

**FACTORS THAT AFFECT RETENTION AMONG FRESHMAN STUDENTS
AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Doctoral Dissertation Research

Submitted to
Faculty of Argosy University, Phoenix Campus
College of Education

In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

by

Samuel L. Hinton

June, 2014

**FACTORS THAT AFFECT RETENTION AMONG FRESHMAN STUDENTS
AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Copyright ©2014

Samuel L. Hinton

All rights reserved

**FACTORS THAT AFFECT RETENTION AMONG FRESHMAN STUDENTS
AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Doctoral Dissertation Research

Submitted to the
Faculty of Argosy University, Phoenix Campus
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

By

Samuel L. Hinton

Argosy University

June, 2014

Dissertation Committee Approval:

Susan Adragna, Ph.D., Chair

Date

Andrea Thompson, Ph.D., Member

Program Chair

**FACTORS THAT AFFECT RETENTION AMONG FRESHMAN STUDENTS
AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation Research

Submitted to the
Faculty of Argosy University, Phoenix Campus
College of Education

In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

by

Samuel L. Hinton

Argosy University

June 2014

Susan Adragna, Ph.D.

Andrea Thompson, Ph.D.

Department: College of Education

Abstract

The retention of rates for freshmen students in Historically Black Colleges and Universities had been comparably low leading to low graduation rate. In order to understand this phenomenon, there was a need to investigate the factors that affected retention rates of freshmen students in HBCU Institutions. The retention of students in higher education was an ongoing problem. It was estimated that half of all students entering higher education would drop out before earning a degree. The purpose of the research was to make recommendations on how HBCU Institutions could effectively implement programs and strategies to retain freshmen students in the Institution until their graduation. A qualitative phenomenological design was used to collect the lived experiences of 15 respondents selected from one HBCU Institution. The data collected was analyzed and findings presented in a narrative form. The results indicated that majority freshmen students in HBCUs are susceptible to many factors including environmental and social that can affect their retention in school. The results also revealed that HBCU Institutions are putting in place systems and programs to ensure retention of freshmen students remains high. The study recommends that future researchers should investigate the role that family and family ties play in the retention rates of freshmen in HBCUs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank God for this awesome journey. Without him I would be nothing. My life would be like a ship without a sail. I can truly say this is the Lords doing and it is marvelous in our eyes! I acknowledge my Father and Mother, Mr. Samuel Thomas Hinton and Mrs. Robbie M. Springs-Hinton. I owe my life to these two individual. They sacrificed so that I may become. I am forever grateful. You both allowed me to pursue a college education when you both did not get a chance to pursue one. Love you both! A special thanks to Dr. Susan Adragna, thank you for your unconditional guidance throughout my dissertation process. You are the best chair any doctoral candidate can have. Dr. Andrea Thompson, my committee member for your expertise in my topic and background. You made revisions easy and understandable. To Dr. Dan Ruff, thank you for your guidance as my professor and mentor in graduate school and post graduate school thank you for believing in me.

Secondly, I would like to thank my ride or die friends who have been with me throughout this journey. I am sure they are excited that this milestone is over lol. Mr and Mrs. Kevin and Kristy Quattlebaum, words cannot adequately express my love and friendship you have shown. You have been there throughout the writing, revisions, PowerPoints and frustrations! Mrs. Marsha Gunter-Brown, I don't have enough pages to express what I really want to express. You have prayed and encouraged me through the good, bad and the ugly! I love you unconditionally! Mr. and Mrs. John and Joanna Ayers, whew!!!! Through it all!!! To my spiritual leaders Pastor James and Lady Andrena Rowson, words cannot adequate express my love for the both of you. Pastor James now you can stop asking, "when is it over" lol. I can tell you both "It was good that I was

afflicted” My faith level will never be the same. I think God strategically ordered this process to be without only to “Trust Him” and remaining “Faithful” to the call of service.

Lastly, I would like to personally thank Dr. Ronnie Hopkins. Since fall 2001, you have been a mentor not only fraternal but educational. You have shown what it means to be a real fraternal brother as well as a friend. You made my process easy even when I was worried about collecting data you were brainstorming on an effective way to get it finish. I am grateful for your guidance! Much Love! Last favor, I need a job lol! To Vyce Johnson my technical and software person you helped me get ready for IRB approval lol. To Colin Myers, man you already know! Because of your obedience God will reward you far beyond your imagination! To Dr. Anthony Driggers, thank you for your encouragement and mentorship! To Dr. Barbara Woods, Dr. William Hine, Dr. Jackie Booker, Dr. Cornelius Sinclair, Dr. Anthony Thompson and Dr. John Simpson thank you for believing in me! To Bishop (Mayor) Michael Butler, the prophecy you gave to me years ago has come to fruition!

I must acknowledge as well the many friends, colleagues, students and professors, who assisted, advised, and supported my research.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in the memory of my father the late Mr. Samuel Thomas Hinton. I will always be appreciative for all that you done to make sure I had the best in everything. Thank you for being “Mr. Mom” lol when Mom had to work late and you step up to the plate to be at all my high school track meets (running on the side shouting “run son”) and my concert choir concerts. Thank you for being a proud father who loved to see his son teach and direct choirs especially South Carolina State University Gospel Choir. Thank you for being my number #1 fan in everything I accomplished. Your death was untimely in the natural and I miss and love you daily Dad!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Background	3
Significance of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions.....	6
Limitations and Delimitations.....	7
Limitations	7
Delimitations.....	7
Definitions of Terms	8
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Initial Review of the Literature.....	10
Different Perspectives about HBCUs	10
Existing Retention Strategies, Their Shortcomings and Their Benefits	11
Researched Factors that Affect Retention at HBCUs.....	12
Strategies to Address the Challenges to Retention of First Year Students in HBCUs.....	13
Conclusion and Recommendation	14
 CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	 15
Different Perspectives on HBCUs	16
Theoretical Explanation: Factors that Influence the Retention of the Freshman Students at HBCUs during the First-year Experience	19
Individual Factors that Affect Retention among Black Students.....	23
Student’s Level of Involvement.....	23
The Background Characteristics of Students.....	24
Place of Residence	26
First Year College Grades.....	26
Financial Barriers.....	27
Existing Retention Strategies, Their Shortcomings and Benefits.....	30
Social Integration/Social Involvement.....	31
First Year Programs	33
Meyerhoff Scholars Program.....	35
Freshman Year Initiative	36
Counseling and Coaching.....	36
Model Institutions for the Excellence Program	39
The State of Retention among the Freshman Students at HBCUs during the First-year Experience.....	40
Strategies to Address the Challenges to Retention of the First Year Students in HBCUs.....	42
Conclusion	45

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	47
Introduction.....	47
Research Design.....	47
Population and Selection of Participants	49
Data Collection	50
Methodological Assumptions	51
Procedures.....	51
Data Processing and Analysis.....	52
Research Bias.....	54
Ethical Considerations	54
Chapter Summary	56
 CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS	56
Restatement of the Purpose.....	56
First Year Experience for Freshman Students at HBCUs.....	56
Factors that Influence Freshman Students to Persist during the First-year Experience	60
Practices used to Retain Freshmen Students at HBCUs during the First-year Experience.....	61
The Proposed Retention Strategies at HBCUs.....	63
Meaningfulness and Essence of the Lived Experiences of Freshmen Students at HBCUs.....	65
 CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	69
Summary	69
Conclusion	73
Recommendations.....	74
 REFERENCES	78
 APPENDICES	87
A. Structured Open-Ended Questions for Interview.....	88
B. Consent Form.....	90
C. Survey.....	92

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Despite the large number of freshmen who were admitted each year at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), a low number of students could graduate (Tinto, 1993). Research indicated that HBCUs could do more to retain freshmen students (Tinto, 1993). Retention research in higher education suggested that increased student involvement with campus life led to greater integration into the social and academic systems of the institution and promoted retention (Tinto, 1993). Educational theorists such as Alexander Astin and Vincent Tinto had long pointed to the importance of social integration, or what was more commonly referred to as social involvement, in retaining college students. Astin (1984) contended that student involvement was a condition for student retention. Based on his theory, Astin (1984) believed that the more students were socially involved with campus life, the more likely they would persist and graduate. Developing and implementing a comprehensive student first-year program required a commitment from leaders, faculty, and staff. According to Swail et al. (2003), a comprehensive student retention program should: (a) rely on proven facts, (b) involve all campus departments and personnel, (c) focus on students, (d) ensure the program is fiscally responsible, (e) monitoring of students and programs and (f) be sensitive to students' needs and student population.

Tinto (1993) stated that student retention could be defined as the ability of an institution of higher education to keep students enrolled and then graduate those students. It is a complex process shaped by various forces, factors and relationships. Since the 1970s, colleges and universities had increasingly recognized declining rates of student retention as a critical issue (Strommer, 1993). Tinto indicated that 41 out of every 100

freshman departed higher education without obtaining a college degree (Tinto, 1993). Most freshman students left within 2 semesters of study (Tinto, 1993).

Hundreds, if not thousands, of specific reasons a student might leave college before graduation existed, they included: financial variables, academic success, and personal factors. Recent decades had seen a steady increase in college enrollment rates, which had not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in graduation rates (Tinto, 1993). Student retention, especially in the first and second years of study, had become a challenging problem for higher education community and a major concern for all postsecondary institutions (Tinton, 1993). Student persistence was one of the most studied phenomena in higher education and continued to be a primary concern for colleges and universities.

Retention of Black students was one of the most challenging problems in higher education. The national average retention rate of Black students was reported at 45% (Rowser, 2001). Institutions of higher education state funding was tied to their graduation and retention rates. Retention theories and studies lacked the understanding of the various factors that could contribute to the retention specifically Black freshmen students attending HBCUs. As a result, limited research on factors that influence Black student overall persistence existed.

A holistic approach was very much needed to address factors that affected retention among freshman students at HBCUs. The issues, however, were common to many institutions but could be addressed with the appropriate resources, resolve, and dedicated faculty and staff (Rowser, 2001). Having an assessment component to all of

the initiatives that could be implemented to address the challenges that Black students face is critical to the retention of students attending HBCUs.

Problem Background

The retention of minority students had been widely acknowledged as one of the most challenging problems of higher education (Craig, 2011). At the time of the study, the national average retention rate of freshman minority students is 45% within five years of study as compared to 57% for the White majority students (Craig, 2011). In addition, statistics indicated that higher academic institutions lost about 20% of their student's in the first year, 11% in the second year and 9% in the third year (American College Testing Program (ACT), 2010). Townsend (2007) stated half of all students that were entering institutions of higher education dropout before earning their degree. In addition, approximately 57% of all college dropouts left college before the beginning of the second year (Townsend, 2007).

Society placed great value on obtaining a college or university education. Black college student completion rates had traditionally been lagging behind those of their White and Asian counterparts (Townsend, 2007). This significant departure from higher education did not only affect the society in general, but also the Black students in particular. According to Townsend (2007), low Black student retention rates were a major concern because their withdrawals from college before earning their degree could adversely affect their quality of life. A college education was important to overcoming barriers related to poverty and adverse social situations and in minimizing the economic and educational disparity that exists between Black and White students.

In an effort to ensure retention and minimized educational and economic disparities that existed between the African Americans and the Whites, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created. Gasman and Tudico (2010) noted these institutions were established prior to 1965 when racial segregation in America was the order of the day. By the time of the study, HBCUs had continued to provide higher educational opportunities for Blacks who had otherwise not attended college. Wright (2008) indicated that, HBCUs enrolled over 26% of all Black students and produce 28% of the bachelor degree holders who were Black. Despite these significant endeavors, the HBCUs still struggled with low retention rates. The ACT (2010) observed that HBCUs and other open admissions institutions had the lowest freshman-to-sophomore retention rates among all public 4-year higher education institutions.

ACT (2010) reported that, despite the fact that HBCUs invested a lot in a variety of programs dedicated to improving Black students' persistence, retention rates had not been improving over time. Determining ways of improving Black students' retention rates (especially in the first year) would benefit the Black students, the HBCUs, as well as society. This was the reason HBCUs granted a high percentage of bachelor degrees to the African American population. The current paper was a proposal on identifying the factors that affected retention among freshmen students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) during the first-year experience.

Significance of the Problem

Retention among freshmen students at HBCUs during the first-year experience was a major challenge for the Black students. Wright (2008) indicated that a number of retention projects had been established at most HBCUs by making retention a major part

of the institution's mission. Many of the HBCUs, through the support of federal and state agencies, had established institutional strategies; such as academic support services, counseling and retention centers, remediation, career services, merit based scholarships and emergency loans, corroborate and private donations, and Title IV programs like Summer Bridge and Trio programs (Wright, 2008). Each of these programs played an important role in improving retention through developing academic skills, social skills, remediation, and providing financial assistance. Love (2010) suggested that the initial years of the establishment of these programs saw reported benefits such as improved grades, enhanced sense of self-worth, and the ability to persevere in school. Despite these improvements, the issue of retention was not addressed as it continued to persist; where students were dropping out of the HBCUs and joining other mixed race public universities or predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Love, 2010). The problem with these strategies was that they failed to address the specific needs facing the first-year Black student.

