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Communicating Diversity in Higher Education

DIVERSITY DIGEST

INSIDE DIVERSITY DIGEST

The Right to Learn and the Pathways to College Network

By Mark Giles, editor, Diversity Digest, *and director, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives*

"The mission of the Pathways to College Network is to focus research-based knowledge and resources on improving college preparation, access, and success for underserved populations, including low-income, underrepresented minority, and first-generation students" (www.pathwaystocollege.net). With that clear and focused statement, the Pathways to College Network has set a powerful national education agenda that is socially responsive, transformative, and action-oriented.

Carol Geary Schneider, president, AAC&U

In June 2003, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) joined the Pathways as a lead partner. Carol Geary Schneider, president of AAC&U, explained AAC&U's commitment to supporting viable pathways to college for all students: "As we articulated in a recent statement issued after the Supreme Court's decisions on affirmative action, higher education must take on an expanded role in our nation's ongoing quest for equal opportunity. We must redouble our efforts to work in partnership with primary and secondary educators to improve the quality of educational outcomes for all the nation's children, especially those who have been underserved by the system."

Various educational, civic, and philanthropic partners across the nation are actively engaged with and fully committed to the values, principles, and mission of Pathways. Indeed, several major educational funding organizations support Pathways and its efforts to help underserved students gain access to and find success in college. In turn, those postsecondary experiences hold the promise of opening the doors to greater earning potential, of broadening participation in society, and of ending the cycle of inadequate schooling and limited life opportunities faced by many underserved students.

The Pathways to College Network's major policy report, *A Shared Agenda: A Leadership Challenge to Improve College Access and Success,* outlines six major principles that guide action for teachers, researchers, leaders, policy makers, and community members involved with K-12 and higher education. The report is more than a simple call to action; it is a flexible and workable blueprint for pedagogical, institutional, and operational changes that will improve education for underserved and marginalized students.

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Designing Pathways to a Four-Year Degree

By Alberto F. Cabrera, professor, department of Educational Administration, WISCAPE senior researcher at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and member of the Research Scholars Panel, Pathways to College Network; Kurt R. Burkum, graduate research assistant & doctoral student, Center for the Study of Higher Education, Pennsylvania State University; and Steven M. La Nasa, visiting assistant professor, School of Education, University of Missouri-Kansas City

Alberto F. Cabrera

PROVIDING ACCESS TO A MYRIAD OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS, THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE REMAINS THE PROVERBIAL STEPPING-STONE TO A BETTER LIFE. AS EARLY AS THE 1960S, FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS RECOGNIZED THAT COMPLETION OF A FOUR-YEAR DEGREE COULD BE AN INSURMOUNTABLE STEP FOR INDIVIDUALS FROM DISADVANTAGED SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS. STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS SUCH AS CHAPTER I, TRIO, AND GEAR-UP RECOGNIZE THAT ACADEMIC PREPARATION, AWARENESS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLEGE, AND ASSISTANCE IN COMPLETING THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS ARE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS WHOSE PARENTS ARE NOT COLLEGE-EDUCATED.

As helpful as these need-based programs have been in facilitating access to and success in college, they do not appear to explain fully why low-income students enroll in college. Nor do they explain why low-income students persist once enrolled. In addition to a student's socioeconomic background, a host of other factors affect whether students enroll. These factors include:

- parental expectations, support and encouragement from family, high school friends, and teachers;
- educational and occupational aspirations which should be developing by the ninth grade;
- high school experiences;
- high school academic resources;
- access to information about college offerings;
- access to and understanding of information about financial aid;
- preparation for entrance exams;
- the type of first institution attended;
- enrollment patterns;
- the nature and kind of remediation;
- curricular patterns;
- collegiate experiences;
- performance in college; and
- family responsibilities.

The High School Sophomore Cohort of 1980

We studied the high school sophomore cohort of 1980 to understand why postsecondary attendance patterns differ markedly between socioeconomically disadvantaged students and their better-off peers. This article is a summary of the findings. (Complete information, including references, can be found in the online file cited at the end of this article.)

The cohort followed nine different pathways to a four-year degree. These paths were determined by the academic resources secured in high school and the first type of postsecondary institution attended. The chance to secure a four-year degree varies in relation to the particular pathway followed.

The pathway most likely to lead to a four-year degree is one defined by acquiring high academic resources in high school and entering a four-year institution upon high school completion. Those who followed this path had a 78 percent chance of graduating within eleven years.

Students with the highest socioeconomic status (SES) followed this pathway, resulting in an 81 percent graduation rate.

Students with the lowest socioeconomic status journeyed on a pathway defined by moderate academic resources and enrollment in a two-year institution. Only 3.3 percent of these students went on to earn a four-year degree.

Transfer

Forty percent of the high school sophomore cohort of 1980 first entered a community college. Of them, 29 percent transferred to a four-year institution within eleven years. When examining the socioeconomic background of the students, our analyses suggest a stratification pattern whereby:

- Fifty percent of students with the lowest socioeconomic status first enter a community college, while only 17 percent of them eventually transfer to a four-year institution.
- Thirty percent of all students with the highest socioeconomic status first enter a community college, and 37 percent of them eventually transfer.
- Transfer decisions are affected most by academic resources, degree aspirations, college courses in math and sciences, and educational loans, and by whether students have children while attending community college.

