



**African American Men from Hennepin
County
at the University of Minnesota, 1994-98**

Who Applies, Who is Accepted, Who Attends?

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Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy

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General College

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Introduction

Minnesota has long prided itself on providing ample higher education opportunities for its citizens. However, there is a well-documented and growing disparity in Minnesota and nationally between various racial and economic groups' participation in college and technical college (McGee 1996, 1997; Almonor & Shulman August 1997; Mortenson, October 1997; Ghere, Moore & Schelske 1999). This study's charge was to determine if participation in higher education at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities, of African American men, age 18 to 30, from Hennepin County (henceforth **HCAAM**) mirrors, improves upon, or is behind state and national conditions.

Summary Findings

A detailed analysis of University of Minnesota admission cohorts from the mid to late 1990s found that the number of HCAAM enrolled was disconcertingly low. The students' admission and financial aid application information revealed a disorganized or haphazard process, with very few students meeting priority application deadlines. Compared with their peers, HCAAM students had low high school rank and low college entrance examination scores and were often missing expected high school preparatory classes. Two-thirds entered the University through General College (GC), indicating that they had not met the more demanding admission standards of other University freshman-admitting colleges. HCAAM students represented the range of family financial backgrounds from poor to wealthy. About half of the students had parents with prior college experience or degrees.

In terms of academic achievement in college, HCAAM earned lower grade point averages than Hennepin County white male students and were less likely to graduate from the University of Minnesota with a baccalaureate degree. HCAAM students who matriculated into General College were less likely than their GC peers to transfer from GC to degree-granting programs at the University. However, those who were successful enough to transfer compared favorably with other GC transfer students in terms of persistence and degree completion.

Interviews revealed students who felt isolated and wished they had greater numbers of African American peers, college staff, and especially, faculty. College advisers were the source of most support for the students. TRIO programs, such as Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search, were endorsed as critical supports in these students meaningful access to higher education.

Research Overview

The Hennepin County Planning Office asked David V. Taylor, dean of the University's General College and a member of the African American Men Project steering committee, to develop a model report that would examine the participation of HCAAM in higher education. Dean Taylor convened a team of General College staff led by Bruce Schelske, director, TRIO/Student Support Services. Jennifer Hatfield, director, Office of Research and Evaluation and Dana Lundell, director, Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy, each took responsibility for major sections of the report. Graduate Assistants Ho Eriq Doung, Jennifer Schlukebier, and Ira Gertrude Hewapathirana gathered and analyzed much of the data reported.

The team designed a comprehensive review of the experiences of HCAAM to include both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data from institutional databases allowed the team to (1) assess intake and pre-college preparation using college admission and financial aid records and (2) assess outcomes of academic progress through transcripts, which include grades, credits, transfer, persistence, and degree completion. Qualitative data was derived from individual and small group interviews with successful HCAAM students regarding their college experiences: what motivated them to persist and where they obtained their financial, personal, academic, and cultural support.

This study asked the following questions about HCAAM:

- How many apply to the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities?
- How many attend the University?
- Which University colleges do they attend?
- Where did they go to high school?
- What are their family financial and educational backgrounds?
- How well are they prepared for University study?
- How well did they navigate the University admission and financial aid systems?
- How successful are they in University study?
- How do they compare to their peers from other demographic groups?
- What do they say about their college experiences?

Methodology

Five cohorts of applicants (fall 1994 to fall 1998) were used in the examination of admission application flow and admission decision distributions. For the purposes of examining outcomes for matriculated students, the decision was made to focus on four admissions cohorts—fall 1994 through fall 1997. These cohorts reflect relatively recent admission trends while allowing sufficient time for retention and graduation outcomes. Graduation and retention outcomes were examined as of fall 2001, hence students admitted in 1997 could be tracked four years from matriculation and students admitted in 1994 could be tracked seven years from matriculation—customary windows for evaluating graduation.

HCAAM

Hennepin County
African American males

HCWM

Hennepin County white
males

AAR

ACT aptitude rating
(determines eligibility for
admission)

ACT

American College Testing

HSPR

High school percentile rank

NAS

New advanced standing
students (those who apply
to the University with 39
or more transfer credits)

NHS

New high school students

CLA

College of Liberal Arts

GC

General College

IT

Institute of Technology

All students who indicated “male African American” on their University application were selected for inclusion in an archival records analysis. HCAMM were then defined in two ways:

- 1) Students who graduated from any of the 62 secondary schools (public, private, alternative) in Hennepin County, independent of county of residence at the time of their application for admission. (In this way we found some students whose pre-college education was in Hennepin County but who were living in Ramsey or other counties at application time), and
- 2) Students whose address was in Hennepin County (including foreign students and GED recipients) at the time of their application to the University, independent of where they went to high school.

It should be noted that the University’s admission application contains only a check box for African American, which does not allow for distinctions between African American and recent African immigrants. Therefore, the data includes both groups and cannot be disaggregated.

The quantitative data found in this report were generated from an archival records analysis using three distinct, centralized, historical University databases (admissions, financial aid, and registration), which were combined for each student.

Concurrent with the quantitative study a qualitative study was designed to identify resources, successes, and barriers in higher education from the standpoint of successful HCAAM at the University. Approximately 20 possible HCAAM participants were identified and invited to join focus groups to discuss a range of questions, including the nature of their high school experiences, college transition, campus and academic life, and the experience of being an African American male at the University.

Two focus groups were held, involving a total of three participants. Semi-structured interviews (45 to 60 minutes in length) were conducted, allowing for open-ended, in-depth responses. Students were also given the option not to respond to questions if they felt uncomfortable answering them. A \$25 bookstore voucher was provided as an incentive and compensation for their time. The data was gathered and thematically analyzed by Hatfield (ORE director); Schelske, (TRIO director); Lundell, (CRDEUL director), and Ho Eriq Duong, (graduate research assistant).

Archival Records Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and measures of location/variance) were used to create a portrait of HCAAM at the University. Application, admissions, registration, and persistence data were also compared between HCAAM and Hennepin County white males (henceforth HCWM) who entered the University over the same time period as HCAAM students. In order to control for evident differences in precollegiate achievement between HCAAM and HCWM students (as measured by ACT and high school percentile rank), HCAAM students were also compared to a “weighted” group of HCWM students, created by

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weighing the HCWM group in such a way as to be comparable to the HCAAM group in terms of ACT aptitude rating (AAR). AAR scores are used by the University in making admissions decisions. AAR is calculated by doubling a student's ACT composite score and adding it to his/her high school percentile rank. It must be noted, however, that this "comparability" is founded strictly on academic variables and does not necessarily account for high school attended, family income, neighborhood, or community.