Allen (2010) thought academic support and retention services ought to be designed in such a way that they address the socio-economic problems faced by first-year students as they maneuvered the obstacles they encountered in campuses. Many retention programs have not increased the retention rates significantly, as they did not demonstrate their effectiveness in addressing the factors that increased the retention of African American students in HBCUs. If these factors were not identified, there is no way in which they could be addressed. This research study was to identify factors that affected retention among freshmen students during their first-year experience at HBCUs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore factors that influence the retention of freshmen students at HBCUs during the first-year experience. In addition to the major purpose, this research study had the following specific purposes:

1. Identify the state of retention among freshmen students at HBCUs during the first-year experience;
2. Identify strategies in place at HBCUs to improve retention of freshmen during their first-year experience;
3. Identify the problems in the then existing retention strategies;
4. Explore what freshmen wanted in order to improve their educational experience at HBCUs during the first-year.

Research Questions

The research study was phenomenological qualitative method. The following questions guided this process:

1. How do HBCU Freshman describe their first-year experience?
2. What factors do HBCU Freshmen students describe as influencing their decision to persist during the first-year experience?
3. What practices do students describe as being in use to retain freshmen students at HBCUs during the first-year experience?
4. What retention strategies do freshmen students at HBCUs propose?
5. What are the meaningfulness and essences of the lived experiences of freshmen students at HBCUs?

Limitations and Delimitations

As with any study, there are several things that could cause issues to arise. The limitations and delimitations were identified here to discuss some of those issues. The limitation of this study was the focus on the number of participants. Results from this study were not transferrable to all HBCUs who had identified factors that affected retention among freshman students at HBCUs. The delimitation of this study was that it consisted of students who had entered their first year experience in college as a freshman. Many of these students were first year generation students from low-income groups.

Limitations

This study used a phenomenological qualitative approach where data from interviews at HBCUs was analyzed. The notion of retention was grounded in student success. Thus, retention related activities focus on providing a campus environment where students successfully completed their goal and completed their academic program from an Institution. This study focused on a limited number of participants of 15 freshman students. The research of the findings of the study, and therefore its reliability could be questioned.

Delimitations

This study focused only on the first-year (freshman) students. According to Tinton, 41 out of every 100 freshman departed higher education without obtaining a college degree (Tinto, 1993). Most freshman students left within two (2) semesters of study (Tinton, 1993).

This study reviewed literature that dealt with retention strategies in HBCUs only. Tinto (1996) reported that approximately 57% of college dropouts left college before the

start of the second year. Because society placed great value on obtaining a college education and Black college student completion rates had traditionally lagged behind those of Whites and Asians (Swail et al., 2003); such a significant departure from higher education not only affected our society in general, but also Blacks in particular. Low Black student retention rates were also a major concern because withdrawing from college before earning a degree could adversely affected an individual's quality of life (Swail, et al., 2003). The results of this study could not be transferable to all Black students at HBCUs, being that all HBCUs public and private Institutions outcome to retention resulted differently.

Definitions of Terms

Dropout rate: The proportion of pupils/students who leave school during the year as well as those who complete the grade/year level but fail to enroll in the next grade/year level the following school year to the total number of pupils/students enrolled during the previous school year (ACT, 2010).

Freshman student: Students in their first year of study less than 30 credit hours (Wright, 2008).

HBCU: Historically Black Colleges and Universities founded for the primary purpose of educating Black people (Gasman & Tudico, 2010).

Minority student: Students from minority groups such as African Americans (Mikyong & Conrad, (2006).

PWI: Predominately White Institutions refer to those higher education institutions that have a historical legacy of excluding Blacks and a historically and predominately white racial composition (Astin, 1984).

Retention: The outcome of students who remained in enrolled from fall to fall. These students clearly defined educational goals whether they are course credits, career advancement, or achievement of new skills (Tinto, 1993).

Theoretical Framework

The research study was guided by such theories as social interactionist, student involvement framework, and student attrition framework that were to form the frame of references or foundation for the study. The social interactionist framework used students' backgrounds characteristics; shared values and a friendship to explain behavior while the student attrition framework used intentions attitudes and believe. In integrating the two theories, the researcher was able to predict or explain the study outcomes and link them to the existing body of knowledge. This research presented the theoretical framework of the study on factors that affected retention among freshman students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The research problem in this paper was factors that affected retention among freshman students at HBCUs. This research problem anchored the entire study and formed the basis of constructing the study's theoretical framework. The key variables in this study were the freshman students, retention rates, and the factors affecting retention. This study relied on four sets of literature: (a) different perspective about HBCUs, (b) Existing retention strategies, their shortcomings and benefits, (c) Researched factors that affected retention at HBCUs, and (d) proposals to address the challenges to retention of first year students in HBCUs.

This research study made use of a phenomenological design. Thus, it relied on phenomenological theory. Therefore, this phenomenological theory stresses on the perception and interpretations of world phenomenon from the viewpoint of the

participants. In addition, phenomenological theories assert that research should borrow other people's experiences and their reflection on these experiences for the better understanding of meaning of the aspects of their whole human experience (Gravetter & Forzano, 2010). This study was focused at getting the factors affecting retention from the participating freshman students in HBCU's. This made phenomenological theories were appropriate for this study. It included, academic standing (performance), social integration (student interaction with the institutional bureaucratic structure and external factors (financial situation or personal relationship outside of college.

Initial Review of the Literature

The literature review was carried out under the following subheadings where relevant literature in line with HBCUs was used to identify factors that affected retention among freshman students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Different Perspectives about HBCUs

HBCUs were founded in the periods before 1965, during the days of racial segregation, to offer higher educational opportunities to Black students. Mikyong and Conrad (2006) explained that presently, there are 106 HBCUs in the U.S. including private and public, 4-year and 2-year institutions, community colleges and medical schools. Most of these HBCUs are found within former slave territories and states of the U.S. Of these 106 HBCUs, 27 offered doctoral degrees and 52 provided graduate programs. Mikyong and Conrad (2006) were of the opinion that the part of bachelor degrees that HBCUs provide had steadily declined from 35% in the 1970s to 21% in 2001 (Mikyong & Conrad 2006). Despite this decline in the number of degrees awarded, Mikyong and Conrad (2006) observed that HBCU enrollment had grown from 180,059 in

1970 to 222,453 in 2001. Following the passing into law of the Civil Rights laws in 1960, all higher educational institutions which benefited from federal funding had resorted to positive action so that to increase their diversity by including all races.

Mikyong and Conrad (2006) noted that some HBCUs now have non-Black majority in their programs. It is especially true with Bluefield State College and State University of West Virginia whose student population had been above 80% White since 1960. Mikyong and Conrad (2006) further observed that most of the non-state-supported HBCUs had financial issues because of the high price of delivering private higher education as well as decreasing financial aid for students. Mikyong and Conrad (2006) noted the period prior mid-20th century saw more than 90% of Black students enrolled in higher education taking their studies in HBCUs. However, the late 20th century saw the percentage of Black students in HBCUs dramatically declining to 17% in all the 103 HBCUs due to public pressure to desegregate higher education (Mikyong & Conrad, 2006). Apart from the pressure to desegregate, questions had been raised about the quality and value of education being offered in HBCUs compared to PWI (Predominately White Institution). These concerns had also contributed to the poor retention rates.

Existing Retention Strategies, Their Shortcomings and Their Benefits

A number of retention strategies have been applied by HBCUs with the support of the Federal Government funding. Reichert and Absher (2013) observed these strategies include college orientation programs for new freshmen, counseling and retention centers, emergency loans and merit-based scholarships, corporate and private donations, and academic support services. These retention strategies had positive results but had failed to address the retention issue. Additionally, Absher (2013) observed in 2012 that the

U.S. Department of Education awarded in excess of \$12.2 million in the form of grants to the four HBCUs in Maryland; most of it earmarked for programs aimed at boosting freshman retention.

This federal support was a reflection of the state's efforts to close the gap between retention rates and the graduation rates at HBCUs and the PWIs. Apart from these efforts by the Government, Mikyong and Conrad (2006) identified a framework for retention known as the Swail's Conceptual Framework for Student Retention that was established in 1995. This approach focused on the issues and barriers facing the African American students at HBCUs.

Researched Factors that Affect Retention at HBCUs

Factors reviewed in the literature were focused on HBCUs. Jacobi (2011) outlined factors affecting freshman students' retention at HBCUs as: (a) students working for long hours due to insufficient financial aid, (b) curriculum difficulties, (c) poor academic performances, (d) poor teaching styles, and (e) self-advisement of courses that resulted in insufficient prerequisites. Other factors that affected retention included positive or negative perception of HBCUs, support and encouragement from family and friends, students' social involvement, and quality of the institution and academic integration.

Mikyong and Conrad (2006) categorized the factors affecting retention into three groups: (a) academic, (b) social, and (c) institutional factors. The academic factors included influence of subjects and courses taken in high school, the quality of learning, aptitude, content knowledge, critical thinking abilities, technology ability, study skills, learning skills, time management, and academic-related extracurricular activities. The social factors constituted issues like financial challenges, educational legacy, attitude of

the student towards learning and towards HBCUs, religious background, maturity, social coping skills, communication skills of the students, attitude towards fellow students and staff, rural/urban upbringing, cultural values, expectations, goal commitment, family influence, peer influence, teacher/counselor influence, and social lifestyle. The institutional factors included the level of financial aid, quality of academic services, quality of student services, and the complexity of curriculum and instruction.

Strategies to Address the Challenges to Retention of First Year Students in HBCUs

Comprehensive student retention plans should focus on a number of aspects: (a) relying on proven research, (b) suiting the particular needs of the specific HBCU, (c) institutionalized and become a regular part of the college service, (d) involve all college departments and personnel, (e) focus on the student, (f) be patient, and (g) be sensitive to the students' needs and at the same time target the most needy ones (Townsend, 2007). Mikyong and Conrad (2006) noted that these strategies should also focus on building trust between the HBCU leaders and departments within the institution; quality advising and supplemental instruction on courses, centralizing of needed services for the purpose of creating a community of support for the freshman students, ensuring quality education referrals and advising to the necessary on- and off-campus student services, and collaborating with the teaching staff to improve instruction in courses with high failure statistics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to explore factors that affect retention of freshmen students at HBCUs during the first year experience. Retention factors were explored that contribute to the first-year students' dropout rates of the HBCUs. After

these factors had been identified, further research was proposed to implement these factors in order to realize improved retention rates among Black students. If retention rates could be increased in HBCUs, then the graduation rates and academic performance of Black students could be equipped with the necessary facilities and resources to ensure their success.

Chapter 2 provided a holistic approach to address the low retention rates among Black freshmen students. The issues, however, were common to many institutions but could be addressed with the appropriate resources, resolve, and dedicated faculty and staff. It was very important to have an assessment component to all of the initiatives that could be implemented to address the challenges that first-generation Black students face.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Most studies have had their focus on institutionalization of education on the graduation rates (Watson, 2002). Moreover, the majority of these studies also have suggested various categories of higher education institutions (Brown & Freeman, 2004). Thus, by narrowing its focus on HBUCs, this study helped put together various important findings concerning HBCUs. This in turn, helped in improving the academic achievement of Black students. More importantly, the study was further narrowed to consider only the issue of the retention of the first-year students joining HBCUs. When focusing on the factors that influence the low retention rate among Black students, the study helped these institutions improve the efficiency of their various programs that they have put in place to increase the retention rate among the first-year students.

HBCUs have rarely been studied, and even if this has been done, they have been combined with PWIs; the attention has been paid to PWIs (Arum & Roska, 2011). Taking into account the students' demographics and the allocation of resources to HBCUs, the studies that have been considering HBCUs alongside PWIs have faced a number of problems. This is because they have failed to consider the impact of limited funding, as well as students' characteristics on HBCUs outcomes, especially in as far as the retention and graduation rates have been concerned (Pryor, 2009).

Based on this literature gap, this research was aimed at the identification of factors that affect retention among the freshman students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In addition, the literature review also focused on the specific study objectives. These objectives included: (a) identifying the state of retention among the freshmen students at HBCUs during the first-year experience, (b) identifying strategies in

place at HBCUs to improve retention of the freshmen students during their first-year experience, (c) identifying the problems in the existing retention strategies, (d) exploring how the freshmen students want to improve their educational experience at HBCUs during the first-year.

Different Perspectives on HBCUs

Right from their establishment, HBCUs have greatly contributed to the reduction of the segregation, which was so rampant in the society in the 1960s when the institutions were being established for the first time. They have since then given the Black students an opportunity to access high level educational. This significant contribution of HBCUs has seen them increase to be over 100 in number with a good number of them now offering up to doctoral degrees in various courses. Apart from the medical schools and community-based colleges, there are well-established universities and colleges operating as HBCUs in the country (Frierson & Wayche, 2009).

Another aspect of HBCUs is that a good proportion of them are located in the territories that were initially dominated by slaves within the United States. Though the institutions have had their share of challenges, their immense contribution to equality education and that to the general level of education in the country have seen them grow in various aspects. The growth was greatly triggered by the incorporation of positive integration, which saw the institutions greatly diversifying their population in terms of races. Though they were initially meant to be for the black students, some of these institutions have had more white students than their Black students' population. An example is the case of the West Virginia's State University that has been having just below 20% of its students being blacks.