Degree Completion

Thirty-five percent of the members of the high school sophomore cohort of 1980 obtained at least a bachelor's degree by 1993. When the socioeconomic background of the students is examined, our analyses suggest a stratification pattern whereby:

- Lowest-SES students have a 13 percent chance of graduating within eleven years. The graduation rate for highest-SES students is 57 percent.
- Degree completion is affected dramatically by SES, academic resources, degree aspirations, enrollment patterns, college courses in math and sciences, and financial aid, and by whether students have children while attending college.

Implications

Helping students plan for college should begin in grade school. Interventions designed to advance college aspirations and preparation should take at least three groups into account: students, their families, and K-12 school personnel. Community colleges and four-year institutions can also help educate students and their parents about the benefits associated with college degree completion. They can advise students and parents about K-12 curricular choices that prepare students for college. College personnel can best provide information about the college application process, including financial aid. Summer camps, summer bridge programs, and targeted visits by college representatives also can help eleventh- and twelfth-graders learn more about college. Making these opportunities available as early as the eighth grade is one way to increase awareness of college, particularly among lowest-SES students and their families.

The curriculum is at the heart of academic preparation for college (Adelman, 1999). Currently, policies geared toward securing academic resources for college-level work during the last few years of high school are inadequate. Instead, academic preparation for college should begin as early as the eighth grade. Our results suggest that a rigorous curriculum should foster the development of the critical competencies, values, and skills needed for collegiate work. Our research indicated that the competencies acquired through math and science courses made a difference for members of the 1980 cohort by increasing their chances of transferring and eventually earning a col-

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COMMUNICATION

Most new research—particularly research that debunks myths or challenges common perceptions—will have value to a reporter, especially if it relates to an issue that is currently in the news. Research like that featured in the high school sophomore cohort of 1980 study may be of interest to reporters seeking new angles for stories around the time of college admissions or at the beginning of the college year. If you have research about your own students or about programs designed to address the challenges faced by low-SES students, consider pitching a story at these times of year. To make the story more appealing to reporters, provide both the research data and specific stories of individual students who have overcome some of the challenges identified in the research. Reporters want to cover new research, but they also always like to put a "personal" face on whatever research findings they are highlighting.

Preparing Students to Succeed in Broad Access Postsecondary Institutions

By Michael W. Kirst, professor of education and business administration, Stanford University, and member of the Research Scholars Panel, Pathways to College Network

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES THAT DELIBERATELY EDUCATE A BROADER RANGE OF STUDENTS ARE FINDING THEMSELVES IN A QUAGMIRE. THEY ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING DEMOCRATIC ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS, BUT THEY ARE PLAGUED BY THE INADEQUATE PREPARATION OF STUDENTS, HIGH LEVELS OF REMEDIATION, AND LOW RATES OF COLLEGE COMPLETION. THESE PROBLEMS ARE EXACERBATED BY A SYSTEMIC DISCONNECT BETWEEN K-12 AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION.

Michael W. Kirst

In these broad access schools, neither the students nor their teachers have sufficient knowledge about college admissions standards or curricular expectations. The problem is compounded when high school students, especially the most economically disadvantaged, receive inadequate counseling and a curriculum that does not prepare them for college-level work.

Attempts to solve these problems sector by sector have clearly failed. What is needed now is a collective commitment between K-12 and postsecondary institutions to improve student outcomes. By focusing systematically on how to create effective pathways for students, some of these troubling obstacles to student success can begin to be addressed.

The Bridge Project

Stanford University's Bridge Project, a six-year national study begun in 1996, is providing insights about this systemic approach to preparing students for college-level work. Researchers from the project interviewed people at state agencies, universities, and community colleges in six states: California, Illinois, Georgia, Maryland, Oregon, and Texas. They also interviewed high school teachers, counselors, and administrators, surveyed high school students and their parents, and talked with groups of high school and community college students.

What the Bridge Project discovered was that at the state level, substantial progress has occurred in two areas. There is consensus now about what students should know and what they are able to do in the K-12 grades; there is also consensus about how to align standards, assessments, textbook selection, and accountability measures at the K-12 level. However, the lack of continuity in content, assessment, and standards between postsecondary and K-12 systems remains a serious problem. Unless we close this standards gap and align K-16 policies, secondary schools will continue to fail to prepare graduates for higher education. As long as the K-12 landscape is marked by a hodgepodge of standards and tests rather than a coherent learning strategy, high levels of remediation at colleges are inevitable.

Since high school counselors are occasionally ill-informed about college admissions standards, they sometimes fail to warn students who have passed low-level exit exams that skipping math in their senior year will leave them unprepared for college.

Broad access college students pay the highest price: Because the standards from their high schools are generally low, they often fail to meet postsecondary expectations for college readiness. For example, since high school counselors are occasionally ill-informed about college admissions standards, they sometimes fail to warn students who have passed low-level exit exams that skipping math in their senior year will leave them unprepared for college.

New Directions

Shifting the focus of local, state, and federal programs from access to success is the first step toward improving policies that affect underserved students. For the past fifty years, it has made sense for the United States to concentrate its postsecondary education policies on opening the doors to college. These policies have a largely positive impact. However, access without success is not opportunity: True

college opportunity is only possible when all students have a fair chance to succeed.