For both HCAAM and HCWM students, archival data were summarized in several different topical areas as follows:

Admissions Applications—All records for undergraduate applications filed at the University between 1994 and 1998 were pulled from the Office of Admissions' database. Number of applications, intended academic programs, and admissions decisions of HCAAM and HCWM were compared. New high school (NHS) and new advanced standing (NAS—new students applying to the University with 39 or more transfer credits) applicants were considered.

Admissions and Pre-college Preparation—Records from University admissions databases were pulled to examine high school achievement, high schools attended, and dates of application for NHS HCAAM and HCWM cohorts (i.e., students who matriculated into the University fall terms from 1994 to 1997).

Family Financial Background and Student Financial Aid Information—University student financial aid data was examined for each HCAAM student with a financial aid record who matriculated to the University between 1994 and 1997. Family financial statements and financial aid awards for the first year were examined. In this report, these data are not available for HCWM students.

Academic Performance, Persistence, and Graduation—Records from the University registration database were pulled for each HCAAM and HCWM student in the NHS cohort group. These databases provided information regarding grade point averages, credits earned, transfer to other colleges (for students who began in General College), retention, and graduation.

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Archival Records Analysis Results

Admissions Applications

Table 1 (below) presents comparisons between HCAAM and HCWM in terms of application frequency and type. In comparison to white males, the African American males were underrepresented among new advanced standing (NAS) applicants over the five years from 1994 to 1998. 15.5 percent of HCAAM undergraduate applicants were prospective NAS, whereas 25.4 percent of HCWM applicants were prospective NAS students.

While students can submit applications to multiple colleges within the University for a given term, it does not appear that HCAAM were any more or less likely than HCWM to have filed multiple applications per term over the five years from 1994 to 1998 (see Table 1.1 in the Web appendix for data regarding the number of applications per term filed by HCAAM and HCWM).

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Table 1.

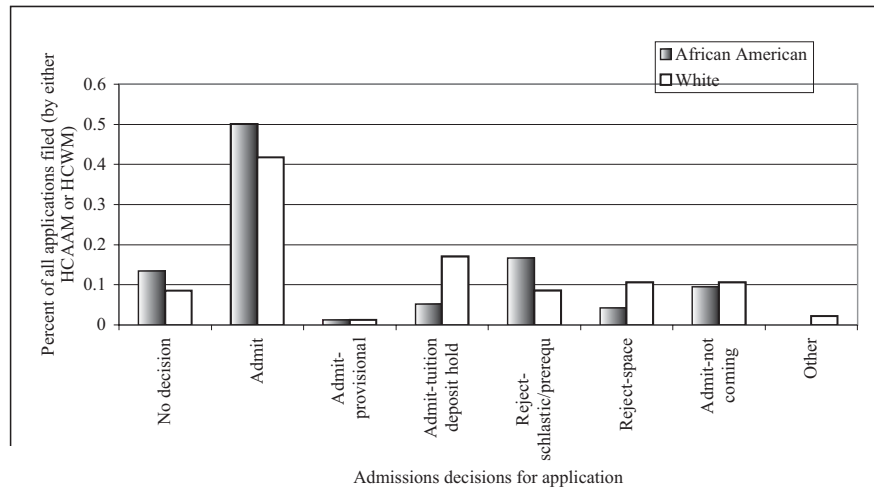
Applicant type (new high school vs. new advanced standing) by application term and ethnicity for Hennepin County males

Term	Group	Undergraduate Application Type			
		New High School (NHS)		New Advanced Standing (NAS)	
		Number	%	Number	%
Fall 1994	African American	43	79.0	11	20.4
	White	680	72.0	265	28.0
Fall 1995	African American	55	84.6	10	15.4
	White	662	71.3	267	28.7
Fall 1996	African American	52	86.7	8	13.3
	White	766	76.8	231	23.2
Fall 1997	African American	55	85.9	9	14.1
	White	794	74.0	279	26.04
Fall 1998	African American	75	85.2	13	14.8
	White	906	78.0	255	22.0

Chart 1, below, (and Tables 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 in the Web appendix) present admission decisions for HCAAM and HCWM applications. Over the five year period from 1994 to 1998, HCAAM appeared to be somewhat less likely to be accepted to the University than did HCWM: 69.5 percent of HCAAM undergraduate applicants were accepted into at least one program of application, whereas 76.1 percent of HCWM applicants were accepted into at least one program of application. This disparity between African American and white acceptance rates has varied from year to year. (See Table 1.4 in the Web appendix for these figures broken out for each application term.) Chart 1 shows that HCAAM applications were more likely to be rejected due to missing prerequisites and inadequate college preparation (i.e., low AAR and missing college preparatory requirements) and somewhat less likely to be rejected due to lack of space.

Chart 1.

Admissions Decision Distributions for New High School Admit Applications filed by Hennepin County African American and White Males From 1994-1998



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Hennepin County African American males

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Hennepin County white males

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Attention should be drawn to the relatively small number of HCAAM who submit undergraduate applications to the University; the ratio of HCWM applicants to HCAAM applicants averaged nearly 15 to 1 over the five-year period from 1994 to 1998. However, from fall 1994 to fall 1998 the number of HCAAM applicants did increase at a higher rate than did the number of HCWM applicants.

Finally, over the five-year period from 1994 to 1998, HCAAM were more likely than HCWM to apply to—and be accepted to—GC (see Table 1.5 in the Web appendix). During this period, 55 percent of HCAAM and 33 percent of HCWM applications were to GC, whereas 7 percent of HCAAM and 18 percent of HCWM applications were to IT and 35 percent of HCAAM and 43 percent of HCWM applications were to CLA.

College Preparation, Enrollment, and Persistence

This section presents data for those Hennepin County African American male students who matriculated into the University as new high school (NHS) admits fall terms between 1994 and 1997. NHS students who were enrolled as of the end of the second week of their first fall term comprise each of the four cohorts. Where available, comparative data are presented for the NHS cohorts of Hennepin County white males.

How many HCAAM students matriculate into the University?