One of the major challenge facing HBCUs is a financial barrier triggered by the ever- increasing cost, which they have had to incur. This has especially had a great impact on private HBCUs which have greatly been hit by the government's move reduce its financial aid beneficiaries through its 2012 July new financial standards. This is what saw most of Black Students seeking enrollment in HBCUs with the white students merely contributing 10% of the total number of students in these institutions at some point. However, the public later put much pressure on the education department to have education at higher levels desegregated. This happened shortly before the beginning of the 21st century. It led to a spontaneous decline of the population of Black students in all the country's HBCUs to just around 17%. A number of other issues also emerged, such controversial ones like whether the education offered in HBCUs was of the required quality adversely affecting the willingness of most Black students to persist until graduation (Mikyong & Conrad, 2006).

Demographically, Palmer, Hilton and Fountaine (2012) stated that most of the students of HBCUs are those from the low and middle-income families. In fact, 42% of these students do come from the families whose annual income is below 25,000 dollars (Whitt et al., 2005). With respect to the academic indicators, HBCUs are seen as institutions for the academically underprepared students for college. This evidenced is by their average scores in standard tests taken prior to attending college (Arum & Roska, 2011).

It is also evidenced in a study conducted by Patterson institute. It was revealed that in the 2009-2010 academic year HBCUs students only managed a score of 19% and 21% in critical Reading and Math respectively. In another study, Freeman and Thomas

who considered data from 1970 to 1990 found out those who selected HBCUs paid attention to consistent profile, as well as financial factor. These were considered the major factors that influence students' choice of college and universities. Other factors included the type of a high school that the students had attended and the desire to have strong cultural connection. Lee stated that, "Financial aid, therefore, comes in handy if HBCUs are to attract academically competitive students" (Lee, 2012, p. 10).

The need for financial aid is further evidenced when HBCUs' enrollment demand is considered. Studies showed that the selection of students by the institutions is largely based on the amount of Pell grant that each student can receive, as well as the average tuition and fee requirements. It is observed that whenever there is an increase in tuition fees, there will be a corresponding decline in demand for enrollment in HBCUs among Black students (Newkirk, 2012). Thus, the success of these institutions and the retention rate, are highly dependent on the proportion of students in need of remedial education, financial resources' availability, as well as the support services meant to enable Black students to transit successfully to the HBCUs social and academic environments (Gasman, 2008).

The need to come up with the strategies meant to improve the HBCUs graduation rates cannot be overemphasized. Improving retention and, therefore, the graduation rate in HBCUs has positively impacted the country, especially economically (Jackson, 2003). In accordance with the study conducted by Price in the year 2011, HBCUs managed to earn relatively higher income compared to their counterparts who graduated from PWIs (Lee, 2012). Another finding was that there was a positive psychological outcome among graduates who had gone through HBCUs as their identity self-image and self-

esteem were greatly nurtured. According to the study by Batsey (2008), concentrating much on HBCUs among the rural counties that are racially diverse greatly contributes to those regions' socio-economic wellbeing. It is supported by the study conducted by Lee. The scholar indicated that the observed increase in level of education between the year 1990 and 2000 was majorly pegged on the contribution by the HBCUs. It was found out that whenever a HBCU is established within a radius of every 100 miles, the residents' rate of degree attainment increases by 5.8% (Lee, 2012).

**Theoretical Explanation: Factors that Influence the Retention of the Freshmen
Students at HBCUs during the First-year Experience**

Numerous theoretical frameworks are applicable when it comes to determining various factors that affect the rate at which Historically Black Colleges and Universities are capable of retaining Black students. The study will focus on three of these frameworks for effectiveness. These will include: (a) the interactionist framework, (b) the student involvement framework, as well as the (c) student attrition framework. The interactionist theory focuses on background characteristics, shared group values, friendship, as well as how they influence the retention of students in various institutions of learning (Siedman, 2009). According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), the ability of Historically Black Colleges and Universities to retain students will be dependent on the students' background characteristics, commitments, social integration, goals, as well as academic integration. The theory suggests that Black students enroll at HBCUs while possessing certain characteristics based on their family background (Tinto, 1993). The characteristics include such aspects as the parents' level of education and their socio-economic status, the gender and age attributes of the individual student, the student's

educational experiences prior to attending college, such as grades attained at high school, rank, as well as test performance (Ortiz & Santos, 2009).

The hypothesis of the theory is that student's goals, as well as level of commitment in the learning process are influenced directly by their academic and social experiences (Alport, 1971). Such experiences have a direct effect on the level to which students in Historically Black Colleges and Universities can be integrated into their colleges or universities' social as well as academic systems. This is because the likelihood of students persisting up to the time they complete their course is dependent on the level to which they are integrated academically and socially (Kasbeek, 2013).

Later, Tinto (1993) expanded the theory to bring in the fact that students who want to succeed in persisting until the completion of their course must seek to have them dissociated from the past relationships. The following will enable students to go through the transition into the new lifestyle, both socially and intellectually. This is also affected by the intention of each individual student. The intention has an impact on the institutional commitment and the individual's goals. A student must, therefore, be able to integrate himself/herself both normatively, into the intellectual environment, and socially, into the social system of the institution (Sutherland, 2002; Burns, 2006).

The theory of attrition as contributed by Bean is based on the turnover of an individual learning institution, as well as the attitude-behavior interaction models. The scholar argued that just like an adult can decide to quit a work place, a student could decide to quit his/her college. Bean made an emphasis on the role played by the students' intentions, attitudes, and beliefs (Bronstein, 2007). According to the scholar, student retention in any institution will depend upon their background characteristics, perception

concerning the quality of their organization, grades, as well as the practical worth of the education being pursued (Bronstein, 2007). This model put more emphasis on the impact that the behavioral intentions have on students' retention. Accordingly, Historically Black Colleges and Universities students' intention to remain in their various learning institutions are greatly dependent on their attitudes that are, in turn, determined by the experiences that an individual student has with his/her institution (Williams, Howell & Hricko, 2006).

Bean also suggested such external factors as finances, responsibilities at the family level, number of hours an individual student is required to be at work, and the ease with which students can transfer and join another learning institution. All these factors affect the probability of students to drop out of a college or a university based on their direct impact on the students' intention to leave. This means that a part from the HBCU students' level of satisfaction with their colleges, background, and attitude, various environmental and organizational factors do affect their drop out intention (Schuh, Kones & Harper, 2010).

However, other psychologically based approaches that can be applicable to the topic include (a) the copying behavioral theory, (b) the self-efficacy theory, and (c) the attribution theory. The copying behavioral theory concerns a student's ability to carry out self-evaluation in order to be able to cope with a new learning environment (Bandura, 1986). The level of adjustment that a student exhibits will determine whether he/she is able to cope with life in the HBCUs. On the other hand, the self-efficacy theory is based on the perception of an individual student of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities on his/her ability to perform various tasks as required of them while in

school (Snowmont, McCown, & Biehler, 2012). It is also partly dependent on a student's perceived ability to handle certain situations that he/she may have experienced or have seen others go through. Finally, the attribution theory has its focus on the locus of control's concept (Leary & Hoyle, 2009). The concept refers to a student's ability to process his/her experience looked at from both external and the internal perspectives. The external perspectives focus on such factors as the luck and fate of Black students while the internal perspectives my focus on such personal attributes as students' skills and attitudes (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Additional frameworks relevant in the study include those based on the cultural and economic factors. This means that some students can leave school based on their inability to pay for their studying. The following fact has been common among the Black students who join most UK colleges and universities (Gallien & Peterson, 2006). As stated by Darryl (2010), finances do affect Historically Black Colleges and Universities students' experience both cognitively and non-cognitively. Whenever, the retention of students in these institutions is approached from a cultural framework perspective, the dropout rate of students is never looked at as a psychological phenomenon, but rather a socio-cultural phenomenon (Palmer & Wood, 2012). The argument here is that students of Historically Black Colleges and Universities voluntarily decide to leave an institution based on various cultural forces; such as the kind of experiences they have had with their families or neighborhoods, the racial and ethnic groups with which they identify themselves, their social class and religious affiliations, as well as institutional culture of their college or university where they study.

Individual Factors that Affect Retention among Black Students

Numerous factors influence the rate at which Black students are retained in their various institutions of higher learning. The major factors include: the level of involvement, background characteristics, place of residence, and the first-year college grades of students among others.

Student's Level of Involvement

Austin's student involvement theory refers to the amount of energy that an individual student has devoted to both his/her social and academic life while in college. Those students who are able to assign much of their time for their studies while also spending the same amount of time in their learning institutions are likely to make them stay in their institutions until their graduation (Andrea & Gosling, 2005). That applies to those students who take part in various student organizations, as well as those who frequently interact with other members of the faculty (Lindsay & Justiz, 2001). On the other hand, the uninvolved students who neglect their studies and those who avoid talking part in the extracurricular activities do have high chances of dropping out of the institution before the completion of their course. That relates to students who spend a limited amount of time they have in college, as well as those who limit their contact with other students and faculty members (Upcraft & Gardener, 1990).

It is obvious that students who are involved in their HBCUs will directly impact their retention. Darryl (2010) reported that the levels to which students are involved in their colleges and campuses activities affect their integration into the schools' academic and social systems. This, in turn, promotes persistence. Yeakey and Henderson (2000) also restated Austin's argument that students who are more involved academically are

more likely to be satisfied with most of the college life aspects (Bataille & Brown, 2006). However, being intensely involved in studies within the colleges and universities can subject HBCUs' students to isolation from their peers and reduce the influence of their peers to remain in their colleges. Studies showed that Black students who are actively involved in various social activities are easily integrated into their college's social environment and, thus, have higher chances of persisting (Fleming, 2012; Skipper, 2003).

The Background Characteristics of Students

Darryl (2010) underlined that students who join institutions of higher learning do possess certain individual characteristics. As such, some are academically not prepared, while others are either prepared or underprepared. Equally, a student is either a male or female in gender and has parents who possess different education levels (Gasman & Baez, 2008). Additionally, students are of different age groups and do earn a varying amount of income. All these aspects have certain levels of effect on the probability of students being retained in HBCUs. However, the level of parents' education, grades attained while at high school, socio-economic status, and gender influence retention among Black students.

According to Darryl (2010), though the influence of gender on retention has been controversial, it is proven that gender greatly influences Black students' willingness to persist. This, in turn, directly influences their willingness to stay in their institutions to the completion of their courses. Whereas men are less likely to persist, the opposite is true with women. However, this has remained a controversy with other scholars, for instance Tinto. The researcher stated that women's pattern of withdrawal is greatly affected by their social issues and not academic ones as it is the case with men. Thus,

unlike male students who always leave school only upon being forced to do so, female students do leave voluntarily in most cases. The Black male students are mostly influenced by the academic experiences that they had had prior to joining college, as well as their personal attributes.

The parents' level of education is another factor that has an immense influence on the probability of having Black students retained in their various schools. Darryl (2010) also noted that the level of parents' education of Black students greatly impacts the students' retention. Compared to the HBCUs students whose parents did not attend college, students whose parents attended college are more inspired to attain degrees. Therefore, they are most likely to remain in school until the completion of their courses. Moreover, those students whose parents failed to attend college have a very low likelihood of being involved in the activities of the institution. This also does affect their ability to persist in the school environment. These students experience a lot of difficulties throughout the whole period they are in college since they lack the necessary adequate preparation. This makes them earn grades that are lower compared to their privileged counterparts. With the humiliations that come with their failures, most of them will opt to drop out a college.

Another factor that affects the probability of students of HBCUs being retained in school is the level of preparation that a student obtained prior to joining a college. In fact, academic preparedness has widely been defined in relation to the performance of students prior to their joining of colleges and their performance while there. There is a close relationship between students' performance while in high school and their performance during their first year at HBCUs. Those students who fail to perform well in

high school have a high likelihood of failing their first year exams in HBCUs and are less likely to persist. This factor is considered very substantial and consistent in predicting the undergraduate persistence among Black students. Studies on the relationship between academic preparedness and retention among Black students revealed that retention is closely related to students' performance while in high school (Brown & Bartee, 2009).

Place of Residence

Darryl (2010) observed that students who live in a school environment are likely to remain in their colleges and universities until the completion of their course. It is arguable whether there is a higher likelihood that such students become more religious compared to those who live outside the campus residence. Landefeld (2009) also stated that students who live within the residence of their colleges or universities are seen to gain a lot when it comes to art, interpersonal self-esteem, as well as liberalism. Moreover, HBCUs students staying in campus have more time for interaction with their colleagues and faculty members. They may take part in the government of students, extracurricular activities, as well as social fraternities. Equally, they usually receive more satisfaction from the friendships, as well as the relationships they have with other students. This means that a student who lives within the environs of the campus will be highly involved. Thus, the probability of being retained in order to graduate an institution will be boosted (Benjamin, 1997).

First Year College Grades

The rate at which students drop out is higher just after their completion of the first year of study. Therefore, Darryl (2010) noted that the most efficient measure that can be used to improve the rate of graduation among Black students is to come up with various

intervention programs. Such programs should be aimed at assisting students adapting to the social life of their institutions' right from their first year of study (Pryor, 2009). The average grade of students completing their first year of study in HBCUs has, thus, been a measurement tool to predict the expected retention rate of students.