Specific Steps

- *Examine the relationship between the content of postsecondary education placement exams and K-12 exit-level standards and assessments to determine if more compatibility is possible.* K-12 standards and assessments that are aligned with those of postsecondary education are effective only if they are of high quality. Examples of high-quality K-12 exams are the New York Regents Exam, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, the California Standards Tests, and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills.
- *Statewide high school assessments should be diagnostic in nature, and should indicate to students if their scores meet or exceed the levels for college preparation or if remediation is needed.* Appropriate K-12 state assessments could be used as placement factors by public postsecondary institutions. The California State University system has dropped its own placement test and now uses the K-12 standards test. Postsecondary institutions can indicate when college remediation is necessary by setting performance levels on statewide high school exams. If these remediation concerns are communicated to high school juniors, students can spend their senior year in high school preparing for postsecondary education.
- *Review the extent to which postsecondary education placement exams for reliability, validity, and efficacy promote teaching for understanding.* This includes scrutiny of assessments developed by individual campuses, departments, and faculty. Data about the efficacy of placement procedures need to be maintained and used to inform policy and programming decisions.
- *Sequence undergraduate general education requirements so that appropriate senior-year high school courses are linked to postsecondary general education courses.*
- *Expand successful dual or concurrent enrollment programs between high schools and colleges to include all students, not just traditionally "college-bound" ones.* Many students are not comfortable socially or emotionally in high school environments, while others complete their schools' highest-level courses as sophomores and juniors and have trouble finding appropriately challenging courses as seniors.
- *Collect and connect data from K-16 education sectors.* This can include, for example, data on the relationship between student course-taking patterns in high school and the need for remedial work, or longitudinal data on what happens to students after they complete remedial-level coursework.

Conclusion

These recommendations will be easier to implement, and more effective, if policymaking and oversight is coordinated for K-16 education. Most states currently discourage K-16 policy makers by having separate K-12 and higher education legislative committees and state agencies. These implicit barriers inhibit joint policy making and communication on issues such as funding, research, student learning (curriculum, standards, and assessment), matriculation and transfer, teacher training and professional development, and accountability. While every state and region needs to have its own form of governance, many integrative models can be created.

Implementing these recommendations will not magically eliminate all of the causes of inadequate college preparation. Nevertheless, such steps can create a more equitable educational experience for all students, providing more students with the opportunity to get the preparation they need to succeed in college. ■

Designing Pathways

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lege degree. Current emphasis on the use of testing to hold elementary and secondary institutions accountable will be successful only if the tests themselves are valid measures of collegiate academic resources (National Research Council, 1999). Without this orientation, the testing regime will produce countless children who are able to answer test questions but unable to perform successfully in college.

The Power of Research

Research can be a powerful vehicle for illuminating pathways that can lead to college success. Our study provided invaluable insights about factors that influence college readiness and degree completion. By combining our findings with other studies of how to enhance student learning we can begin to close the troubling gaps in degree attainment and make equal educational opportunity more than just a dream. ■

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African-American Student Achievement in Historically Black Colleges and Universities

By M. Christopher Brown II, Ph.D., executive director and chief research scientist at the Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute

Christopher Brown II

RECENT DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH HAS REVEALED THAT STUDENTS FROM MINORITY ETHNIC AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS ARE ALREADY THE MAJORITY IN CALIFORNIA, NEW MEXICO, MISSISSIPPI, AND LOUISIANA PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE SAME IS TRUE IN MANY URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN OTHER STATES. THE TASK OF PREPARING THESE STUDENTS TO BE PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS WILL FALL ON MANY TYPES OF POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS A DEARTH OF DISCOURSE ABOUT NATIVE-AMERICAN, MEXICAN, HISPANIC, AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS WHO ATTEND TRIBAL COLLEGES, HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTIONS, AND HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, RESPECTIVELY. WE SHOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT HOW THESE PARTICULAR GROUPS OF STUDENTS PERFORM IN AND ARE SERVED BY THESE TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT SUCCESS AT HISTORICALLY BLACK INSTITUTIONS? WHICH PROGRAMS OR INITIATIVES AT THESE INSTITUTIONS PROMOTE ACHIEVEMENT?

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are institutions founded prior to 1964 to provide collegiate education to African Americans (Brown and Freeman, 2004). Currently, there are 105 public, private, four-year, and two-year historically black colleges and universities in the United States. In addition to the 105 HBCUs, there are more than fifty predominantly black institutions. Predominantly black colleges and universities are institutions that were not founded primarily for African Americans but have greater than 50 percent black student enrollment.

Like other American postsecondary institutions, historically black colleges and universities vary widely in size, curriculum specializations, and a host of other characteristics. HBCUs are distinctive, however, in their historic role providing postsecondary education for African Americans during the era of legal educational segregation. Understanding the fundamental characteristics of historically black colleges is a prerequisite for a meaningful discussion of equity and access issues in higher education. On the one hand, historically black colleges serve to develop, create, and convey advanced knowledge. In this way, they transmit and transform a society's culture while educating its citizens. On the other, these institutions ensure that growing numbers of African Americans will be competent to serve as leaders and productive contributors to society.

Recent Data Trends

Data about African-American student achievement at the beginning of the twenty-first century reveal mixed progress. An analysis of the decade from 1990 to 2000 shows that African Americans are proportionately making great strides in college enrollment and degree attainment. During that decade, African Americans took standardized college entrance exams, attended institutions of higher learning, and fulfilled the academic demands for degree conferment at the highest rates in history. Such progress is largely a function of increased access to educational settings.

These academic achievements, however, have not lessened the continued gap between African Americans and whites in college enrollment and college completion. This gap is determined by the pathways through which students get to college and by their ability to navigate those academic pathways.