After the examination of admissions application data it was not surprising that the NHS cohorts of HCAAM were quite small. Over the four years studied, only 129 HCAAM students were admitted to, and enrolled at, the University. The University consists of many colleges; from 1994 to 1997 five of these colleges admitted NHS students, as opposed to those that only accepted advanced- standing students from other colleges. The 129 HCAAM students

matriculated into the three largest freshman-admitting colleges: the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), the General College (GC), and the Institute of Technology (IT). These colleges account for over 90 percent of freshman admissions. Between 1994 and 1997 15,361 NHS admits matriculated into these colleges. The 129 HCAAM students accounted for less than 1 percent of this combined NHS cohort. Both 1994 and 1996 cohorts included fewer than 30 HCAAM students. Because HCAAM students did not matriculate into colleges other than CLA, GC, or IT, any comparisons made with HCWM students will be based only on HCWM students who matriculated into CLA, GC, or IT.

CLA admits the largest number of new students, enrolling from 2,081 to 2,583 NHS students annually over the study period. Students needed a minimum AAR of 110 to be admitted to CLA. During the four-year study period, the presence of HCAAM in CLA NHS cohorts averaged 10 students per year, slightly less than 0.5 of 1 percent of the CLA NHS cohort.

From 1994 to 1997 IT was the most selective (and third largest) new student-admitting college, enrolling from 661 to 718 new high school students annually. During each year of the four-year study period, IT NHS cohorts never included more than two HCAAM, slightly less than 0.25 of 1 percent of all NHS IT matriculants.

GC is the second-largest freshman-admitting college at the University, enrolling between 691 and 948 NHS admits annually over the four-year study period. GC is the least selective University college, admitting only students who do not meet the more stringent requirements of the other colleges. GC does not confer degrees. It prepares students to transfer to degree-granting colleges. GC's admission floor was an AAR of 70 during the period of this study. GC is also the most diverse University college, with students of color making up an average of 30 percent of all new admits. GC NHS cohorts included two-thirds of all NHS HCAAM students at the University during the study period, averaging 20 students each year, about 2 percent of the GC NHS cohort.

From 1994 to 1997, the NHS cohort of HCWM (N=1,419) was 11 times larger than the HCAAM NHS cohort (N=129). Interestingly, when considering the entire cohort of NHS students over this time period, the group of white male students (N=6090) was 17.5 times larger than the group of African American students (N=329).

HCWM students were five times more likely to matriculate into IT (N=347)—the most selective college—compared to HCAAM students (N=6). Twenty-eight percent of HCWM students began University study in GC, compared to 63 percent of HCAAM students. This means that 72 percent of HCWM met the more stringent admission requirements of IT or CLA.

How well-prepared are students for college admission and the financial aid process?

The University's priority admission deadline is December 15 of the year preceding the year the student wishes to begin college. Thus, the deadline for the fall 1994 admission cohort was December 15, 1993. Every student who applies by the deadline and has the appropriate admissions score is guaranteed admission.

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HCAAM were less likely than HCWM to have filed applications by the priority deadline. Fifty-three percent of HCWM applied by the priority admission date whereas only 34 percent of the HCAAM students had done so (see Table 2.2 in the Web appendix). Looking only at students whose applications were late, HCAAM students' admission applications averaged 71 days late. While admissions spaces are reserved for special populations (including urban students), late applications can cause a host of problems. Late-applying students who are admitted end up at the end of the communication cycle for notifications of admission, orientation date, and on-campus housing. With late orientation dates beginning students may not find spaces in appropriate first-year classes. Furthermore, on-campus housing may be full, requiring students to find apartments or live at home and commute.

Students applying late for financial aid is even more problematic. The priority deadline for the best combinations of financial aid is February 15 for the following school year. Thus, the deadline for fall 1994 financial aid was February 15, 1994.

Only 14 percent of enrolled HCAAM students applied for financial aid by the priority date. Pell Grants and Minnesota State Grants are like vouchers and follow the student wherever he is enrolled; however, institutional aid, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, work-study awards, college scholarships, and preferred-rate loans are awarded first-come, first-served. Late-applying students end up with financial aid awards that have large amounts of loans. Often these students try to work more hours than is appropriate to make up for financial aid shortfalls, and their studies suffer.

How academically well prepared are HCAAM compared to other University students?

As noted above, admission to the University is based on the AAR score (high school percentile rank (HSPR) added to twice the ACT composite score). The resulting AAR score determines applicants' eligibility for admission to various University colleges. Students needed at least an AAR of 110 to be admitted directly to a degree-granting college during the period of this study. Students whose AAR score did not qualify for the more selective colleges could be admitted to GC if their AAR was between 70 and 110. Students with AARs lower than 70 could be admitted through a special review processes that takes into consideration other factors beside AAR, such as special talents, leadership, "late blooming," etc. After finding that HCAAM students were more likely to matriculate into GC, it was not surprising to find that AAR scores were lower for HCAAM than for HCWM students. It follows that HCAAM students will have lower ACT scores and high school percentile ranks—the two measures that comprise the AAR. Table 2 below presents comparisons between HCAAM and HCWM NHS cohorts in terms of AAR, HSPR, and ACT scores.

Table 2.

Pre-college entry statistics for HCAAM and HCWM NHS students who matriculated into the University between fall 1994 and 1997

Pre-college Entry Measure	HCAAM	HCWM	HCWM: weighted
Median high school rank	51	72	47
Mean high school rank.....	50.73	67.64	48.27
	(N=107; SD=24.32)	(N=1327; SD=22.87)	(SD=24.5)
Median ACT Composite	18	25	22
Mean ACT Composite	19.02	24.82	22.49
	(N=108; SD=4.09)	(N=1331; SD=3.94)	(SD=4.01)
Median AAR.....	89	121	89
Mean AAR	89.72	117.46	90.26
	(N=95; SD=27.78)	(N=1265; SD=27.56)	(SD=27.93)

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HCAAM students began college study with low ACT college entrance test scores. The mean ACT composite score for HCAAM students (M=19.02, SD=4.09) was both below the 1997 national average for freshman enrolled at public universities (M=23.3, SD=4.5) and low in comparison to their HCWM peers (M=24.82, SD=3.94).

HSPR is based upon a student’s grade point average at the end of their junior year compared to all other students in their high school grade. The HSPR is expressed as a percentage. A HSPR of 100 means a student has the highest grade point average in their high school class. HCAAM students average in the 50th percentile of HSPR, meaning they are in the middle of their class in terms of high school grade point average. The average HSPR for HCWM students is 67, with half of the students having HSPRs above 72. It must be noted, however, that the competitiveness and high school completion rates of different high schools confound the comparison between different students’ HSPR.

