standardized competency tests already implemented are ranging from two to ten times as high as those for whites taking the same tests, the differential results are a cause of special concern. The elimination of sorely needed minority teachers from the entry-level teaching force, without adequate rationale at a time when the proportion of minority students is growing rapidly, must surely be at the risk of perpetuating disparities and inequities in the public school environment. Ultimately the results of these inequities and the disproportionately small cohort of minority educators will have significant impact on community colleges and all institutions of higher education. For this reason, community colleges and community college

educators must form positive educational linkages to challenge improper and potentially discriminatory procedures and to forge new systems and learning experiences to enhance the ability of college of education students to cope with standardized testing.

## PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The importance of positive academic experiences has been highlighted as a significant component of the retention experience. However, the importance of providing minority students with academic and cultural activities which incorporate, inculcate and enhance the minority experience can not be overstated.

Urban community colleges have long been aware of the "generation gaps" among the 18-20 year-old, traditional student, the middle-age worker, and the mature adults present on their campuses. Many instructors have addressed generic adaptations that will allow all to succeed despite their position in the life cycle.

In a like manner, community colleges have become aware of the gender gap and have moved to make meaningful accommodations for both returning male and female students who face special problems in adapting to the modern community college campus.

It is also important for community colleges to realize that there may also be significant variances among cultures and to make similar positive adaptations.

Being "nontraditional" in two or even all three areas geometrically increases the complexity of meaningful adaptation and integration into the college environment. For example, the mature, returning worker may well have been more damaged by the elimination of obsolete skills through technological change than a younger worker. If the returning worker is also female, additional problems may emerge. If the mature, female, returning worker is also a minority, staff or environmental insensitivities to cultural needs may further exacerbate meaningful adjustment and accomplishment.

Two approaches, including the development of a culturally pluralistic approach to curriculum development and the development of specially designed liberal arts packages for various ethnic and minority groups may be considered as vital components for providing an intellectually and personally satisfying environment for minority students.

Finally, community colleges must undertake the responsibility of assisting minority students and minority communities in developing the leadership they need to maintain and enhance the overall quality of life. To this end, community colleges should consider developing, implement

ing, and expanding special courses and training packages dealing with areas such as leadership and community organization.

## COMMUNITY LINKAGES

Urban community colleges have long recognized that the diversity and depth of the minority community parallels that of the colleges themselves and have realized the critical importance of establishing positive linkages and close working relationships with the minority community.

Overall educational quality and life experience for minority students at urban community colleges can be particularly enhanced by active urban community college/minority community linkages in the following areas. (1) the recruitment and retention of minority students, (2) determining faculty interests and commitments and articulating these to the research and service needs of the community; (3) assuring that there is ongoing, continuous dialogue between influential community leaders and members of the college administration and staff, and (4) concrete demonstrations and reports concerning community college commitments and projects to meet specific minority community needs.

Recognition and comprehensive support of the minority community's role as a critical part of the overall taxpaying community and the college's unique ability to satisfy longstanding educational, social, and economic aspirations of the minority community will produce educational and economic enhancements for the entire community.

## RESEARCH

For many years, community college leaders relied heavily on major research institution "findings" regarding their students, staff, and general college operations. Currently, a shift in this pattern has begun to develop as community colleges express a willingness and a commitment to perform their own institutional research on themselves, their constituents, and the environments in which they exist.

The most outstanding characteristic of research dealing with minority students is its paucity. The lack of a database of information for guiding research policy, and programming for minority students and cultures is a critical concern that urban community colleges must begin to address. Long-term efforts to support applied research into the diverse nature of ethnic minorities and the minority community from which to establish reliable data on minority students and to develop relevant policy studies must be undertaken if community colleges are to meet their vital commitment to successful programs of recruitment and retention and to assist

minority students in the achievement of their goals, improvement of their quality of life, and enhancement of the socioeconomic structure of our country.

**Commission on Urban Community Colleges  
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges  
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