However, it is suggested that the interpretation of grades should be limited to their depiction of the performance of each student in relation to others at a particular time. Thus, it should never be used as a determinant of what students have learnt. Therefore, there is the need for the replacement of the grading system currently used in colleges with performance that is able to give a true reflection of the level of growth and development among students. This can be achieved through conducting a repeated post-testing, as well as pre-testing that are relatively more efficient in measuring how effective such programs are. However, schools should be cautious about not downplaying performance since the grades that students attain while in college can be used as important aspects of knowing how students have accomplished their courses. Accordingly, students with poor grades can be dismissed, while those with good grades get an opportunity to further their career in the universities. There is, thus, the need for integration of the two approaches (Darryl, 2010).

Financial Barriers

Based on the magnitude of the effect of students' economic stability on their rate of retention, it is necessary to present extensive findings in as far as it is concerned. Although it is difficult for Black students to finance their education, those aspiring to join HBCUs have had to find adequate financial sources; otherwise, they can drop out of an institution. The stability of the source of funding that a student is relying on will affect

the probability of them being retained, as well as their ability to persist to the completion of their courses (Jones, 2001). Educational funding is subjected to strict regulations whether it is at the level of the federal or state government. The same is true to various HBCUs institutions that also have their own regulations for all kinds of financial aid available to their students. Thus, a good percentage of Black students depend on their families that are their main financial source for their education. This, in turn, contributes to the already poor families' heavier responsibilities. Thus, most students from the low and middle-income families drop out of their institutions at the end of or even before the completion of their first year of study (Berg, 2010).

The challenge to finance higher education that Black students face has exacerbated with time due to the increasing amount of students who are seeking access to college and university education through these aids. Chau (2012) stated that the proportion of college students receiving financial aid is constantly increasing. The scholar stated that based on this challenge, at least one among every five students drop out a college immediately after or during their first year of study. Overall, it is indicated that 30% of the first-year students who register either in HBCUs or PWIs failed to report back to their colleges or campuses on their second year of study. It is accounted for over \$6.2 billion that the state appropriates for college and university education. About \$1.5 billion is provided in the form of grants. This amount being lost in terms of revenue for education of the college and university students does have a great effect on college attrition and rate of graduation (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

According to Pan and Bai (2009), the challenges that come with securing financial aid influence the rate of students' persistence in colleges and universities.

Scholars noted that the finance-related choices directly and indirectly influence students' retention and persistence decisions. Financially, persistence factors affecting the retention of Black students in HBCUs include monetary measures used for financial aid, housing costs, tuition costs, and other related living costs (Hale, 2006).

Another challenge related to financial aid has been the new regulations for a student's eligibility to receive financial aid. This had been evidenced since the beginning of July 2012 when the country's education department strengthened its requirements for students who wish to make satisfactory academic standards. Besides the initial requirements, the Department for Education provided that if a student wants to apply for the government's financial aid, he/she will have to complete an academic plan. The plan made it complex for most of the HBCUs students, the majority of who had not performed well while in their high school levels due to various reasons (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). For instance, due to unpreparedness of most Black students, it is a challenging task for them to come up with an acceptable and appealing copy of an evaluation on their intended courses and a requirement of such courses as stated in the S.A.P. Academic Plan.

In addition, the current President of the USA, President Barack Obama signed into law the *Consolidated Appropriation Act* in 2012. This Act gives limitation to the eligibility of the use of Lifetime Pell. Since 2012, the provisions of the Act have limited the total number of students accessing the Federal Pell Grant since they can do so in twelve semesters and not the initial 18 semesters (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Existing Retention Strategies, Their Shortcomings and Benefits

Most HBCUs have come up with a number of retention strategies, which are largely implemented through the support that these institutions receive from the federal government in form of grants. Some of the strategies that will be looked at in this work include (a) social integration/social involvement, (b) first year program, (c) Meyerhoff scholars program and (d) freshmen year initiative among others as will be evident, all these strategies have impacted positively on education quality and equality in the country. Of great interest to this paper will be those strategies, which are meant to promote retention among the first year students in the HBCUs institutions. Being that the federal government remains to be the major funder of these programs, they are a clear commitment by the country to promote educational equality in the country especially in as far as the country's graduation rate is concerned.

The freshman experience determines the kind of retention and academic success in HBCUs. Thus, formation of academic support groups and services could contribute to the success of the student. Rocconi (2011) observed that learning groups are essential in assisting students who have difficulties and who need support from their teachers and fellow students. Learning groups are different from the counseling and coaching programs that are done in a more formal way than is the case with learning groups. Academic support services are important advisement with a purposeful restructuring of university programs while developing a link in courses and different student cohorts. The essence of these support services is to enhance a collaborative academic experience that espouses the tenets of academic and social experiences.

Positive benefits of collaborative learning community and engagement of student resulted from an increasing inclusion of academic support services in the daily activities of students in their first years. Montgomery, Jeffs, Schlegel & Jones (2009) noted that freshmen seminar programs had a direct influence on the retention and performance of students in HBCUs. This aligns with the objective of any university, which is to provide learning strategies in a socially facilitative environment while espousing the elements that increase retention and completion rates.

Social Integration/ Social Involvement

According to the studies conducted, nearly 57% of those students who drop out their college do so immediately after they complete their first year of study. A remedy for the low completion rate among Historically Black Colleges and University students must be addressed due to increasing emphasis made on the importance of college and university education. On the one hand, the impact of the low education levels can be reduced in general, but on the other hand, the living standards among Blacks can be significantly improved (Townsend, 2007). This section looked at the strategies that have been used in order to reduce this menace.

The most common strategy that has been implemented by most HBCU institutions is student involvement. It is proved that HBCUs' students who are more socially involved are socially more supportive and are likely to be retained in their various learning institutions. The concept entails such behaviors as the student-staff relationship, building of relationship with peers, and the use of facilities at the disposal of students while in campus, extracurricular activities, and personal experiences. Activities that can help students scale up their relationship with the staff include seeking advice and

socializing with them during the out-of-class periods. Building one's relationship with peers may involve initiating friendship with students who have different background characteristics or entering a conversation of those of different views. The extracurricular activities include such undertakings as registering and participating in various student organizations. According to the studies on HBCUs, Black students who spend more time taking part in various social activities consider that this helps them persist in completing their education since they find themselves to be part of their institutions' social environment (Townsend, 2007)

HBCUs have been identified to be much concerned about the creation of the high level of connectedness while also promoting an environment that allows their students to have a great sense of belonging. This is based on the deliberate effort that is normally put by personnel of these institutions that specialize in different students' affairs. The office of the student personnel has been involved in promoting connectedness and the sense of belonging among the HBCUs' students. This is achieved through coming up with the activities that encourage students to have close relationships with their administrators, faculty members, as well as colleagues. These relationships and activities have a great influence on the social and academic development Black Students (Darryl, 2010).

In such a way, students who join HBCUs do experience reduced problems in relation to the necessary adjustments since they can take advantage of the social networking and increase their involvement in the relevant social activities. This has seen an increasing number of students exhibiting a greater level of satisfaction when it comes to experiences they have with their colleges. Compared to their colleagues at PWIs, students at HBCUs are found to have greater expectations. This has, in turn, seen an

increasing number of Black students remaining in their respective colleges and universities until they finish studies (Darryl, 2010).

Darryl (2010) stated that social involvement has increasingly been used among the HBCUs because it focuses on students' behavior and makes it more effective. It has a great influence on the extent to which students will be satisfied with their colleges and that to which they will be willing to persist.

First Year Programs

Since the highest percentage of dropout cases do occur immediately after students complete their first year of study, it is evident that any effective preventive measure should focus on the HBCUs' students in their first year of study. This fact has seen most HBCUs engaging in the development and implementation of different comprehensive programs that focus on enabling the first year students to adapt to the university and college lifestyles. However, Carey (2008) emphasized that all the staff, leaders, and faculty members should be committed to such programs. Equally, the scholar suggested that any program meant to improve retention among the first year students should meet a number of criteria. They include: (a) relying on proven research, (b) institutionalized (c) becoming a regular part of the college service, and involving all college departments and personnel. The other criteria include focusing on the student, being patient, suiting the particular needs of the specific HBCUs as well as being sensitive to the students' needs (Townsend, 2007).

Mikyong and Conrad (2006) noted that these strategies should also focus on building trust between the HBCU leaders and departments, quality advising and supplemental instruction on courses, centralizing of needed services for the purpose of

creating a community of support for the freshmen students, ensuring quality education referrals, advising concerning the necessary on- and off-campus student services, and collaborating with the teaching staff to improve instructions in the courses with the high failure statistics.

It is thus clear that most of the HBCUs institutions have put in place programs that are meant to introduce students to their environment. These programs are commonly known as orientation programs that are inculcated in the overall learning systems. The main purpose of the orientation programs is to familiarize the new students with the life in the university. As noted by Wolf and Kay (2011), Black students who join universities have no predisposition of fitting in an environment of learning without being introduced to the system. This is not a unique phenomenon among students from other races.

Wolfe and Kay (2011) highlight the concept of intervening in the programs of students at the university with the purpose of assisting the university to retain such students in the long term. For instance, the two argue that an attempt by the university administration to introduce outdoor orientation programs by HBCUs will form in the minds of the students a novel structure of adventurers learning experience at the university. This also prepares the HBCUs to align their programs and teaching activities that are biased towards successful student transition to a learning life at the university. Wolfe and Kay observe that such an attempt helps students to have a holistic approach to their emotional and social development in the university life. Thus, the two researchers conclude that seminar courses that are specifically tailored for freshmen in HBCUs must include programs that assist new students to refocus their minds to be able to implement the courses including the support got from orientation programs. The researchers add that

a well-developed orientation program provides an opportunity for the university administration to be committed in the support and execution of learning programs to the new students. However, the focus should be to help students to transit in accordance to the expectations while achieving high level of personal and social growth through encouragement of developed social relationships with fellow students and their teachers.

Meyerhoff Scholars Program

The program is used at the University of Maryland, which is located in Baltimore County. Its focus is to increase the number of Black students who take engineering and science courses. It became successful since 1989 when 19 Black male students were admitted to the university. Later in 1990, this program underwent expansion. However, the major focus of the program has been Black students. It has greatly helped in meeting the educational needs, as well as concerns of Black students (Townsend, 2007).

To achieve its objectives, the program has employed numerous interventions, as well as resources. This has seen Black students who achieve high grades succeed in their educational career. It has as its philosophy a premise that all the selected students have the ability to be successful in engineering and science provided they are given the necessary support to take advantage of the available opportunity. The program has a number of components, such as (a) recruitment, (b) scholarship support, (c) study groups, (d) tutoring, (e) program values, (f) personal counseling and advising, (g) summer bridge program, (h) summer research internships, (i) program community meetings, and (j) involvement of students, their parents, as well as supportive relatives (Frierson, Wyche & Pearson, 2009).

Freshman Year Initiative

This program is aimed at first year students in HBCUs, which is very optimistic. It is used at Fayetteville State University, which is a HBCU. The objective of the program is to ensure that students successfully transit to college. The following aim is achieved through the identification of students who have difficulties as they go through their first year at college. Identified students are then provided with remedial help in terms of various personal and academic services. Its key component involves that students are to complete profiles and register in a number of courses, depending on what they would want to be their majors (Edgerton & Pew Charitable Trusts, 1998). Some students have to complete writing/reading or math laboratory center assignments. Equally, all considered students become enrolled for both the first and second freshmen seminars where a peer academic leader addresses them. Continuous assessment of the program has indicated that students who took part in this program have shown great improvement in their retention rates and the level of their satisfaction (Fort, 2013).

Counseling and Coaching

The environment can confuse new students in the university setting, as many of them have never been in such a closed environment. In realization of this fact, many HBCUs embarked on new strategies to enable them retain their students and avoid a high rate of non-completion of Black Students at institutions. These institutions have since established dedicated offices to identify and help students to accomplish their social, academic, and career goals. As noted by Barkley (2011), academic coaching and counseling enables university administration to examine the methods, attitudes, and characteristics to improve the experience of the Black students at the university. Among

the areas that form a characteristic approach to learning and counseling include academic advice, career development, support learning, social counseling, programs of study evaluation, guarantee of transfer admission, as well as students' access to workshops and conferences. Despite the fact that many counseling and retention programs have contributed to the student-centered learning and other advantages like accountability programs, and initiatives that are based on the hypothesized outcomes, this does not imply that there are no challenges in the student completion and persistence in HBCUs.

As such, Taylor (2008) argued that coaching in university learning should only use a style that contributes to improvement in the learning capabilities of students. Additionally, this kind of approach only serves to provide a strategic program that enhances the learning of the student at the HBCUs. This will definitely conform to the main purpose of having coaching in HBCUs, which is to assist instructors to abandon their dispassionate and disinteresting lecture but instead adopt an approach that emphasizes engagement, academic excellence with enthusiasm, reactivity, and intentional learning. Thus, most important in academic coaching is to try and develop a teacher-student but this should be approached as a teacher initiative because teachers are the ones with the necessary experiences about student behaviors in the university (Webberman, 2011). Evidently, the more a teacher learns and knows about their students the better they prepare themselves to meet their students' academic and social needs in the university setting.