When the HCWM students are weighted to be comparable to the HCAAM students in terms of AAR, it is interesting to note that the mean HSPR for HCWM is somewhat lower than that for HCAAM and the mean ACT composite score for HCWM is somewhat higher than that for HCAAM. It is possible that these differences could be related to differences in high schools attended by HCAAM and HCWM students. (See “Where did the students complete their pre-college education?” on page 15 for more evidence). For example, by the nature of the HSPR, any two high school classes will have the same distribution of HSPR even if the high school classes differ in competitiveness. However, the same will not hold true for ACT scores. One would expect that the mean ACT scores would be higher in more competitive high school classes. As a consequence, if HCWM had attended more competitive high schools than HCAAM students, one might expect the pattern indicated above.

Each year, 31 to 53 percent of HCAAM NHS cohorts were missing at least one year of expected high school coursework. In 1986 the University set the following expectations for high school coursework for students who wish to be admitted: four years of high school English; three years of science; three years of math;

two years of foreign language; and two years of social science, one year of which has to be U.S. history. When students are admitted to the University without the required number of high school preparatory classes they must complete the high school preparatory requirements by taking college course equivalents.

HCAAM students were nearly three times more likely than HCWM students to be missing some college preparatory work upon entry to the University. Specifically, HCAAM were over five times more likely to be missing some pre-collegiate math; over two and one-half times more likely to be missing some precollegiate science; over three and one-half times more likely to be missing some precollegiate English; and nearly twice as likely to be missing some foreign language (see Tables 2.3 and 2.4 in the Web appendix). Given the difference in admissions profiles between these groups, this finding is not surprising. However, it is interesting that this disparity still remains when controlling for pre-collegiate achievement differences. When comparing HCAAM students with HCWM weighted so as to be comparable with HCAAM in terms of AAR, HCAAM were still over one and one-half times more likely to be missing some amount of college preparatory work. Specifically:

- 24.8 percent of HCAAM students and 11.5 percent of weighted HCWM students were missing one or more years of pre-collegiate math.
- 13.2 percent of HCAAM students and 10.1 percent of weighted HCWM students were missing one or more years of high school science.
- 13.9 percent of HCAAM students and 6.0 percent of weighted HCWM students were missing one or more years of high school English.
- 14.0 percent of HCAAM students and 15.3 percent of weighted HCWM students were missing one or more years of second language.

Clearly, HCAAM students were entering the University less prepared in mathematics and English than their HCWM peers with similar AAR scores. However, as mentioned earlier, racial group differences in the competitiveness of high schools students had attended could account for some of this achievement disparity between races among students with similar AAR scores. Indeed, it appears that this could be the case since the disparity is greatly reduced when the HCWM group is weighted to be comparable to HCAAM in terms of ACT composite score. However, even when controlling for ACT scores in this manner, HCAAM students were still over one and one-half times more likely to be missing some amount of precollegiate mathematics.

Missing college preparatory mathematics courses is particularly problematic. While high school preparatory classes in the sciences, languages, and social science may be completed by taking college credit courses, high school math preparatory classes are completed by taking college courses that do not count toward college graduation.

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Where did the students complete their pre-college education?

The largest number of HCAAM students (N=51) were graduates of the Minneapolis Public Schools, accounting for 40 percent of the total HCAAM 1994-1997 NHS cohort. Seventy percent of the Minneapolis Public School students matriculated to GC and only one student to IT. While comprising the largest group of HCAAM students admitted to the University, the Minneapolis Public School students were a very small subset of the total African American male population of the Minneapolis public senior high schools. For example, during the study period there were 1,235 African American male students enrolled in 12th grade in Minneapolis' six public senior high schools, yet only 51 African American males from these high schools matriculated to the University.

Web appendix

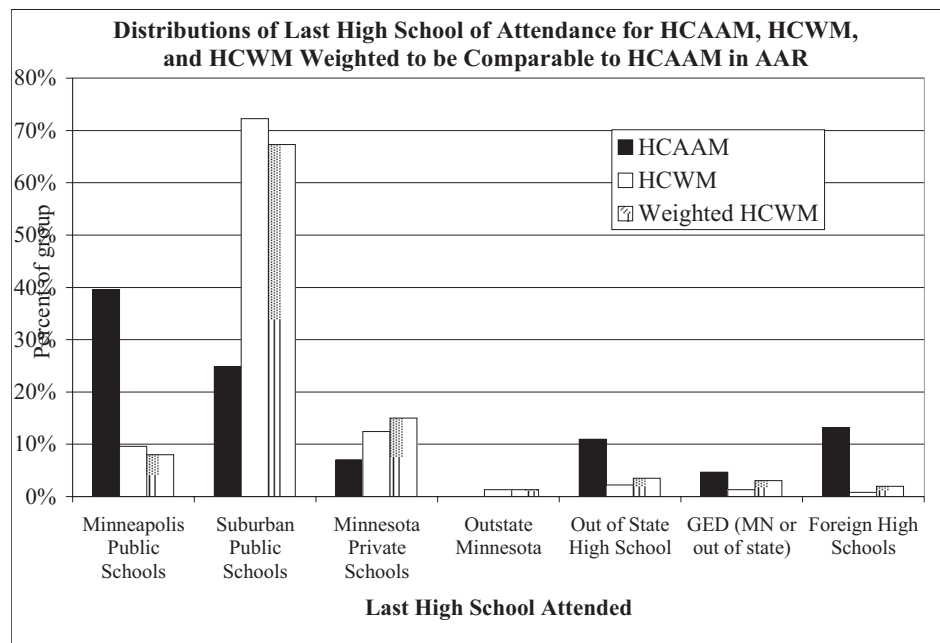
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Surprisingly, the second largest group of HCAAM students (27%, N=34) completed their pre-college education outside of the state of Minnesota. The largest out-of-state group had foreign high school diplomas (13% of the total, N=17). An additional 14 students had diplomas from other states and 3 students had GEDs from other states.

Graduates of suburban Hennepin County high schools (N=32) comprised 25 percent of the HCAAM cohort. Additionally, three of the six students admitted to IT were from suburban Hennepin County high schools. About 10 percent of the HCAAM students from suburban high schools matriculated into IT (see Table 2.5 in the Web appendix).

In contrast to the HCAAM students, HCWM students were much more likely to have attended high schools in the suburban Twin Cities area and much less likely to have attended urban Minneapolis high schools. Chart 2, below, shows that HCAAM were over four times more likely than HCWM students to have come from Minneapolis public schools and that HCWM were over three times more likely to have attended high schools in Minneapolis suburbs. HCWM

Chart 2



students were over one and one-half times more likely to have come from private Minnesota high schools. HCAAM students were much more likely to have come from foreign high schools or U.S. high schools outside the state of Minnesota (nearly 16.5 times and five times more likely respectively). These figures remain fairly stable even when controlling for AAR.