The findings reveal that African Americans are attending traditionally

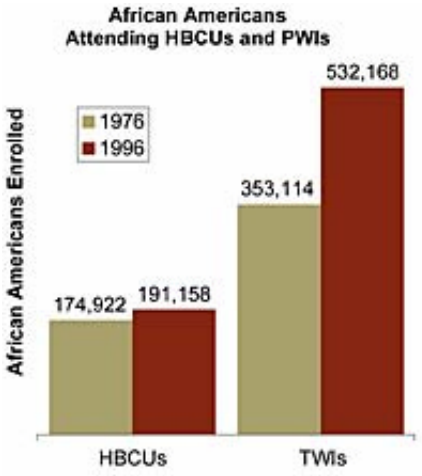

Figure 1

white institutions (TWIs) at higher rates than they are attending HBCUs. Moreover, whether they choose TWIs or HBCUs, African Americans are opting to attend private institutions. (See figures 1 and 2.)

Status and Trends in the Education of Blacks (2003) revealed that of 1,730,318 African Americans attending colleges and universities, 13.1 percent attended HBCUs in the fall of 2000. Most notably, HBCUs conferred a statistically significant percentage of the bachelor's degrees earned by African Americans. African Americans received about one-fourth of the total number of bachelor's degrees awarded in the U.S. A comparison between the earlier data from the Nettles study (1996) and the more recent data of the *Status and Trends* study (2003) suggests that while African Americans are attending private TWIs at increased rates, they are not completing their degrees at TWIs at the same rate as those attending HBCUs. In effect, HBCUs continue to play an important role in graduating African-American students.

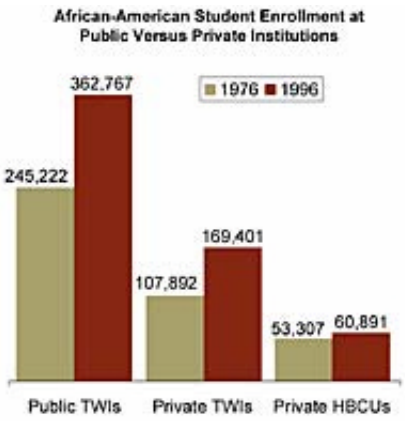

Figure 2

Institutional Models

Despite increasing enrollments of African-American students at institutions other than HBCUs, race-based hostilities continue to surface on white-majority campuses. In fact, the negative experiences that many African-American students encounter on some predominantly white campuses can potentially have injurious effects. By contrast, as Roebuck and Murty (1993) assert, "HBCUs, unlike other colleges, are united in a mission to meet the educational and emotional needs of black students." They further suggest that "There is also a general level of satisfaction and camaraderie among black students at black schools that is not found among black students on white campuses." However, the mere existence of intragroup racial homogeneity alone does not guarantee academic success. Like all institutions, HBCUs must focus on high-quality teaching, improve student-professor contact hours, and abolish institutional policies and practices that hinder student achievement.

The Freshman Year Initiative (FYI) at Fayetteville State University in North Carolina is a prime example of an institutional effort to encourage student success. Implemented in 1996 and coordinated through the University College, The Freshman Year Initiative is a comprehensive program of support designed to improve the academic success of freshmen. University College is primarily responsible for working with freshmen to ensure their successful transition into the upper divisions of the institution. Several units within the University College are directly involved in FYI: the Advisement/ Mentoring Office, the Freshman Seminar Program, Student Support Services, the Mathematics Laboratory, and the Writing Center. One-year retention rates have increased since FYI was implemented, and the freshman class that entered in 1996 is on track to have one of the best (if not the best) four-year graduation rates since these data have been recorded at the institution.

Conclusion

To achieve improved results for African-American students, wherever they are educated, researchers, policy makers, and practitioners must focus on efforts that make meaningful, long-term improvements at colleges while also targeting programs toward individual students. Coordinated institutional initiatives can assist particular students in areas where gaps in achievement are most pronounced. Systemic activities at historically black universities and other institutions with special populations are not a replacement for other diversity or equity activities that help predominantly white institutions recruit, retain, and educate African-American students. HBCUs can clearly serve as a resource for predominantly white institutions as they seek to strengthen society by educating increasing numbers of African-American students. The facts could not be clearer; HBCUs generate achievement and success for African-American students. All of higher education can learn from their legacy. ■

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Communications: The Key to Making Change

During its first three years, the Pathways to College Network focused its work on identifying, compiling, and synthesizing effective policies and practices that improve college access and success. The recently released report, *A Shared Agenda: A Leadership Challenge to Improve College Access and Success,* featured these policies and practices and articulated a set of principles to guide future reforms.

While this effort was a crucial first step, Pathways leaders recognize that in the next year they will need to focus almost exclusively on communications efforts. To affect real students and real schools, and to generate sustainable, systemic change, Pathways leaders will need to persuade policy makers, education leaders, and teachers to implement research-based practices like those summarized in *A Shared Agenda*.

Using what experts refer to as "social marketing," Pathways leaders will direct the project's communications efforts toward both educational "providers" (i.e., teachers, policy makers, school leaders, and funders) and educational "consumers" (i.e., students and their families). Communications efforts over the coming years will work to create the political will to implement the *Shared Agenda* recommendations and to motivate students and their families to engage more actively in the educational system and in college-preparatory activities.

Diversity M

Wisconsin

On March 25, approximately fifty college students at Edgewood College took time out of their day to talk candidly about race. The forum, sponsored by senior Jocelynn Hosea-Davis, came in response to a recent incident in which she and three friends, all of them African American, were denied admission to a college fitness center by the center's director when they could not produce their student identification. Hosea-Davis and her friends suggested in a campus e-mail that the director's action may have been racially motivated, after they saw him admit a white staff member without her ID.