An interview in 2011, Webberman (2011) quoted Carter as saying that the success of k-16 students depended on the form of social and academic coaching that the university was willing to invest in. The author noted this kind of coaching needs to be

continued throughout the lifetime of a student in the university. He noted that the major mistake with many coaching and counseling programs in HBCUs is that once the programs runs for a week or two, they are abandoned with the home that students have got into the system of university. This is in fact catastrophic as such students may develop a resistance to the coaching and counseling attempts in cases they start showing signs of being dissatisfied with the university life. Thus, this must be formulated as an ongoing partnership seeking to assist student to produce most desirable results in their education.

As already noted elsewhere in this research, many students drop out after their first year in university. Therefore a continuation with the program will ensure that they are able to remain around despite their finding of the environment difficult and unwelcoming. Carter (2011) argued that the process of students' coaching helped to deepen the experience about learning and increase the sense of responsibility while in the university. It also improves the effectiveness of students to deal with various challenges while taking full control of their lives' outcomes. Moreover, Carter observed that academic coaching and counseling assisted in improving the emotional and social connections that is important in trying to understand the environment. To this end, the author contented that coaching and counseling in HBCUs should focus on the understanding of students' needs and also assurance that the university administration was concerned about their welfare while they are in the institution boundary. It also shows that the university administration take initiatives to solve some of the problems that students might be facing in the university. It is thus believed, in the retention research that the more educators and instructors work in collaboration with systems that

seek to improve the experience of a student in HBCUs the more they instill confidence of completing their education. Nevertheless, there is a need to have further research in this area to determine how coaching and counseling can influence other factors like performance including the grades, retention, social experience, involvement in university activities, family and work experience, as well as the overall learning experience.

Model Institutions for the Excellence Program

A number of HBCUs institutions have been brought up as part of the model institutions for excellence. Examples are the Bowie State University, in Maryland, Xavier University in Louisiana, and Spellman College in Georgia. The program aims at serving as a model with regards to successful education, recruitment, as well as preparation of well-trained engineering, mathematics, and science baccalaureates. The program is aimed at supporting the development of HBCUs institutions, as well as student support activities that influence the successful recruitment, as well as retention of engineering, mathematics, and science undergraduates. The students enrolled in the program are given a chance to take part in the activities aimed at enriching their academic abilities. They are also expected to participate in counseling, as well as mentoring. Also, students are given orientation in the three key subjects: mathematics, science, and engineering (Frierson, Wyche & Pearson, 2009).

The success of the program has been evident when a 5 year study was completed. There was a tremendous increase in the number of undergraduate students enrolling in mathematics, science, and engineering. The following increase reached 115% as 743 students took these subjects in 2000, if to compare to 340 students in 1995. This increase was also reflected in the rate of retention of the first year students who took mathematics,

science, as well as engineering. There was a 28% increase from 52% in 1995 to 80% in 2000. The same tendency was seen through the performances that these institutions realized between the second year students. The average mark of students increased to 62% (by 39 points) in 2000, up from 26% in 1995 (Townsend, 2007).

The State of Retention among the Freshmen Students at HBCUs during the First-year Experience

Lee (2012) stated that the graduation rates of the HBCUs are 42%. According to the scholar, the graduation rate of Black students at HBCUs is relatively lower than that of PWIs that are the lowest in rank. This variation is based on the differences in the characteristics of the students who enroll in both institutions. Lee added that the tendency by HBCUs to ease their admission process, as well as historical nature of focusing on the disadvantaged students has led to the disproportionate enrollment of students who have varying achievements during their high school (Lee, 2012).

Rawlston conducted a study aimed at establishing whether there were variations in the graduation rates and persistence among Black students who studied at PWIs and those who studied at HBCUs (Skipper et al., 2003). The result, as reported by Lee, indicated that there was no major variation in the rate at which students dropped out in either category of institutions when students' socio-economic status and pre-college attributes were controlled. It was found out that the dropout rates were, however, dependent on high school grades, family background, as well as students' academic performance (Lee, 2012).

According to the study conducted by Allen in 1992, Black students at PWIs were more likely to drop out if to compare with their colleagues at HBCUs. According to the

analysis, the following tendency was based on the characteristics of both students and their learning institutions. The two factors predicted Black students' social integration, academic performance, as well as their occupational aspirations (Lee, 2012).

Students who are enrolled in HBCUs are those who would have not been able to cater for college education because of various social, academic, and/or financial barriers that they face in life (Byrne, 2006). Even as they aim at realizing the missions which they were constituted for, that of ensuring that the disadvantaged Black students are able to access quality education, the HBCUs must do their best to ensure the provision of the socially friendly and supportive learning environment (Frierson & Wayche, 2009). Such an environment will provide students with a good friendship network, various social outlets, as well as supportive relationships. Such an environment is necessary since it will convict HBCUs students to believe in safe taking of risks to realize their development and enjoy intellectual growth. Also, there should be people who can offer support, positive feedback and more understanding to Black students in HBCUs. This will make students know that their welfare is of great concern to their various institutions. Thus, their willingness to persist in their study will be boosted till they graduate (Townsend, 2007).

The institutions of higher learning have found it very challenging to retain their students. Patterson Institute reports that according to the national statistics, the retention rate for Black students is 45% while that of their white counterparts is 57%. Equally, the study revealed that the rate at which Black male students are retained is higher than that of their male counterparts (Craig, 2011).

Strategies to Address the Challenges to Retention of the First Year Students in HBCUs

Townsend (2007) reported Allen's observation that HBCUs' retention programs have mostly been focused on academics with programs that are aimed at giving academic advice, support, as well as providing remediation to students. Allen suggested that it is of great necessity to change the focus of these programs. The following programs should be made relevant with the recent findings on the social experiences among first-year students enrolled at HBCUs. The scholar emphasized that programs and activities should be aimed at encouraging the extent to which students are socially involved since this will positively impact the retention of Black students. Allen considered that coming up with ways of keeping students until they successfully complete their course should be the major concern of any program. This can only be achieved if HBCUs have retention of students as their major focus (Gasman & Tudico, 2008)

Thus, it is recommendable that HBCUs should focus on their staff and administrators who are supposed to provide their students in their first year of study with numerous opportunities through which they can socially be involved in the campus life. This will help them promote retention. As such, any program that is supposed to be implanted in HBCUs should have both social and academic dimensions. Social programs that can be incorporated with academic ones include: service learning, freshmen interest groups, and experience programs purely meant for students in their first year of study. Even after the enactment of the programs, it will be necessary for HBCUs to ensure that funds for the reevaluation of the existing programs are meant to improve the retention of first-year students is made available. It will be instrumental in the establishment of the

effectiveness of such programs in terms of promoting the social experience of their students in their first year of study considering that the intellectual and social experiences of students are never mutually exclusive (Flowers, 2004).

According to the study conducted by Bean, HBCUs can have most of their students retained by putting in place the measures aimed at improving students' performance. Another measure identified during the study is that of providing opportunities for enculturation while also seeking to improve the students' level of loyalty to their learning institutions. (Darryl, 2010) Equally, HBCUs need to come up with programs that would ensure that the freshmen students have a feeling of belonging. Such programs should bring students together, based on a peer group, to enable them to take advantage of the students' peer group influence (Frierson, Wyche & Pearson, 2009).

Thus, retention programs should aim at helping naïve students who join HBCUs to be informed about the effective ways that will help them transit from their high school level to HBCUs. Students must also be ensured that they are in a position to utilize the available opportunities for financial aid. This does help relieve them from having to spend much of their time on work. Equally, there is a need for the enhancement of the support services offered to students to help in the mitigation of their curriculum difficulties, as well as their unpreparedness, which is also common among the Black students (Craig, 2011).

It is also important that after various programs meant to improve retention have been evaluated, they should be carried out. For instances, it is revealed that though students are given an opportunity to attend tutorials, the majority of them who had shown the desire for the same failed to take advantage of the programs. However, this can be

explained that students prefer to have tutorials offered by their peer friends. Other students also lack the time to attend such sessions because they have to spend most of their out-of-class time working to pay for their study. Thus, such measures as coming up with retention centers should be considered by the HBCUs to encourage their students to make use of various programs formulated to help them adapt to college life and excel in their various courses (Craig, 2011).

Equally, students must be encouraged to take advantage of their faculty advisors and mentors since the outcome of such processes are also essential in the determination of whether the students are retained in the long term. There is a statistical indication that some students do resort to depend on their own understanding of the courses as they choose it by themselves. Though it may not be 100% effective, there is a need for HBCUs to ensure that all students who are enrolled in their institutions consult with their faculty advisors prior to their selection and registration for courses (Craig, 2011).

Finally, HBCUs must pay attention to the need to go beyond the developing students intellectually. Instead, the production of all rounded professionals should become the first priority of HBCUs. This means that professional development should go hand in hand with personal development. As such, HBCUs can invest in organizing numerous workshops aimed at preparing their Black students for their future, right from their first year of study. The focus should be put on leadership and communication skills (Craig, 2011).

Other initiatives have been advanced in HBCUs to help retain students in school. As already indicated, they include programs like orientation, counseling and coaching, as well as provision of merit-based scholarships. Nevertheless, these initiatives are not

sufficient in the wake of new technology where students from one institution could share information in a real-time manner. This could invariably affect their stability in the institution. Thus, the trend is for universities to engage in practices that encourage social networking and therefore improve their communication.

Beck and Mattis (2009) observed that computer-based social networking has since become an integral part of university life in many HBCUs. Their study measured the social integration of freshmen in universities, which assessed the activities on the social media using some of the popular social media networks. The purpose was to understand how the concept of social integration applies to students through quantifying the students' activity. They also tested how social integration contributed to prediction of freshmen retention in HBCUs institution. This research assessed the validity of new measures of social integration against the traditional social integration such as workshops and conferences. The finding of the study showed that the extent to which a student is involved in media activities greatly determined his/her retention in the university. As such, they proposed that integration of social media and other computer-based systems in addition to the traditional methods of retention could help. In fact, the researchers noted that a lack of participation in social media by students in HBCUs could adversely affect the integration of the student in the learning environment.

Conclusion

The review of the literature was devoted to exploring the factors that affect freshman Black students' retention rate in HBCUs. The following research has provided sources that allow a better understanding of the barriers that Black students face in HBCUs, right from their first year of study. Moreover, the study has presented various

strategies that have been used to help increase the retention rate among Black students. Some recommendations on how these strategies can be improved were provided in the following research. Chapter 3 proceeded in elaborating on the approaches that were used during the actual study. The review of literature has led to a number of insights. Apart from what was investigated in this study; the challenges affecting the retention rate of the first year students in HBCUs, the study recommended a few areas, which can be considered by future researchers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presented the design of the research, the mode used in the selection of participants, the list of instruments, the various methodological assumptions that the author made during the study, the study procedures, and a brief on the data processing and analysis. The researcher presented the opinions, perception, experiences, and perspectives of the participants. Thus, the design highlighted the majority characteristics of a phenomenological study and how they were applied in this study.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative in approach. Unlike quantitative method, qualitative research enabled the researcher to study phenomena in the natural settings; therefore, the researcher was not able to control or manipulate his/her participants. The researcher remained open minded throughout the duration of study. The four major types of qualitative research include; (a) phenomenology, (b) case study, (c) grounded theory and (d) ethnography. This research study made use of a phenomenological design (Heidegger, 2005).

In a broad perspective, phenomenology makes reference to how a person perceives meaning of a given event (Heidegger, 2005). It is, thus, opposed to the researcher's own perception which was based on the external observation. Hence, it is focused on the experiences of the participants, factors that influenced the retention of freshmen students at HBCUs during the first-year experience. The study undertook to establish the stakeholders' understandings, perception, and perspectives of this particular issue under study. The design was best suited to establish what the experience of the first-year students at HBCUs was like and how it affected their willingness to persevere until they completed their studies. With this method, the

researcher's main objective was to explore and then describe the experience of the first-years at HBCUs; as was consciously being experienced. In this way, it was possible to understand how HBCUs students in their first-year of study constructed meaning of their experiences in school.

With this approach, the study was carried out in four major steps in accordance to the principles proposed by Creswell (1998). The first step was bracketing which was to allow the researcher to put aside formerly preconceived opinions and beliefs on this phenomenon. This helped eliminate any bias that would result due to the researcher's judgments. In the next step, the study accepted the meanings that participants attributed to the phenomenon as was to be communicated by the participants based on their own experience. This enabled the researcher to be in a common understanding with my participants on the phenomenon in question. The study then proceeded to analyze the facts as were given by the participants. This involved process, such as coding, categorizing, as well as seeking to make sense of the phenomena's essential meanings. From the resulting descriptive data, research was able to begin to find and organize common themes. This led the researcher to the description stage where the study was able to describe the phenomenon as was seen by the participants. The findings were then communicated in a critical and distinct way (Creswell, 1998).

As in other approaches to research, the phenomenological study has a number of advantages. The study approach enabled the researcher to observe the way processes were changing with time, adjust to the emerging ideas and issues, contribute to the development of new theories, as well as gather natural and not artificial data (Creswell, 2013). In this way, data was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the various factors that affect retention of students in HBCUs during the first year of study through analyzing the resulting rich data from individual participant experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Irrespective of the many advantages, the approach could also present the researcher with a number of disadvantages, which would have to be addressed for the quality of the data not to be compromised. First, the process of gathering data needed much time and resources. It was also not easy to analyze and interpret the resulting data. Compared to other approaches, such as positivism, it was always harder to control endpoints, progress and pace. The approach also made it difficult for the researcher to detect and prevent participants' related biases. Equally, it was not easy to present the study results since they were very qualitative in nature. Finally, the study was to use a small sample, which would not give a true representation of the phenomenon. However, the extensive data from current literature compensated for these biases.