What are the family income backgrounds of the students?

Seventy-five percent (N=97) of the HCAAM students had filed for financial aid. Of these students, 85 percent were considered financially dependent upon their parents and 15 percent were financially independent. The 31 students who had not applied for financial aid were assumed to be dependent since their average age (M=18.8, SD=1.3) was very close to that for the dependent students who had filed for financial aid (M=18.4, SD=1.1). Among dependent HCAAM students, 27.5 percent came from families with an income below \$24,000 per year, 28.5 percent came from families whose annual income was between \$24,000 and \$45,000, and 9.2 percent came from families whose annual income was between \$45,000 and \$72,000. Family income information was not available for 6.4 percent of dependent students who applied for financial aid. It was assumed that the remaining 28.4 percent of (presumably) dependent students who had not filed for financial aid came from upper-income families. Some may have come from families in the \$45,000–\$72,000 since not all families in this income quartile range may not have filed for financial aid (see Table 2.6 in Web appendix).

Family income was compared with national family income quartiles from 1996. For example, in 1996, 25 percent of all U.S. families had an income of less than \$24,000; and 25 percent were between \$24,000 and \$45,000. Because we can only infer family incomes of students who did not apply for financial aid and because not all students in the \$45,000 to \$72,000 family income range would have applied for financial aid, the comparison between HCAAM family incomes and national family incomes is the most complete at the bottom half of the income distribution. The HCAAM family incomes are slightly lower than the national incomes; 27.5 percent of the HCAAM incomes were below \$24,000 and 28.5 percent of the HCAAM incomes were between \$24,000 and \$45,000, whereas 25 percent of the families in the national survey fall into those income quartiles. A reasonable supposition might be that the HCAAM incomes, while close to national averages, are lower than overall University students' family incomes since the family incomes of college students tend to be higher than average.

What are student academic progress outcomes?

Grade point average (GPA) is the currency of the University academic progress economy. Grade point average determines who is allowed to continue enrollment, who receives academic honors, and who can transfer to particular majors or upper division colleges.

The GPA of HCAAM students for their first three quarters (one year) averaged near a C+. The first year GPAs of HCAAM students averaged about .3 to .5 GPA points lower than first-year GPAs for HCWM. Compared to the group of HCWM with comparable AARs, HCAAM students' first year GPAs averaged about .1 to .4 GPA points lower (see Table 3 below).

HCAAM

Hennepin County
African American males

HCWM

Hennepin County white
males

AAR

ACT aptitude rating
(determines eligibility for
admission)

ACT

American College Testing

HSPR

High school percentile rank

NAS

New advanced standing
students (those who apply
to the University with 39
or more transfer credits)

NHS

New high school students

CLA

College of Liberal Arts

GC

General College

IT

Institute of Technology

Table 3.

College grade point averages for HCAAM and HCWM NHS cohorts

GPA	HCAAM			HCWM				
	N	mean	SD	<i>unweighted</i>			<i>weighted</i>	
	N	mean	SD	N	mean	SD	mean	SD
First quarter	122	2.35	1.07	1395	2.85	.85	2.71	.93
Second quarter	112	2.40	1.01	1319	2.76	.89	2.59	.95
Third quarter	108	2.38	1.03	1248	2.71	.93	2.51	.96
Cumulative	126	2.06	.87	1402	2.68	.80	2.44	.84

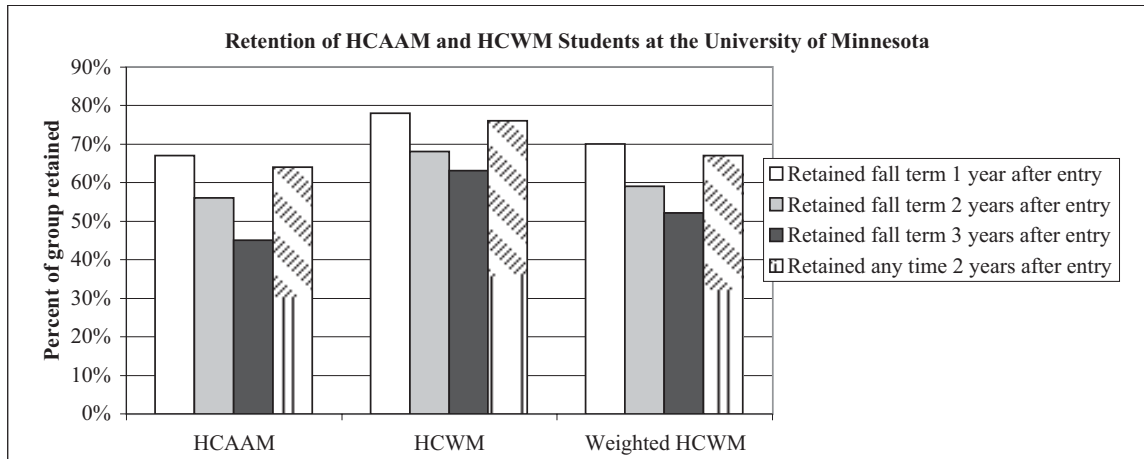
Web appendix
www.gen.umn.edu/research/crdeul/publications.htm

However, the *cumulative* GPA for HCAAM students was barely above 2.0—.4 to .6 lower than HCWM comparison groups (weighted and unweighted respectively). Cumulative GPA could be lower for a number of reasons. First, it could be influenced by the performance of stop out/drop outs, many of whom tend to receive poor grades in college. Second, since two-thirds of the HCAAM students matriculated into GC, it could also reflect what has been coined “GC transfer shock.” Transfer shock refers to the lower grades that GC students tend to earn in non-GC courses—courses that they take with more frequency beyond their first year. It is worrisome that the cumulative GPA is so low for HCAAM students in light of the fact that most of these students matriculated into GC and hence must transfer to degree-granting colleges at the University in order to complete their degree. A cumulative GPA of 2.3 was sufficient to be admitted to many upper division majors and colleges at the University, but is well below the requirements for highly selective colleges such as the Carlson School of Management. This low cumulative GPA foreshadows the low transfer rates for HCAAM GC students presented later in this report.

How many HCAAM students stay in school at the University?