The college newspaper further stirred controversy when an editorial and a letter to the editor suggested black students were being overly sensitive. After two hours of dialogue, the "barriers between people of different races eased a bit" as students engaged with each other and agreed to find ways to improve the campus climate for all students.

"Edgewood Students Discuss Race Relations," by Karen Rivedal, *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 26, 2004.

Missouri

Over 700 students walked out of Clayton High School on May 18, 2004 to show support for continuing the desegregation program in St. Louis County. The walkout came a day after the fiftieth anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that declared separate schools unequal. The Clayton and Mehlville school boards have been debating the future of voluntary desegregation programs, which are threatened by decreasing state funds. One student involved in the protest said, "Diversity is key. . . . When we leave Clayton High School, everything is not white. Everything is not black. . . . The voluntary student transfer program has let students be exposed to things they would not normally see, not just different ethnic groups but students from different economic levels." Another student commented, "I definitely think this had an impact. . . . It made us feel we had a voice, that we could have an influence." The three Clayton students who led the protest said they decided to organize the walkout to make other students more aware of the school boards' discussions. Students spread the news of the walkout through instant messaging, e-mails, and phone calls. During the protest, a petition of support for the desegregation program was circulated and 600 signatures were collected.

"Students Stand Up for Diversity," by Carolyn Bower, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 22, 2004.

edia Watch

Connecticut

More than 100 high school students around New Haven recently attended "Moving Beyond Awareness to Action: Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges," a special session of the Anti-Defamation League's World of Difference Institute. The students who participated in the program, which was held at the Jewish Community Center of Greater New Haven, first met during a summer retreat at Quinnipiac University. The teens gathered eight times during the school year to learn about and discuss diversity issues. The World of Difference program focused on breaking down stereotypes and fighting racism and discrimination. Students presented essays and poems on diversity and shared their personal experiences with the group. Because of this program, many students have formed lasting friendships with one another and have been empowered to advocate for diversity in their schools and communities.

"ADL Program Brings Students Together to Fight Prejudice," by Stacy Dresner, *Jewish Ledger*, May 28, 2004.

Florida

Staking a claim in diversity education, students at Western High School in Davie, Florida, created PRIDE—Promoting Relationships In Diversity Education—a multicultural club founded to help new foreign-born students and their parents adjust to the school system, culture, and country. Paola Urrea, a Colombia-born teenager, wanted to make sure her experiences were not repeated. When she enrolled at Western High School in 2000, school administrators and guidance counselors chose her classes without consulting her. Only weeks before graduation, she discovered that she had not been taking the courses required for college. To make sure others will not fall through the cracks, PRIDE members provide advice on college-preparatory courses, gather information on scholarships and deadlines for college entrance exams, and organize community seminars to help families survive in the public school system. Several members of PRIDE said that building new relationships is vital to overcoming the initial feelings of isolation and homesickness experienced by many recent immigrants.

"Immigrant Students Form Two Organizations to Ensure the Best Possible Preparation for College," by C. Ron Allen, *Weston Edition*, March 26, 2004.

Making Diversity News

What Is Social Marketing?

Social marketing is a term that describes the planning and implementation of programs designed to bring about social change. It uses commercial marketing techniques to encourage a target audience to take social action to improve their personal welfare and that of their community.

Strategies for Success

Pathways plans to implement a variety of strategies designed to achieve its communications goals. It will create and disseminate resources and toolboxes tailored to key stakeholder groups, along with clear agendas for action. Issue-oriented newsletters will introduce constituents to the implications of key research in the areas of K-12 Education, Outreach Programs, College Success and Achievement, Family/Community Involvement, and Financial Aid.

Pathways partners will also plan visits with key media opinion leaders and will create media kits, including sample op-eds and letters to the editor, that local constituents can tailor to their own audiences. Additionally, Pathways will redesign its Web site to ensure easy navigability and to incorporate a "newsroom" to serve as a resource for media professionals.

Linking Student Support with Student Success: The Posse Foundation

By Deborah Bial, president and founder of The Posse Foundation

THE POSSE FOUNDATION IS A COLLEGE ACCESS AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM THAT IDENTIFIES, RECRUITS, AND SELECTS STUDENT LEADERS FROM PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS AND SENDS THEM IN SMALL COHORT GROUPS, CALLED POSSES, TO TOP COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. THE GOAL IS TO INCREASE THE ACCESS AND SUCCESS OF UNDERSERVED STUDENTS AT LEADING INSTITUTIONS.

Photo courtesy of Posse Foundation

Posse started in New York City in 1989 after one student said to me that he never would have dropped out of college if he had his "posse" with him. It seemed like an incredibly simple idea: Why not send a tightly linked team of students, or a posse, to college? Urban students who experience the culture shock of an out-of-state campus would then have a built-in support system.

The Scholars are succeeding and graduating at a rate of over 90 percent, demonstrating a direct link between access and success.

Vanderbilt University became the first institution to take a chance on the Posse program, which had no history or record of accomplishment at that time. Fifteen years later, The Posse Foundation has twenty partner colleges and universities and a stellar record of success, with nearly 1,000 Posse Scholars graduated or currently enrolled. These young people have won over $85 million in leadership and merit scholarships from Posse partner colleges. Most importantly, the Scholars are succeeding and graduating at a rate of over 90 percent, demonstrating a direct link between access and success.

Each Posse consists of ten students from diverse backgrounds. They are chosen because they exhibit outstanding leadership and academic potential. The concept of a Posse is rooted in the belief that a small, diverse group of talented students—a Posse—carefully selected and prepared for their chosen campuses, can serve as a catalyst for individual and campus community development. These small groups serve as interdependent and interconnected support units within the institution and help promote students' individual and collective success.