Population and Selection of Participants

Being a phenomenological study, the scope was narrowed down to only one HBCU, Benedict College after getting permission from IRB. That means 15 freshman, students took part in the study. The student participants were randomly selected from the college. Benedict College, a private HBCU had been in existence since 1870 and was the second oldest HBCU in the state of South Carolina. The college offered programs in liberal arts and was having a population of 3000 students pursuing baccalaureate degree programs (Moss, 2013). The institution was also selected for this study because it was recently named by "Diverse Magazine" to be among the top 100 American Institutions graduating African Scholars (Moss, 2013). The participants chosen for this study were believed to be resourceful for obtaining data regarding the state of retention among the first-year students chosen for the study. They were randomly selected from among first year students pursuing their degree course at Benedict College. As Creswell (1998) noted, sampling method would give the students equal chances of taking part in the study and help avoid selection biases as would arise.

Data Collection

Qualitative research studies often have five main methods of data collection and triangulation/instrumentations: (a) open-ended questionnaires, (b) surveys, (c) interviews, (d) participant observations, and (e) direct observation. (Creswell, 1998). During this study, the researcher only used three main methods of data collections: (a) open-ended questionnaires, (b) surveys, and (c) interviews. This study made use of the unstructured interview. The unstructured interview was useful for obtaining information from the students who shall have been sampled to take part in the study (Creswell, 2013). As noted by Klink (2008), “this method became the most appropriate whenever authentic accounts of the subjective experience of the interviewees were sought” (p. 125). It enabled the researcher to go beyond the superficial responses that were received from the interviewee and increased the relevance of the questions. This enabled the research to obtain an accurate meaning of what respondents assigned to their meanings. However, “the approach was technical because the researcher needed to establish a close rapport/social relationship with the participants” (Klenke 2008, p. 125).

Two sets of interviews were conducted, one set lasting 20 minutes and the second set lasting 30-45 minutes. The first set focused on participants’ demographic data and sharing of first-year experiences. These included such information as student’s age, gender, the course being pursued, the family level of income, marital status, sponsorship, aspiration to proceed to graduate school, as well as the country of origin. The second set of interviews helped the researcher to get their participants’ lived experience. The questions revolved around such issues as coping strategies and barriers to college persistence. Equally, the respondents were encouraged to answer freely and even provide further explanations beyond what the questions demanded from them. While interviewing the respondents, the researcher used two major

approaches. First, the respondents were allowed to answer a set of interview questions while the researcher was making use of audiotapes with supporting notes to capture the interviewees' responses. "The researcher also asked certain additional questions as were be deemed necessary in obtaining accurate meaning the participants attribute to their experiences" (Klenke 2008, p. 126). After the information was captured, they transcribed into written form to ease the analysis.

Methodological Assumptions

Phenomenological research, like in the case with this research, has a number of assumptions. They included:

1. Critical truths on why most first year students in HBCUs drop out of school were grounded on their own lived experiences;
2. The findings reflected the understanding, perception and perspective of the participants;
3. The researcher's perception had no influence whatsoever on the outcome of the study.

Procedures

The researcher begun by seeking permission from the relevant authority at Benedict school. With the Institutional approval, the researcher proceeded to seek the approval of the IRB. Designing of data collection tools that the researcher was to use during the actual study then followed this. These were basically the unstructured questionnaires. The researcher then sought to carry out a random sampling to narrow down to the 15 first-year students to be considered for this study. Two important meetings then followed this with the participants. The first meeting was to explain to the participants the purpose of the study, seek their consent, and develop a rapport with them. The second meeting was majorly to test and adjust the data collection tools as a way of enhancing the validity of the study. This first stage enabled the researcher to gain enough understanding of the philosophical perspective in as far as studying

ways in which people do experience the phenomenon under concerned study (Cresswell, 1998). In the second stage of the study, the researcher was now ready for the actual study, during which data was collected. This involved the use of unstructured questionnaire to request for explanations from the participants regarding their daily experiences of the various factors that affect their retention in HBCUs. Information was majorly collected through three interviews as identified in the data collection section.

With the data from the field, the researcher proceeded to the analysis stage. The process involved phenomenological analysis of data. At this level, as Cresswell (1998) advices, the various protocols were divided into different statements with the units being transformed into various meaningful clusters. The transformation was then tied together with an aim of coming up with a general way of describing the students' experiences.

Descriptions were categorized into the kind of experiences the students reported to have and how they were experienced. However, before the presentation of the final report, the researcher conducted member checking as a strategy to increase the validity through elimination of any information deemed inaccurate or biased. This was in line with Murphy & Dingwall's (2003) advice. The two noted that member checking could help improve the accuracy of research interpretations and conclusions. Finally, the report was presented to give its readers a better understanding of the kind of experiences first-year students at HBCUs went through and factors that made it challenging for them to complete their studies.

Data Processing and Analysis

Once the data was collected, it was analyzed to generate assumptions. As a phenomenological study, the researcher followed certain procedures during data analysis. The analysis process proceeded through the reduction of methodology, themes and specific

statements' analysis, and finally, all possible meaning's search. The researcher underlined the importance of setting aside all kinds of pre-judgments that would compromise the reliability of the study results.

The researcher used the following methods to analyze the information collected:

1. The themes, ideas and patterns in the data were identified through coding. Axial coding was done to help organize the data and provide a means to introduce its interpretation. This coding was done using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software;
2. Summarized data was analyzed using recursive abstraction;
3. Narrative analysis was used to analyze the content of the interview responses to ascertain the meanings of situations, social, and cultural contexts of the respondent narratives;
4. The information obtained was presented using graphs and tables with adequate explanations using software to code the results.

During the entire analysis process, the major aim was the examination of the first year students' lived experience as were reported by them. The researcher did all it takes to avoid a case where the result could influence his interpretation. This means that the commonality of the first-years lived experiences was entirely determined through the analysis of the participants' interpretation of their experiences. Similar to the researcher's opinions, the theoretical descriptions were not used to influence analysis. The researcher also carried out member checking to test the accuracy of my interpretations and conclusions with the participants before presenting the final report (Murphy & Dingwall, 2003). After description and analysis, a report was prepared in accordance with the required formatting guidelines of the research journal (IRB)

this research study was submitted to. The researcher ensured that the purpose of this research (as stated in the introduction chapter) was compelling and that the research methodology and analysis were explained in detail.

Research Bias

Being based on unstructured interview, the researcher could be tempted to direct and somehow control the participants. Any feeling of control from the researcher could affect the willingness of the participants to give accurate information. However, the researcher planned for member checking which helped to correct any inaccuracy in reporting before the presentation of the first report.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher made a number of considerations prior to, during and after the study to ensure that the study was conducted within the acceptable standard of any scientific work. First, the researcher contacted the school administration to seek the permission to carry out the study among its students. The researcher then proceeded to meet the students who were selected for the study to seek their consent, as the researcher also developed a rapport with them. During the same time, the researcher inquired about the participants' availability during the study period. Finally, the researcher also guaranteed the respondents and the school management of their privacy and assured them that any data that were collected during the study were going to be used strictly for the purpose of the research study only. All written data were stored in a locked file cabinet and computer generated documents, stored in a password-protected computer.

Chapter Summary

The chapter has highlighted on the methodology that were used during this study. Specifically, it presents the design of the research, the mode that was used in the selection of participants, the list of instruments, the various methodological assumptions that the author made during the study, the study procedures, as well as briefs on the data processing and analysis. With this understanding, it became easy for the reader to proceed to chapter four where the study's findings presented and gathered the analyzed data to be discussed and presented.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore factors that influence the retention of freshmen students at HBCUs during the first-year experience. A high rate of dropout has been noted in HBCUs. Thus, it provided a compelling reason to investigate why some students might choose to drop out of college during their first year while others continue. This was despite the environmental conditions that they live and learn in were the same. In order to achieve the identified purpose, the study sought to identify the state of retention among freshman students in HBCUs in their first year of study, the strategies that HBCUs have put in place to improve the retention rate of freshmen during the first year of study, and identify the challenges that such strategies might be facing. In addition, the study also sought to explore the factors that may contribute to the improvement of education experience at HBCUs for freshmen in their first year of study.

First Year Experience for Freshman Students at HBCU's

The research question sought to find the perceptions of first year freshman students and their experiences in an HBCU Institution. Fifteen students were selected from one Historically Black College and University asked about their experiences in the Institution as freshmen students. They were also asked to state whether they liked studying in those Institutions. Half of the students interviewed said that the HBCUs were unorganized when it comes to issues relating to Black students, despite of the fact that the institutions were specifically aimed at serving the interests of Black students.

Respondent A said, "The only reason that keeps me in this Institution is the scholarship,

otherwise I would have already transferred”, “I am motivated by my friends and some professors to continue studying in this college,” Respondent B said. The environment itself was not conducive to study due to high socialization including in the library. The environment was challenging due to the adaption of North and South cultures while also some professors made the study for Black students to be challenging. All students interviewed felt that they were not academically productive individually during the first year.

The first year experience was also stressful to Black students and called for the development of a more manageable time-management schedule to allow freshmen Black students to adapt to the new environment rather than them having to hit the ground running. Respondent C noted that the first year experience was great irrespective of the personal challenges, which she believed every Black student faced.

“The first year is challenging in the sense that students have to adapt from the North to South, some professors also give answers to the work while others make it difficult for students,” Respondent B said. “First years is not academically productive to freshmen students as they are involved in adjusting to the new environment,” noted Respondent K.

Influence of social life was identified as the reason why a number of Black students liked the HBCU environment. Respondent E described the learning environment at HBCU as quick and challenging. He noted that some students were focused on their study because they had a clear mission to accomplish through their studies. Respondent E also stated that the HBCU environment provided a good learning experience for first years because they learned valuable lessons about life through

challenges. Respondent H noted that the HBCU learning experience was different, new atmosphere, nervous, adapting to people and climate to the South and academically challenging even though a good number of freshmen students felt like they were in a financial trap.

Table 1

Research Question: Emergent Retention Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-Themes
Relevance HBCU learning environment for freshmen students	Real Life Application. Supportive professors Ease of adopting the new environment Being productive academically Need for better and manageable time schedules
Personal supporting factors for retention	Family support Sponsorship from government Advice from students who have gone through HBCU Motivation to achieve higher goals in life
Social factors influencing retention rates in HBCU	Trendy social lifestyle Racial groups that promote culture and practice Racial integration and collaboration among students Attendance policy from the institution Peer tutors to guide freshmen students Social involvement in activities around the institution Clamor for freedom by freshmen students

“The experience for freshmen students is different because of the new environment and some students are nervous, and are just trying to adapt to new people and new environment,” said Respondent G.

The first year experience was a representation of freedom to some freshman students. Respondent E noted that since they were maturing into adulthood they ought to have prepared for different things. “The idea of the HBCU experience is getting involved in social and co-curricular activities,” said Respondent E. Another Respondent, G “freshmen are supposed to transition from high school to college life. This means that they must deal with many challenging situations that they must overcome.”

Respondents E and L then stated students should be able to adapt to the environment. Two respondents indicated that HBCU environment was supportive of their needs and the Institutions provided unique chances and opportunities for Black students to learn about life lessons. Freshman students could benefit from academic coaches that are available for those who need academic assistance. However, it was noted throughout the responses that challenges of adapting to the new environment as well as meeting new people abounded for many first years. Different climate and being away from their country of origin also came out as one of the challenges that freshman students faced in HBCU’s.

Table 2

Reasons and Motivational Factors for Joining HBCU

Number of respondents	Reasons they joined the HBCU	Motivational factors
2	They wanted to experience a new environment	The opportunity to meet new students
3	Good social and Academic environment	Support from professors and instructors
5	Advice from the parents and friends	Being focused and a promise of a good future
5	Federal and Institutional support	Financial and social support from the government and family

Factors that Influence Freshmen Students to Persist during the First-year Experience

Respondents were asked to describe their experiences and the motivational factors that made them to continue studying in an HBCU institution despite of the challenges. They were specifically asked about particular unique factors that made them to prefer and wish to continue with their studies at HBCU institution. Majority of the respondents indicated that good grades and better life was the main motivation factors that made them to persist with their studies. They also pointed out the care from professors who assist them in their programs and challenges.

Respondent H indicated that family was the main motivational factor. To him, being involved in different organizations while on study was a unique factor that one cannot get outside the learning environment. Respondent I and Respondent J indicated that the fact that they could maintain a high GPA to enable them to transfer to another institution was their main motivational factor. They also revealed that they stuck around

because the institution was related to their family tradition. All respondents indicated that HBCU's presented more opportunities for them to learn and meet new people than if they were in other institutions or at home. They also stated that work was manageable in HBCU's and opportunities were unlimited. Family, academic coaches and friends mainly motivated one respondent. The style of instruction by the professors also came up as a motivational factor to this student. Respondent L stated that she was motivated by her professor's interest in academic and would want to attain the level of the professor in academic excellence.