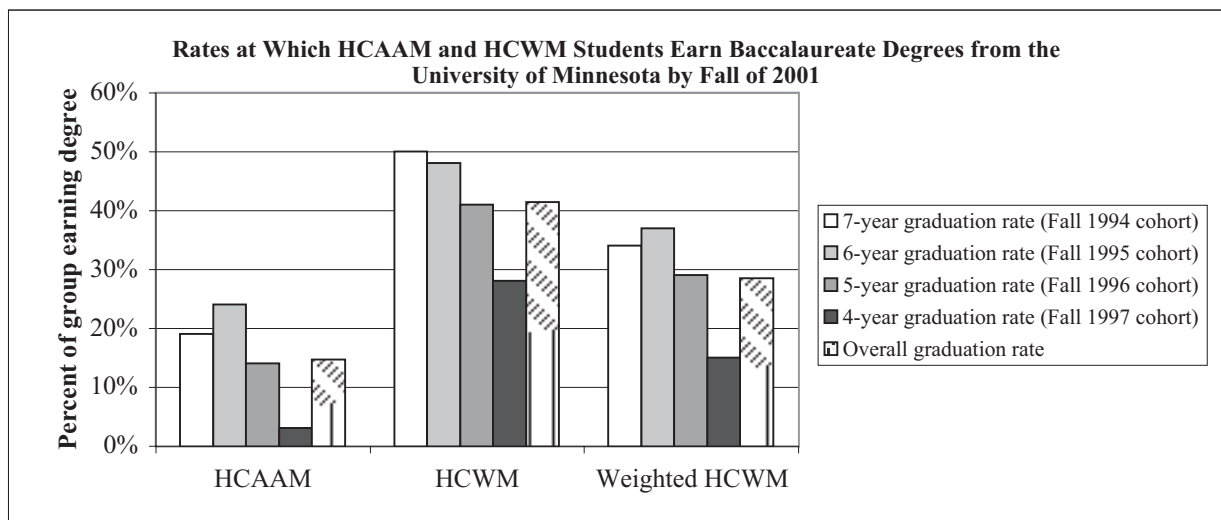
Retention to the second fall term for HCAAM students (67 percent) is 11 percentage points below that for HCWM students (78 percent). However, when controlling for AAR, the difference is reduced to 3 percentage points. The disparity between retention of HCAAM and HCWM students is more marked three years after entry (at the fourth fall term) when only 45 percent of HCAAM students were still enrolled, whereas 63 percent of HCWM students showed continued enrollment (a difference of 18 percentage points). The disparate drop in retention from second year to third year for HCAAM students most likely reflects the low transfer rates of HCAAM students from GC to other degree-granting programs in the University. (See section below regarding transfer rates.) The fact that more students are retained any time two years after entry than are retained fall two years after entry reflects stop out behavior among students.

Chart 3



There are very marked differences in graduation rates between HCAAM and HCWM cohorts (see Chart 4 below and Table 2.7 in the Web appendix). HCWM were almost three times more likely to have graduated from the University by fall 2001. Even when controlling for AAR, HCWM were nearly twice as likely to have graduated. This disparity in graduation rates was of the same magnitude for students who matriculated into GC and those who matriculated into CLA or IT. For example, 10 percent of HCAAM GC students and 20 percent of HCWM GC students had graduated by Fall 2001, and 23 percent of HCAAM CLA/IT students and 51 percent of HCWM CLA/IT students had graduated by fall 2001. In general, graduation rates for GC cohorts are lower than rates for CLA and IT cohorts. In light of this, it is very interesting that HCAAM students who do not matriculate into GC nevertheless graduate at rates similar to HCWM students who enter the University through the General College.

Chart 4



The GC Experience of African American Men from Hennepin County High Schools (1994–97)

As noted above, GC enrolls the majority of all HCAAM students. Students matriculating into GC may have unique experiences confounding comparisons with students who did not begin their academic career in GC. For example, GC enrolls less well-prepared students who may have more difficulty adjusting to the demands of college. Furthermore, GC does not grant baccalaureate degrees so students must transfer to degree-granting University colleges in order to progress towards graduation. In general, GC students tend to earn lower GPAs and have lower retention and graduation rates than their peers in CLA or IT.

This section examines the pre-college preparation, academic progress, and University experiences *only* of HCAAM and HCWM students who matriculated into GC. Due to the nature of the dataset available, these analyses are only based upon students who attended Hennepin County high schools.

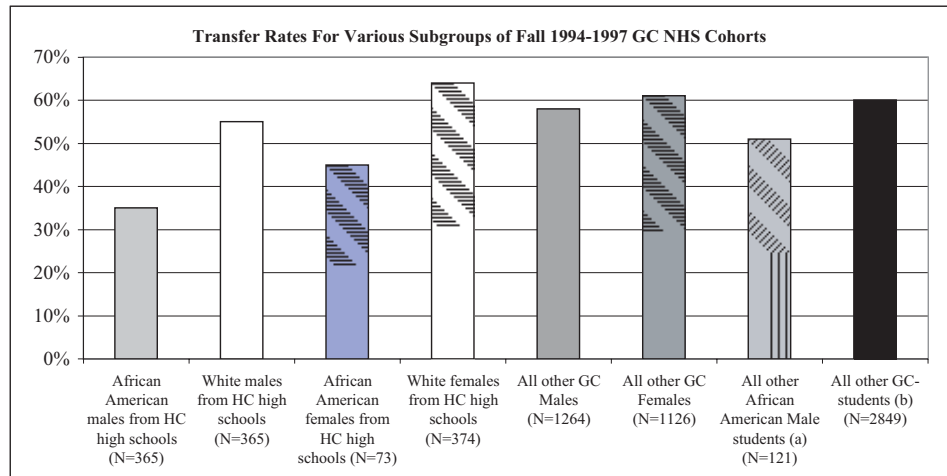
GC African American males from Hennepin County high schools (N=60) came into the college less well prepared than the rest of the GC population. The HCAAM average AAR is barely over the lowest permissible University admission score of 70 (M=74.2, SD=19.2) and is about 8 points below the mean for HCWM students (M=82.5, SD=17.0) and over 10 points below the mean of all other GC students (M=86.3, SD=16.2). GC HCAAM have lower average ACT composite scores than GC HCWM students (M=17.8, SD=3.8 vs. 21.4, SD=3.3) and all other GC students (M=19.7, SD=3.3). However, the ACT composite score for HCAAM students is near the 1997 national average for all African American freshmen enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities (M=17.5, SD=3.7).

The average HSPR of GC HCAAM and HCWM students differ by only approximately 1 percentage point, and are 7 to 8 percentage points (respectively) lower than the average HSPR for all other GC students (Mean=46.5). High school performance differences were more marked between HCAAM and HCWM when examining high school GPA—this supports the notion that HCAAM students had attended less competitive high schools than the HCWM students (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2 in the Web appendix).