Preparing Diverse Leaders

The Posse Foundation believes that the leaders of the new century should reflect this country's increasingly rich demographic mix. Our nation's future rests on our ability to educate strong leaders from diverse backgrounds who can develop consensus solutions to complex social problems. Currently, neither the campuses of top universities nor the country's workforce adequately reflect the changing demographics of the nation's population. The rising cost of higher education and the competition for the highest-achieving students have created homogeneous campus environments in the country's top universities. In turn, fewer students from minority and low-income families are graduating from these institutions and continuing on to senior-level leadership positions in the workforce.

Among the factors contributing to the lack of persons from ethnic minority groups and lower-income families at

COMMUNICATION

The debates over race-based affirmative action have generated a large amount of media coverage. It is possible to build on existing media interest in a topic to generate news stories that focus on related programs. For example, reporters might be interested in programs sponsored by The Posse Foundation that address college access and success by focusing on non-cognitive variables such as leadership ability. Reporters frequently will look for angles for stories that reframe a much-debated issue. If you have a Posse program or something similar on your campus, consider pitching a story about it to your local education reporter. To do this successfully you may need to educate the reporter about why college success, especially for traditionally underrepresented students, depends on more than test scores and grade-point averages. Suggest that an article could address the many factors that contribute to college success.

highly selective colleges and universities are the narrow parameters of the selection process. Two critical factors for acceptance into top institutions are high standardized test scores and an excellent academic background from a strong high school program. While these sound like reasonable criteria for measuring academic potential, they unnecessarily narrow the pool of young people who could succeed at the best schools. The criteria also narrow the diversity and scope of abilities represented in selective universities and colleges. Many capable and promising students are unfortunately overlooked.

Compounding the challenges admissions officers face in recruiting a diverse student body is the reality of culture shock for many students. Young people from nontraditional backgrounds who are admitted to selective institutions often report feeling isolated from the rest of the student body. Consequently, these students tend to leave school at a higher rate than their white and upper-income counterparts. Many universities recognize the lack of racial and cultural diversity as a problem. Most universities routinely seek ways to recruit and retain underrepresented students. The Posse Foundation offers an effective model for improving the pathway to and through college.

Posse advances three major ways of addressing some of the challenges of recruiting and graduating a diverse student body:

- Expand the pool from which top colleges and universities can recruit.
- Help institutions build more intercultural campus environments so that they can become more welcoming institutions for students from all backgrounds.
- Ensure that Posse Scholars persist in their academic studies and graduate so that they can take leadership positions in the workforce.

Posse Partners

Babson College
Bowdoin College
Brandeis University
Bryn Mawr College
Bucknell University
Carleton College
Claremont McKenna College
Colby College
Denison University
DePauw University
Dickinson College
Grinnell College
Hamilton College
Lafayette University
Middlebury College
Trinity College
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
University of Wisconsin, Madison
Vanderbilt University
Wheaton College

Training for Success

Posse achieves its goals through four program components that focus on the following critical areas: recruitment; preparation to navigate the collegiate environment; ongoing mentoring in college, and support for structured interaction with the broader student body; and career transition activities.

1. The Posse Foundation developed an innovative system to identify, evaluate, and prepare students for the Posse program. The Dynamic Assessment Process (DAP) represents a unique evaluation process designed to identify outstanding young leaders often overlooked by traditional college admissions measures. DAP offers students an opportunity to demonstrate their intrinsic leadership ability, academic promise, skills at working in a team setting, and desire to succeed.
2. The Eight-Month Pre-Collegiate Training Program is a critical element in the success of Posse students. Posse Scholars meet weekly as a Posse for two-hour workshops during their senior year in high school. These meetings with trainers focus on team-building, cross-cultural communication, leadership, and academic excellence. In addition, Posse's Writing Program engages lawyers, journalists, professors, and others to act as academic coaches.
3. Once students are enrolled in college, the Campus Program works to ensure the retention of Posse Scholars and to increase the impact of the Scholars and the program on the campus. Every year, Scholars host a weekend-long PossePlus Retreat that brings members of the larger student body together to examine important campus issues. A mentor meets with Posse Scholars during their first two years of college, and Posse staff members make regular visits to Scholars, university administrators, and campus mentors.
4. The Career Program helps Posse Scholars make the transition from being leaders on campus to serving as leaders in the workforce by providing them with the tools and opportunities they need to secure career-enhancing internships and highly competitive jobs. The Career Program also develops partnerships with prominent national and international corporations and organizations in order to offer unique internship opportunities.

Why It Works

A recent evaluation of The Posse Program conducted by The Conservation Company found that the Posse Foundation is identifying highly motivated students who can succeed at

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College Choice and Diversity

By Patricia M. McDonough, associate professor of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, and member of the Research Scholars Panel, Pathways to College Network

Patricia M. McDonough

WHY DO STUDENTS MAKE THE COLLEGE CHOICES THAT THEY DO? WE OFTEN ASSUME THAT STUDENTS CHOOSE COLLEGES IN A LOGICAL, METHODICAL FASHION; IN FACT, THE SELECTION OF A COLLEGE OCCURS IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. ALTHOUGH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT REMAINS THE MOST IMPORTANT DETERMINANT OF WHETHER AND WHERE STUDENTS GO TO COLLEGE, OTHER POWERFUL FACTORS COME INTO PLAY, INCLUDING RACE AND ETHNICITY, GENDER, SOCIAL CLASS, HIGH SCHOOL PREPARATION, NEAR- AND LONG-TERM ASPIRATIONS, PARENTS, AND PEERS. THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO AN INSTITUTION'S ATTRACTIVENESS INCLUDE ITS COMPETITIVENESS, ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS, FINANCIAL AID, LOCATION, INSTITUTIONAL REPUTATION, CAMPUS CLIMATE, AND MARKETING.