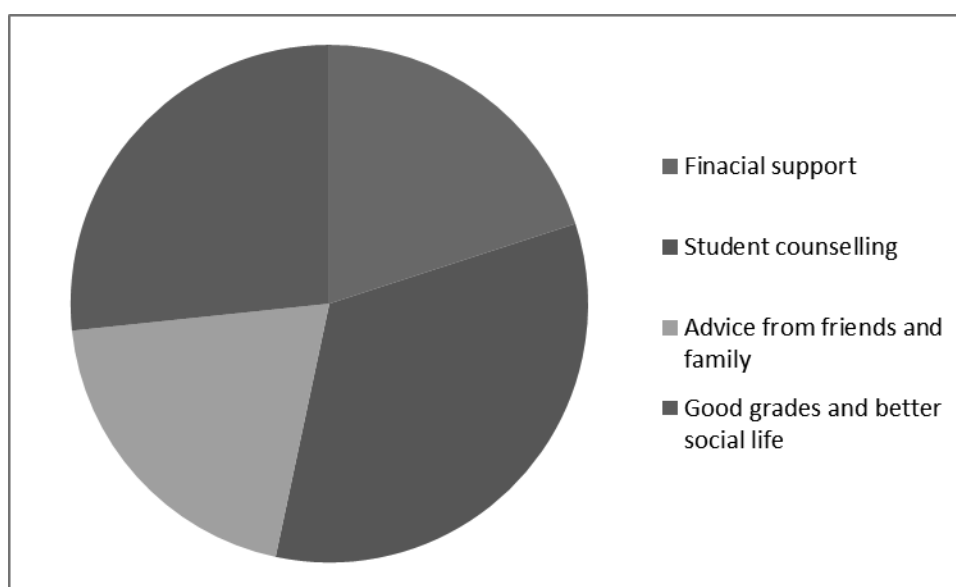


Figure 1. Q1: Factors that influence retention of freshmen students in HBCU

Practices used to Retain Freshmen Students at HBCUs during the First-year Experience

The research question sought to identify the practices that HBCU institutions have put in place to retain freshman students. It also sought to explore the views of students on the anti-racial and anti-ethnic differences and if they were used as strategies to retain

students in HBCU institutions. Respondent A stated that the Freshman Institute and Study night for mid-term and final exams were instrumental in determining whether students would be retained in their first year. The respondent, however, did not see the connection between anti-racial and anti-ethnic differences on the one hand and freshman student retention strategies on the other without giving further elaboration.

Respondent B acknowledged the academic coaches and lab instructors as playing a major role in retention of Black students in HBCU. The respondent answered on the affirmative when asked about anti-racial and anti-ethnic programs adding that a broad range of different groups played a major role in retaining the students in HBCU'S.

Respondent C indicated that the Freshman Institute played an important role in the retention rate of students in HBCU's. He also stated on the negative that diversity of the students was reflected in the selection of students who were enrolled in the institutions. The institutions can do a better work by enrolling more diverse groups in terms of race and ethnicity.

Respondent D noted that HBCUs did not play any role in the retention rate of students without elaborating on her answer. She only acknowledged the probable significance of diversified ethnic and racial groups at the HBCU institutions. Respondent E declined to answer on the role of HBCU institutions in retaining freshman students. Instead, she stated that an open-enrollment institution should allow any student regardless of their race or ethnicity to be enrolled in their programs.

Respondent F stated that institutional practices contributed to the retention of freshman students and observed that any race or ethnic group has an opportunity to succeed academically in HBCU institutions. Respondent G indicated that they really

didn't see any practices that would be beneficial besides having study night during the final examinations. The respondent answered on affirmative that ethnic and racial groups were beneficial to the general student population in terms of initiatives to assert integration and achievement. Other respondents indicated that academic meetings contributed to retention of students since every student was welcome. Peer tutors and seminar courses also contributed to retention of students in HBCU institutions.

The Proposed Retention Strategies at HBCUs

HBCUs have used different strategies to retain their first year students. In the past, this has not been fully integrated in the university overall learning environment. The freshmen first years have their own expectations with regard to their retention in schools. The research question sought to explore the views of freshman students at HBCU's that historically Black institutions can use to retain freshmen in their first years of study. It also sought to know their advice to other freshmen students to join a particular HBCU to retain the number of Black students. Majority of the respondents indicated that they felt that Historically Black Higher Educational Institutions could retain students if more academic advising was made available. The respondents indicated they would advise potential freshmen in HBCU institution to be consistent in seeking for academic advice from their instructors and professors. Respondent B noted that more activities, tutors, and labs would contribute to retention rate among HBCUs, advised other students to be engaged socially, and seek for academic assistance whenever there is need.

HBCU Institutions were also required to offer more majors and allow co-ed visitation from other professors. Equally, students' expectations were focused on completing their class assignment with less social life and more focus on academics.

Most respondents stated that HBCUs could have a better relationship with students from faculty and staff for the betterment in retention during the first year experience. Freshman students also required encouragement to do better in their academics irrespective of their racial or ethnic differences. The freshman students should also keep good company and avoid social gatherings that would lead them into trouble with other students or the school administration.

Respondent E said that class attendance policy was likely to enhance the academic progress of freshman students in HBCUs and helps to retain them during their first years. Freshmen students should have fewer parties during social activities. Freshmen students should not look forward to transferring to another institution because they will be disrupted from important issues.

Respondent G indicated that surveys about freshman characteristics and expectation during first year would enable the institution to understand their needs in terms of basic and secondary needs. Freshman also needed to know that they were under no obligation to attend an HBCU based on their characteristics but rather because they qualified to be in that institution. They were also expected to plan well for their work and avoid procrastination, always being cognitive of academics and social life. The two should be done at the right time. Professor participation in academic matters was also a practice that could lead to high retention rate besides freshman students being motivated to make it.

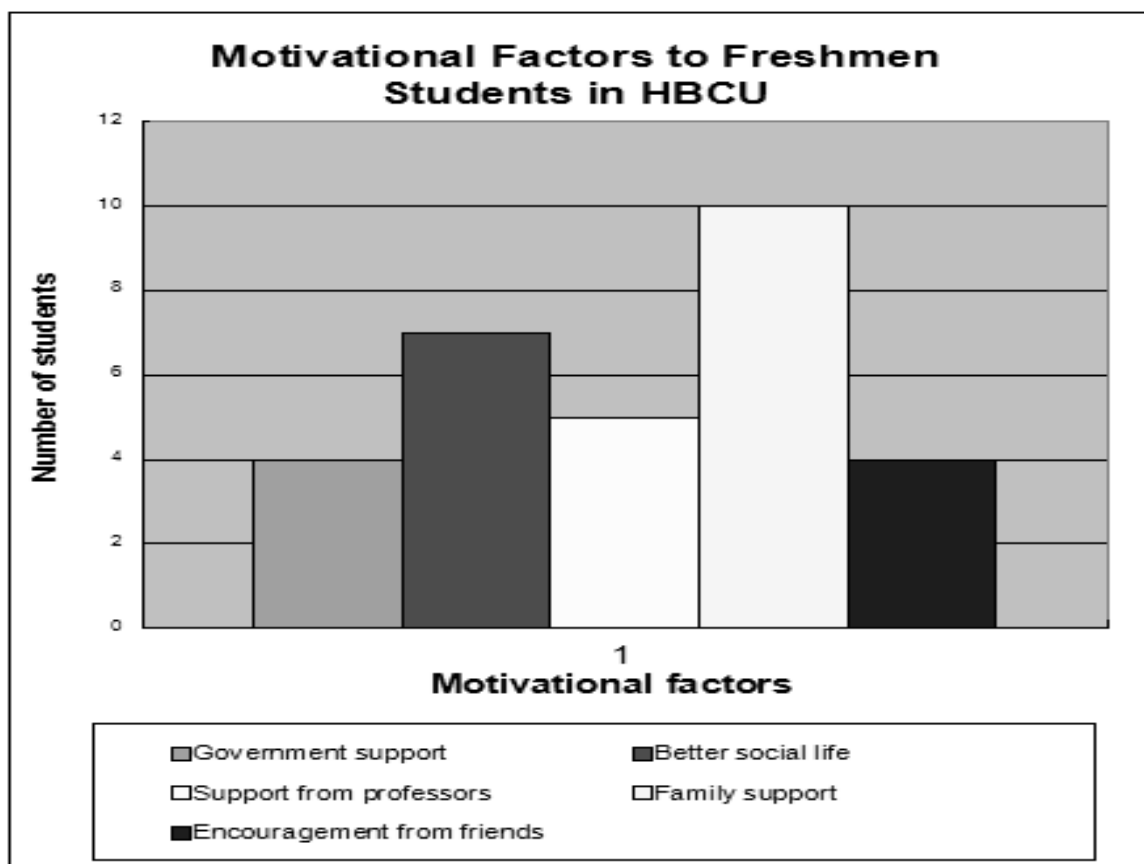


Figure 2. Q4: Motivational factors.

Meaningfulness and Essence of the Lived Experiences of Freshmen Students at HBCUs

The research question sought to get the views of freshmen retention in HBCUs for first year and the idea of Black student experience in a first year study in HBCU.

Respondent A said academic coaching played a role in retention while social life was the main idea in HBCUs. Respondent B indicated that sincerity of academic coaching would contribute to high retention rate in HBCUs during the first year of study. The respondent also indicated that it would be challenging adapting to new students; adding that learning to communicate with other students from different backgrounds and cultures would also

have been a challenge. Respondent C indicated that more freedom played a role in determining the retention rate. He stated that the idea of Black experience was getting involved in social and co-curricular activities. Respondent D said that the idea of the Black experience was adapting to college life. Students have had to adapt to the transition from high school to college, the challenge of being their own, as well as the development of becoming a young adult. Respondent E said the idea of the Black experience is to maintain good grades academically to progress from one semester to the next semester.

Majority of the respondent indicated that the importance of having guidance and peers counseling during first year was essential to high retention rate. He noted that Black experience was challenging and socially involving. Respondent G indicated that many Black first year students attended HBCUs with the idea of getting experience and later transfer to another institution. The respondent indicated that the Black experience is to value transition and education.

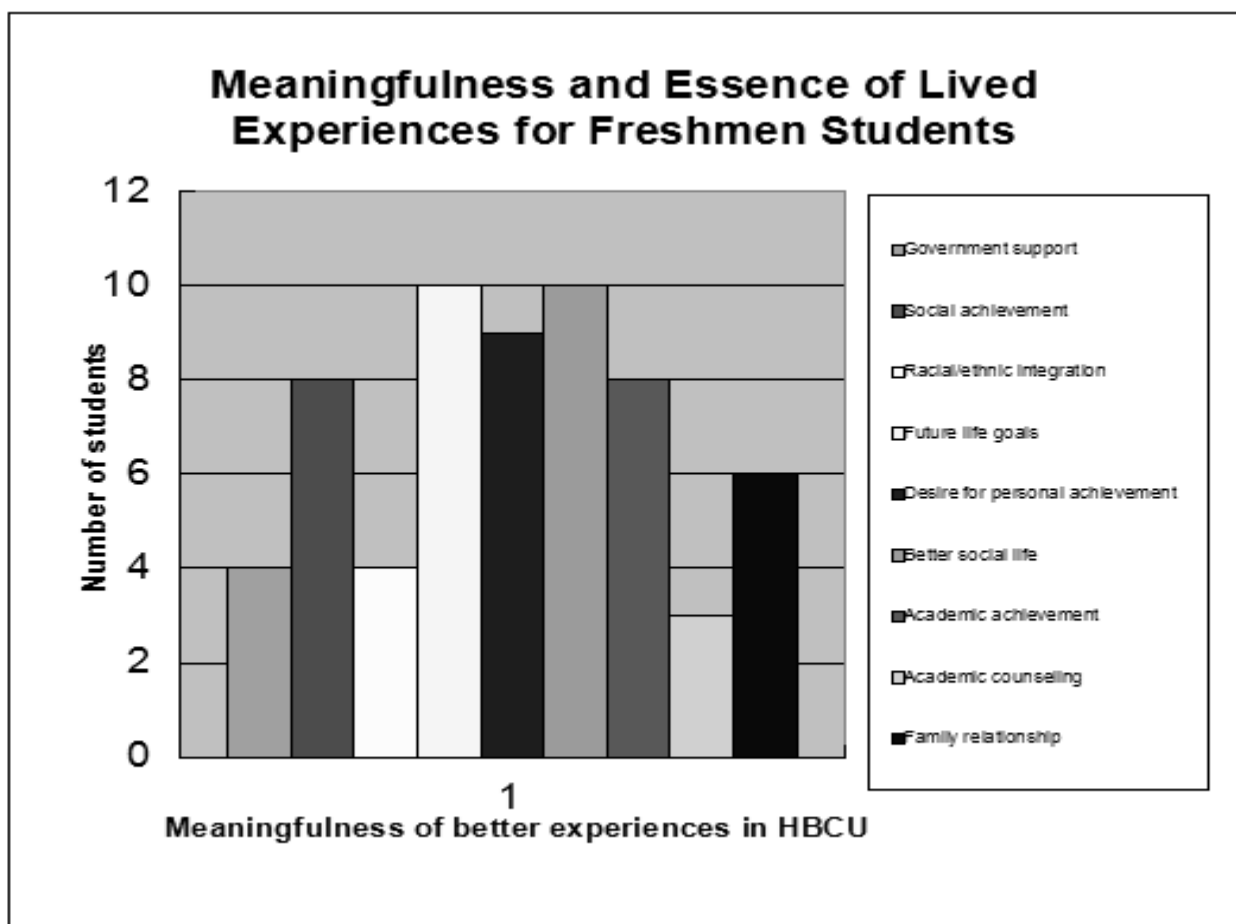


Figure 3. Q5: Meaningfulness and Essence of Lived Experience of Freshmen students

Most respondents felt that they were trapped into a promise of better lives in future if they attended HBCUs; indicating that Black experience was socially, academically, and financially painful. They also indicated that freshmen students wanted to feel like it was within their interest to be in HBCU and not that they were forced to be in HBCU. The idea of the Black experience is uplifting Black culture and what made them to qualify for HBCU enrollment. The respondents also were excited about programs that celebrated the cultural diversities as well as help them to appreciation. The interest in establishment of systems that helped first years to integrate in the learning environment contributed to their continuity with their studies in HBCUs. First year students were motivated with the

level of involvement that the administration and professors showed in helping them to cope up with different challenges in the learning environment.