How successful are HCAAM students at transferring from General College to degree-granting University of Minnesota colleges?

HCAAM differed markedly from other groups of GC students in terms of cumulative grade point average earned while in GC and percentages who successfully transfer. HCWM students were over one and one-half times more likely than HCAAM students were to have transferred from GC to a degree-granting unit within the University by fall of 2001. Interestingly, African American males who did not come from Hennepin County high schools were nearly one and one-half times more likely than those who came from Hennepin County high schools to have transferred. This disparity in transfer rates is not evident between Hennepin County African American females and non-Hennepin County African American females, whose transfer rates were 45 percent and 41 percent respectively (see Chart 5 above and Table 3.3 in the Web appendix).

Chart 5.



^a i.e., all African American males who did not attend Hennepin County high schools;

^b i.e., all GC students who were not HCAAM or HCWM

HCAAM

Hennepin County African American males

HCWM

Hennepin County white males

AAR

ACT aptitude rating (determines eligibility for admission)

ACT

American College Testing

HSPR

High school percentile rank

NAS

New advanced standing students (those who apply to the University with 39 or more transfer credits)

NHS

New high school students

CLA

College of Liberal Arts

GC

General College

IT

Institute of Technology

It appears that the low transfer rates for HCAAM students is due at least in part to academic difficulty encountered in GC. The mean cumulative GPA earned by HCAAM students while in GC ($M=1.96$, $SD=.95$) was below the 2.0 minimum GPA needed to remain in good academic standing at the University. While the average cumulative GC GPA earned by other African American students ($M=2.17$, $SD=.90$) was below that earned by all GC non-African American students ($M=2.54$, $SD=.82$), it was still somewhat above the average for HCAAM students (see Table 3.3 in the Web appendix).

Are there differences between HCAAM who transfer and those who do not transfer?

Students who fail to transfer have pre-college statistics somewhat lower than students who transfer, but they are far below transfer students in terms of cumulative GPA earned while in GC. African American males from Hennepin County high schools who transfer averaged a cumulative GC GPA of 2.76 ($SD=.38$) and those who did not transfer averaged 1.51 ($SD=.87$). All other GC students who transfer averaged a cumulative GC GPA of 2.91 ($SD=.48$) and those who did not transfer averaged 1.88 ($SD=.88$) (see Table 3.4 in the Web appendix). Only a small percentage of non-transfer students were still enrolled at the University some time between fall 2000 and fall 2001 (8 percent for HCAAM and 6 percent for all other GC students) suggesting that most students who do not transfer have stopped pursuing their education at the University.

The very low average GPA for the 65 percent of HCAAM students who had not transferred and appear to have dropped out suggests that many HCAAM students had academic difficulty while in GC which quashed their ability to persist at the University. The same statement could also be made for all other GC students who failed to persist and transfer as well.

How successful are HCAAM who transfer from GC to degree-granting University colleges?

If HCAAM students from Hennepin County high schools achieve well enough while in GC to transfer to degree-granting University colleges, the students' retention compares favorably to all other GC transfer groups. Twenty-nine percent of HCAAM transfer students had graduated by fall 2001 and 47 percent had enrolled sometime between fall 2000 and fall 2001. This compares very favorably with white male GC transfer students from Hennepin County high schools and all other GC students combined, 32 percent and 33 percent (respectively) of whom had graduated by fall 2001 and 37 percent and 30 percent (respectively) of whom had enrolled some time between fall 2000 and fall 2001. Interestingly, although African American males who did not come from Hennepin County high schools (non-HCAAM) were nearly one and one-half times more likely to transfer than African American males from Hennepin County high schools, non-HCAAM who do transfer were nearly 50 percent less likely than HCAAM to have graduated by fall 2001 (see Table 3.5 in the Web appendix).

Web appendix

www.gen.umn.edu/research/crdeul/publications.htm

Qualitative Study Results: Student Voices

Three students—“Quincy,” “Robert,” and “Alex” (all pseudonyms)—focused on a variety of resources, barriers, and successes in their transitions from Hennepin County high schools to college at the University. Following these student profiles will be a summary of major themes and a discussion of the study’s implications.

HCAAM

Hennepin County
African American males

HCWM

Hennepin County white
males

AAR

ACT aptitude rating
(determines eligibility for
admission)

ACT

American College Testing

HSPR

High school percentile rank

NAS

New advanced standing
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Profiles

Quincy

Quincy is enrolled in a master’s degree program at the University. He attended a private Minnesota college for his undergraduate degree. Prior to college, he participated in a TRIO program, Educational Talent Search (ETS), at his high school in south Minneapolis. He was raised in a single-parent household, with his mother and two brothers. Quincy identified several issues that affected his transition from high school to college, including family support, peer connections, work, preparation for college, resources, and his views on racism and its impact in higher educational systems.

Growing up, Quincy described conflicting messages about the accessibility of education. His family fully supported his educational goals. Quincy’s older brother attended college but could not continue due to a lack of financial resources. Quincy admitted he hung with “the wrong crowd” of peers at times, which negatively affected his performance in high school. Quincy indicated that he experienced a major turning point as he examined more closely what he wanted to do with his life. Looking around his neighborhood, he related that he really wanted something different for himself from what he saw around him. “I refused to be a nothing...I told myself I had to get out of that [neighborhood, drugs] before it brings me down.”

Quincy referred to the TRIO and ETS programs in high school as having provided him with valuable resources for college, creating other life options for him. “TRIO saved my life,” he said, noting the exceptional access he had to financial aid, career information, and advising support. “I owe my thinking about college to ETS... I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for those people in TRIO or in ETS that worked in [my high school] and reached out and came to classrooms and told us what they were about, and really reached out to people to realize the opportunity.” He also attributed his success to strong personal motivation and family support.

Quincy entered a private Minnesota college and described a difficult transition that was “socially isolating at times.” He experienced “culture shock” and “institutional racism,” identifiable by a lack of administrators and professors of color on campus as well as a “lukewarm” campus climate related to race issues. “The sharing of ideas with people from different cultures... I would have to say that those were the big ones [support network and diversity] that [my private college] need[ed].” Despite being an African American male on a predomi-

nantly white campus where “no one speaks your language,” Quincy said he was persistent and successful academically because he utilized resources on campus to become part of the community, joining a multicultural concerns campus group, and working with TRIO’s Upward Bound program.

Overall, he recommended more programs like TRIO to provide opportunities for achievement and access to higher education. Quincy is presently pursuing his goal of becoming a teacher via enrollment in graduate school at the University.