Early family support and encouragement, both of which are among the strongest predictors of four-year college attendance, spur students to form educational plans by the eighth grade. These two elements are the twin keys to maintaining college aspirations, sustaining motivation and academic achievement in high school, and actually enrolling in college.

But a school environment also has a powerful influence on students' college aspirations and preparation. Schools can provide incentives by offering a college-preparatory curriculum; a culture which encourages high academic standards; formal and informal communication networks that promote and support college expectations; teachers and counselors committed to students' college goals; and resources devoted to counseling and advising college-bound students. Given the racially and economically stratified school systems in the United States, low-income students of color are often deprived of the kind of schools that can provide such an environment.

General Factors Influencing College Choice

How do students choose their college? Almost all students say they selected their undergraduate institution because it has a "good academic reputation." Many students select their college with an eye toward converting college degrees into high paying jobs or to better position themselves for graduate school. After that, however, research has shown that race, ethnicity, and social class significantly affect a student's college choice.

> *Students from families with low socioeconomic status (SES), rural students, and women are more likely to attend less selective institutions, regardless of their levels of academic ability, achievement, and expectations.*

Oftentimes, students fall into two distinct subgroups: 1) those who emphasize the utilitarian, instrumental value of a college education—attending college to increase job opportunities and earning power—versus 2) those who emphasize getting a solid liberal education. The utilitarian students tend to be first-generation college attendees and tend to enroll in public, regional, and religious colleges closer to home. Those interested in a liberal education typically set their sights on selective public and private universities that might position them for access to top graduate schools. These students, most of whom have college-educated parents, are willing to move away from home. Both pathways reflect students' desires for educational and social mobility.

Students from families with low socioeconomic status (SES), rural students, and women are more likely to attend less selective institutions, regardless of their levels of academic ability, achievement, and expectations. This trend is most pronounced among students of high ability. Not surprisingly, low-SES students are quick to rule out "high-priced" colleges and are sensitive to college costs and financial aid offers.

Race Matters

Several research studies have shown that even when achievement is held constant, a student's racial background is still central to the question of *where* an individual attends college. While most students get into their first-choice colleges, African

Americans and Latinos are less likely to get into their first-choice colleges than whites and Asian-American students.

African-American and Latino students are particularly likely to attend less selective institutions, regardless of their levels of demonstrated academic ability. White and Asian-American students' college choices are less dependent upon a financial-aid offer, yet such an offer is a relatively strong influence for Latino and African-American students. Often, Latinos and African Americans also place importance on the religious affiliations of their colleges.

Regardless of gender, family income, or educational aspiration, African-American students who select historically black colleges are influenced by mentors, friends, and family members as well as by their religious affiliation with and proximity to the college. Conversely, counselors, teachers, and college representatives influence African-American students who choose predominantly white colleges. Social networks and geography similarly influence the Latino students who choose an Hispanic-serving institution (HIS).

In fact, when looking at African-American, Latino, and Asian-American students, individual mentors are often pivotal figures in college preparation and enrollment. Many of these mentors are teachers. Teacher-student relationships, especially for students of color, affect whether students choose to go to college, what college or type of college they choose, and the selectivity of college chosen.

There are also interesting variations of student choices based on the actual or perceived racial atmosphere of the college. African-American and Latino students and parents, for example, describe tensions between their desire for the best education possible and their perception of some campus climates as racially hostile and unwelcoming. The perception of a dearth of students of color on campuses influences these students' and parents' college choices. Other research has shown that underserved minorities who are primarily first-generation, college-bound students are constrained by a lack of knowledge of the collegiate experience, as well as by a lack of trained professionals to advise them.

Schools Matter

While a high school's culture and the adequacy of its college-preparatory course offerings strongly influence college attendance patterns, very few students of color and low-SES students attend such high schools. Too often, these students are enrolled in high schools that fail to meet the entrance requirements of more competitive colleges because of shortages of qualified teachers and counselors, and inadequate honors and advanced placement classes.

Typically, college admissions are represented as if every student had equal choices. When it comes to K-12 educational systems and college preparation, however, the options are anything but equal. Low-SES students and students of color need a more rigorous high school curriculum, better information about college costs, better and earlier notification about financial-aid packages, a critical mass of students of color on college campuses, and more affirming campus climates. With these factors in place, they might actually begin to have choices about whether and where to go to college. ■

Linking Student Support with Student Success

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selective institutions despite their lower than average SAT/ACT scores and despite the fact that they may come from underfinanced public high schools. The study found that 70 percent of Posse Scholars have either founded or been president of at least one campus-based organization, club, or academic program. Posse Scholars also have a significant impact on their campuses by hosting annual retreats to discuss important campus issues, serving as campus leaders, engaging actively in the learning process, and speaking on social and political issues. The program has been so successful that several Posse partner institutions, including DePauw University in Indiana and Grinnell College in Iowa, have each decided to take two Posses per year (twenty students)—a move that will yield eighty Posse scholars over a four-year period on each of their small campuses.

Posse graduates are making the most of the premier educational experiences they receive and are committed to giving back to their communities. They become teachers, engineers, lawyers, social workers, and bankers. They are tutoring public high school students, joining community initiatives, and returning to The Posse Foundation as staff.