Robert

Robert attended a high school in south Minneapolis, and later, another one in north Minneapolis. He indicated that attending the northside school was a better experience because “North had more black teachers” and it was where he “really fit in.” He received scholarships and good letters of recommendation there and indicated that this was a positive motivation for him to attend and persist in college. Robert felt at the time that the curriculum at both schools was adequate in preparing him for college work. He was in the Upward Bound program, which exposed him to college in high school. He said no one in his family knew anything about college, so this program was very positive in providing him exposure and helping him with financial aid and application forms. This information led him to choose General College at the University .

Robert said that he chose college so he “didn’t have to work a regular job that I see people in my family all with, you know, just regular old.” Robert viewed a college degree as something that could offer him some more choices in his life. His first two years in college he described as hard because he did not feel his study skills from high school were sufficient for the kind of core courses he had to take. Additionally, Robert lived with his family off campus and was raising his son during college. Financial aid helped him because his family was poor: “Otherwise I couldn’t go to college without financial aid.” He said he focused primarily on school and on providing food and rent for his son while he did his work at the University. His finances were a bit of a problem, he indicated, because he did not get a big scholarship. He had to write for grants and “little scholarships” to make ends meet. His adviser in General College was very supportive of him, and he noted that this relationship really helped him stay on track with his enrollment and course work.

Although Robert said he had not directly experienced any racism at the University, he mentioned that he would also like “probably more black people or something at the “U,” because I mean there’s not that many black teachers here.” However, Robert agreed that he would choose the University again, despite his perception that there are always some stereotypes and isolation experienced on campus associated with being an African American student. Overall, Robert said he experienced many opportunities at the University despite the barriers he experienced with financial aid and isolation, and his worldview expanded through course work and advising networks that provided him with career information.

Web appendix

www.gen.umn.edu/research/crdeul/publications.htm

Alex

Alex attended high school in southwest Minneapolis and then went to an alternative vocational high school. He did not form very close relationships with his peers or teachers. “I kinda kept to myself, did my own thing.” After he graduated he took two years off from school before deciding to go to college at the University.

Alex viewed college as a “stepping stone for things I want to do in my lifetime.” He lived off campus during college and supported his 5-year-old son. He noted that he did receive some direct support from his adviser in the TRIO program. Alex also found some grants and financial aid to help pay for school, but he primarily describes his motivations and means of support as coming from himself. “I said I been on this long path by myself, you know, it’s like, I don’t want to call myself a loner, but I did what I had to do, and I know what I need to succeed in life.” He viewed his son as his motivation for succeeding and persisting in college. “I want him to be able to look up to me and show him and anybody, you know, if I can do it, anybody can do it.”

Alex said that there is a need for more African American professors on campus. Alex noted he would even like to attend a black university for a year just to see what that is like in comparison to the University. “I was raised in the city, and I never experienced a black teacher, and in college I probably had two, no three, professors in my whole college career at the University.” Alex also mentioned that “the simple fact that being African American, especially being a male, we are, we’re living our life on the edge, we’re stereotyped every day, we’re harassed, I mean I don’t care how much education we got, in certain people’s eyes we’re still labeled as ignorant and naïve and all the downfall names that people apply to us.” Despite this he said he would choose the University again, “and yeah, I would choose being black again, I love it.” Alex also noted the difficulties of supporting himself financially through college, but he indicated that it provided him with many opportunities for success in his future.

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African American males

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Summary of Major Interview Themes

Students reported common themes in their experiences related to resources, barriers, and successes in their transition from high school to higher education.

Resources

Students identified a variety of resources that positively supported their transition from high school to college, including access to financial aid; college-to-high-school bridge programs; affiliation with campus cultural groups; and having supportive high school and college advisers, family members, and teachers. All the students gave strong and repeated praise for pre-college TRIO programs like Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search. Students mentioned how these programs helped them identify financial aid opportunities and mentored them through a range of social and academic activities in college, such as finding meaningful campus resources like learning centers, career information, and cultural concerns groups.

Web appendix

www.gen.umn.edu/research/crdeul/publications.htm

Barriers

Students described some barriers in their college transition, including social isolation, stereotypes, financial aid problems, and deficient high school skills preparation. Students discussed the difficulties of being first-generation college students whose families had limited success or essentially no experience with postsecondary education. Financial concerns persisted throughout the students' college experience, such as dealing with financial aid bureaucracies and supporting themselves and their families. They also reported feelings of social isolation, lamenting the shortage of African American faculty and limited numbers of successful African American peers. Although the students reported no overt acts of discrimination, each commented upon the stresses and harassment of dealing with stereotypic perceptions of African American males.

Successes

Students also reported on their successes in higher education, focusing on feelings of accomplishment and increased motivation to succeed, and the development of personal, social, vocational, and academic goals. Student motivation included increased ambition to better their situations and create an alternative future for themselves. Students reported various motivators and reasons for being in college, such as supporting their children, creating better future opportunities, and pursuing career goals.

Discussion and Implications

Its number of participants limited this study. However, it does reveal some starting points for future conversations and more extensive research. The resources, barriers, and successes these students have identified are important qualitative pieces to add to the quantitative measures of their successes and transitions. We recommend expanding this study, involving more participants (including high school students) in a series of interviews.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Continuing this study should be an ongoing evaluation project of the University of Minnesota. Improving realistic access and academic success for this group of students goes to the heart of the University's responsibilities to the community in which it is located and to the duties of a great land-grant university.

The finding with perhaps the most significant implication for higher education policy is the following: there is little ability to predict from admission information which HCAAM students will be successful and which will fail. Therefore, it is imperative that admissions channels to General College remain open if HCAAM students are to be served in significant numbers at the University.

The small numbers of HCAAM students admitted to the University needs to be increased. The college application and financial aid application process is fraught with pitfalls for HCAAM students. Substantial collaborative efforts between Hennepin County secondary schools and the University to augment programs of proven worth, like Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search, which address these processes to include more HCAAM students, should be examined.

The critical importance of first-term and first-year academic performance is clear. However, transition to upper division and major courses in the third year is a stumbling block that requires thoughtful examination.

Strong college advising relationships are essential for student success and need to be supported.

Ideas to forge ties between successful African American adults and HCAAM college students need to be explored. Perhaps University scholarships could be delivered through African American adult mentors to help address feelings of isolation and anomie. Are there adult fraternal organizations that would sponsor University student memberships? Could more African American fraternities or service organizations be encouraged?

Overtures to tie larger African American community services to HCAAM students might be explored through helping students with parenting support, health care, employment opportunities, summer jobs, and academic year internships.

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African American males

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Web appendix

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