The Posse Foundation plans to expand its initiative. This year over 4,500 young people were nominated for 223 Posse Scholarships. With sites firmly anchored in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City, Posse has just received a major grant from the Sallie Mae Fund to open a new site in Washington, DC. The Posse Foundation seeks to increase its number of partner institutions over the next several years to respond to increased interest.

For more information visit www.possefoundation.org. ■

Diversity Digest's New Editor

MARK S. GILES, PH.D., WAS NAMED AS DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS FOR AAC&U'S OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND GLOBAL INITIATIVES IN FEBRUARY 2004 AND IS THE NEW EDITOR OF *DIVERSITY DIGEST*. MARK CAME TO AAC&U FROM INDIANA UNIVERSITY, WHERE HE WAS SERVING AS SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY.

In that capacity, Mark assisted the Hudson and Holland Scholars Programs, which are designed to recruit and retain minority and underrepresented high-achievers. Before that, he served as director of the community and school partnerships program, an early college outreach initiative designed to promote academic excellence and college aspirations among minority and low-income Indiana middle school students.

At Indiana, he also helped to create an online diversity course on the dynamics of race and interracial communications, and was the primary researcher for an award winning historical exhibit on the black experience at Indiana University from 1816 to 2002 (see www.indiana.edu/~oma/AA/entrance.html). Mark has also taught and co-taught courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels in a wide range of subjects: contemporary issues in higher education, enrollment management and underrepresented students, college student activism of the 1960s, community colleges, the black church in America, and black student experience in college.

Mark completed his Ph.D. in educational leadership and policy studies, with a concentration in higher education administration, at Indiana University. His dissertation was on the distinguished African-American theologian Howard Thurman. Mark has worked in higher education for the past ten years. He earned his B.A. in African-American studies at the University of Cincinnati, and his M.S. in college student personnel at Miami University in Ohio.

Mark replaces Heather D. Wathington, who left AAC&U to become senior research officer at the Lumina Foundation. ■

The Right to Learn

continued from page 1

The six principles outlined in the report are:

- Expect that all underserved students are capable of being prepared to enroll and succeed in college
- Provide a range of high-quality college preparatory tools for underserved students and their families
- Embrace social, cultural, and learning-style differences in developing learning environments and activities for underserved students
- Involve leaders at all levels in establishing policies, programs, and practices that facilitate student transitions toward postsecondary attainment
- Maintain sufficient financial and human resources to enable underserved students to prepare for, enroll, and succeed in college
- Assess policy, program, practice, and institutional effectiveness regularly

Rich in useful information, the Pathways Web site provides a comprehensive summary of the work of the Network and its partners. Visit www.pathwaystocollege.net to find out more.

Inside this Issue of *Diversity Digest*

Sponsored by the Pathways to College Network, this issue of *Diversity Digest* highlights some of the research that informs Pathways. In future issues, we plan to publish articles that focus on best practices and student experiences.

Most of the contributors to this issue are higher education researchers who serve on the Pathways Research Scholars Panel. Special acknowledgement goes to Barbara Hill, AAC&U senior fellow, who helped contact the contributors and construct the outline of this issue.

Several of the articles identify factors that affect underserved students' ability to attend and succeed at postsecondary institutions. Alberto Cabrera, Kurt Burkum, and Steven La Nasa highlight factors that affect college enrollment and share findings from a research report on a 1980 cohort of high school sophomores. One implication of their research is not shocking: College planning and preparation should begin in middle school. The authors outline several strategies for moving young students along the pathway toward successful postsecondary experiences.

Factors such as race, socioeconomic status, high school experiences, college recruitment efforts, and the perceptions of an institution's racial climate significantly shape the college choices students make.

Michael W. Kirst argues for improving the quality of education received by underserved students who attend broad access schools. Specifically, Kirst shares several findings and recommendations from the Bridge Project, a six-year national study from Stanford University that began in 1996.

M. Christopher Brown's article focuses on African-American student success at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). His findings reveal interesting data on the significant role of HBCUs in educating and graduating African-American students and on the shifts in where African-American students attend college.

For a practical perspective on access and retention strategies for underserved and minority students, Deborah Bial, executive director of The Posse Foundation, shares the good news of her organization's excellent work. She describes how growing numbers of underserved students from urban settings are finding academic success in our nation's top colleges and universities with help from the Posse Foundation. The Posse Foundation's outstanding record of success and influence is clear and growing. Ms. Bial shares the secrets of why and how this is true.

Lastly, Patricia McDonough describes the factors that influence how underserved and minority students choose a college. She notes how factors such as race, socioeconomic status, high school experiences, college recruitment efforts, and the perceptions of an institution's racial climate significantly shape the college choices students make.

W. E. B. Du Bois observed that "Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental." Higher education can play a significant role in securing that right for children from low-income families and for children of color. The Pathways to College Network illustrates how to make democracy's promise of equal opportunity available to all Americans. Now it is up to each of us to act on what we know.

We hope you find this issue of *Diversity Digest* informative and interesting.

Further information about Pathways, its research and resources, can be found at www.pathwaystocollege.net.

To see AAC&U's statement on "Diversity and Democracy: The Unfinished Work," issued after the recent Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action, see www.aacu.org/About/diversity_democracy.cfm.

AAC&U thanks the Pathways to College Network for its generous support for this issue of Diversity Digest. ■

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About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Since its founding in 1915, AAC&U's membership has grown to more than 900 accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education at both the national and local levels and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

From AAC&U Board Statement on Liberal Learning

AAC&U believes that by its nature...liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives.

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