The next chapter provided the summary of the findings as presented in this chapter. Chapter five also concluded the study by identifying the connection between the retention rates and some certain factors as revealed in this chapter. The last section was a recommendation for future research on the factors that affect retention rates in HBCUs for freshmen students.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The retention rate in Historically Black Colleges and Universities has not been up to the level of other universities in the country. Several reasons can be applied to the differences in the retention rate between the two types of institutions. Motivation for freshmen students in Historically Black Colleges and University is thus influenced by quiet a number of factors. Some of these factors can be taken care of by the various HBCU Institutions. This chapter presented the summary of the study results in relation to the factors that affect retention among freshman students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In so doing, the researcher offers the interpretation of the findings. The second section was a conclusion of the study and the third was the recommendation for first year students and HBCU Institutions to take into account to ensure the high retention rate.

Summary

Since 1965 when HBCUs were established, a number of strategies have been applied with the support from the government through funding to ensure retention rates for Black students remain high. The strategies include college programs for incoming students, retention and counseling centers, merit based scholarships, emergency loans, private and corporate donations, and academic support services, among others.

However, the landscape has changed first with students' perception of the strategies differing from one institution to the other. Therefore, the strategies have been successful to a larger extent as more than 80% of students who enroll in HBCUs complete their studies. The government through the Department of Education has continued to support HBCU strategies in form of grants. A large percentage of the grants

are used for programs that are aimed at boosting the retention of freshmen students during the first year of study.

This reflects the effort by the federal government to continue supporting retention programs in HBCUs as a way of closing the gap between graduation rates and retention rates. The Swail's Conceptual Framework that aims at achieving high retention rates in HBCUs helps to focus on the barriers and issues that Black students encounter in their learning environment at the HBCUs.

The findings of the study showed a variation in the factors that affect retention rates among Black students at HBCUs. One of the most outstanding factors was the issue of social life where respondents agreed that learning environment at HBCUs was largely depended on the social environment. For instance, in the past, students have been forced to work for long hours as a way of boosting their performance as well as taking a longer period for study because of lack of finance. Nevertheless, this has changed with time moving towards a lack of time to study since the environment is awash with many parties and activities that disrupt students from their studies. Some students in HBCUs have also dropped out of school citing the difficult programs that lead to poor performances. There was also the issue of poor teaching approaches from the professors and tutors and also self-advertisement of courses resulting for insufficient prerequisites. However, the environment is different as respondents cited a commitment from professors as well as numerous coaching programs that help them to choose courses in which they can perform well.

However, the contemporary perspective is that freshmen students in HBCUs need to seek for advice from their friends who are already attending to such schools as well as

liaise with their parents for support (Reichert & Absher 2013; Jacobi, 2011; Mikyong & Conrad, 2006). They should also have a positive perception when enrolling in HBCUs rather than being driven by emotions about race or ethnic affiliations. Moreover, first year students also need to have a social attachment or involvement so that when they finally enroll into a certain HBCU they can participate in positive social activities rather than spending their time in bad groups

HBCUs can also secure high retention rate by ensuring that the quality standards of their education programs are high and support the students to meet their needs.

Academic integration is also an important aspect that HBCUs can use to ensure that the first year students are engaged in interesting and relevant activities while in school. This will reduce their thoughts about dropping out of school because the school environment is boring or it does not seem to help them meet their objectives.

The respondents in this study had various factors that could affect the retention rate in HBCUs. The factors ranged from academic to institutional ones; including the kind of programs that are put in place, the level of support from professors and fellow students, and the environmental conditions. The conditions include the perceptions that freshmen students have about the learning environment. Furthermore, family support and advice from fellow students also have a big role in the retention rate of students in HBCUs. The academic factors came out as highly influential indicative of the desire for many freshmen students in their first year experience to focus on learning more than any other activities in the learning environment. For instance, the previous courses undertaken, content knowledge of the programs, critical thinking capabilities, study and learning skills, among others, were of great importance to the respondents.

This also included the academic related extracurricular activities such as student coaching that were well represented in the present HBCUs. Unlike in the past, when HBCUs began, the present environment offers first year students an opportunity to participate in constructive extracurricular activities. They are sometimes able to do this in groups. The family motivation is also important when it comes to retention rates in HBCU's as many first years are likely to view their support as an experience. This form of support might be outside the control of the school. However, the school administration can develop programs that help to bring parents and other family members on board so that students feel their presence. The first year experience for freshmen in HBCUs needs to be nurtured by all parties from the school administration to the family members.

The feeling that the students also merited and qualified to be enrolled in a particular HBCU is also important in making their experience memorable. Most freshmen do not want to be forced into an HBCU but rather they would want to qualify and feel appreciated for their enrollment. Ethnic and racial integration is a factor that determines the level of retention in HBCUs. The institutions have various groups and organizations that assist the first year students to appreciate their culture as well as the culture of others. These groups are important especially in alleviating the feeling that the institution is segregated in terms of racial or ethnic affiliations. There have been an increase in the number of students from different racial groups enrolling in HBCUs and this is contributing to the feeling of fairness and equality in terms of programs that are offered in such schools.

Conclusion

From this study, it was evident that first year students in HBCUs have different experiences in terms of their integration in the learning environment. The experiences have an effect on the retention rate and later graduate rates. First year experience determines the formation of perceptions that student finally have about their school. Social life and academic experiences are the most influencing factors when it comes to retention in HBCUs. The HBCUs have initiated programs that are student-friendly such as academic coaching and formation of positive groups to help students with coping with the learning environment in the HBCUs. Such programs are playing a big role in the retention rates of these institutions. Most of the students that enroll in HBCUs have expectations in terms of experiences and learning environment that they have when they enroll in HBCUs. Thus, it is important for the institutions to put in place strategies that will help them achieve their expectations. The family and government support is also essential in ensuring that HBCUs have high retention rates as well as high graduation rates. It is important for school administration to engage all stakeholders including students in creating programs that will address the expressed and unexpressed needs of the first year students. This allows for launching them in a new environment where they feel positive about everything. Therefore, they look forward to graduating after a specific period.

With an increasing number of students from different ethnic and racial backgrounds enrolling in HBCUs, the issue of integration is essential so that no one student feels that they school system is not appreciating their culture. Ethnic and racial groups in HBCUs play a crucial role in assisting the students to appreciate their

background as well as those of others. HBCUs have had low retention rates for first year Black student. As such, it is important to put in place strategies that will address the influencing factors. Such strategies that are implemented must rely on scientific facts as expressed in various research findings. This will help the HBCUs to implement programs that meet the needs of the students as well as institutionalize them to become a regular part of the college service. It is also important that all institution personnel and departments are trained on how to deal with first students as way of making their initial experiences worthwhile. The institutions also need to be aggressive in getting involved in the social and academic lives of the students as well as be sensitive to their needs. This will help them to address the most important needs first. While incorporating the new students in the learning system/the strategies that are implemented must focus on building trust between students and the administration. The quality of education also needs to be high and freshmen students given advice on the selection of courses. Centralizing academic services with a view of creating a community of support will create the perception among freshmen of equality of education standards across the education sector.

Recommendations

There are different perspectives on the factors that influence retention rates in HBCUs as revealed in the literature review chapter (Reichert and Absher, 2013; Jacobi, 2011; and Mikyong & Conrad, 2006). Unfortunately, most of the perceptions are based on the phenomenological studies from different researchers. Generally, HBCUs have normally experienced a high number of admissions every year. But the graduation rates have remained low and sometimes dwindling. In the past, the HBCUs have had little

input in helping Black students to remain in universities until they graduate. However, this has slowly changed even as more HBCU administration becomes conscious of the needs of their new students.

However, there is a need for quantitative empirical studies to determine the factors that influence the retention rate of freshmen students in HBCUs, including family support, faculty support, racial groups, student perceptions of HBCU education, and lifestyle among others. Specifically, the research has pointed to various issues that can be explored by future quantitative researchers in details. They include the following:

- 1) To what extent has racial or ethnic segregation, in HBCUs played a role in the students' retention rates among the HBCUs?
- 2) What is the current quality standard of education in the current HBCUs and how is this related to students' retention rate?
- 3) To what extent are students being prepared to participate in positive social activities rather than spending their time in bad groups prior to their joining of HBCUs?
- 4) To what extent have the federal government's efforts to support retention programs helped in closing the gap between graduation rates and retention rate?
- 5) To what extent has students in HBCUs embraced the various retention strategies put in place to improve their retention, and therefore, graduation rates?
- 6) What is the level of effectiveness of the various strategies being implemented to help improve the retention rate among the HBCU students?

- 7) To what extent has the families of students joining HBCUs proved effective in ensuring improved retention among students in HBCUs?

The proposed studies take into account the fact that the factors highlighted in these study as affecting retention rate among the first year HBCUs students are changing even as lifestyle changes. Therefore, empirical studies should be done to review the programs in HBCUs as a way of ensuring that they reflect the changes in the lifestyle. It will help ensure that the future studies are also able to factor in the changing perceptions from students of what makes an ideal learning environment in HBCUs.

From the findings during the literature review, it can be recommended that education stakeholders incorporate parents and family members in their strategies to achieve high retention rates. Another finding from the literature review was that academic coaching and advises are also not fully utilized in the programs that seek to address the problem of low retention rates among students in HBCUs. Therefore, institutions should form programs that emphasize academic coaching and proper communication between students and their instructors to help in establishing a rapport between them during the initial years of enrollment. This could need a study to establish the extent to which the current the current programs have succeeded in taking advantage of academic coaching and proper communication between students and their instructors; with a view of helping in establishing a rapport between them during the initial years of enrollment.

It is also recommended that first year students receive effective orientation to the school environment so that they can enter the system with an open mind and an objective to be met. To be affective as a future strategy, it will require an empirical study on the

level of effectiveness of the current first years' orientation programs aimed at orienting first year students to school environments. This will allow the HBCUs to come up with better orientation programs for the fresh students to the new environment. It also assists in making first year students persevere to conditions that might not be pleasant or encouraging to them. The school should also encourage students to join organizations that are positive so that they do not enter up getting socialized in bad groups.

Furthermore, through research findings, HBCUs can put in place systems to help the students deal with the social life and the challenges that they face when they enroll in a new environment. Theoretically, there is a need to establish social integration mechanisms in HBCUs through social involvement with a focus on retaining the students in school. Already, some respondents have indicated that increased involvement in the social activities is a motivation for them to remain in the college. Engaging campus life will make them to persist to the end. The need for a comprehensive first year program should be approached by commitment from all stakeholders in education for HBCUs institutions. Nevertheless, such comprehensive programs should only be informed by the available facts, involve all personnel and departments; let students be the center of focus. The program should also meet the financial standards and fiscal responsibility. The programs should also enable monitoring of students needs as well as their changing lifestyle in campus.

REFERENCES

- Allen, W. R. (2010). The color of success: African-American college student outcomes at predominantly White and Historically black public colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1), 26-45.
- Allen, W. R., Epps, E. G. & Haniff, N. (1991). *College in black and white: African American Students in predominantly white and in historically black public universities*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Allport, G. (1971). *Personality: A psychological interpretation*. London: Constable.
- American College Testing Program. (2010). *Improving college retention rates*. Retrieved from <http://www.act.org/>
- Andrea, V. & Gosling, D. (2005). *Improving teaching and learning in higher education: A whole institution approach*. Maidenhead, UK: Society for research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- Arum, R. & Roska, J. (2011). *Academically adrift: limited learning on college campuses*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Astin, A.W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25(4), 297–308.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Barkley, A. (2011). Academic coaching for enhanced learning. *NACTA Journal*. 51(1), 76-81.
- Bataille, G & Brown, B. (2006). *Faculty career paths: Multiple routes to academic success and satisfaction*. Wesport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

- Batsey, C. (2008). *Historically Black Colleges and Universities*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.
- Beck, R. & Mattis, C. (2009). Facebook usage as a predictor of retention at a private 4-year institution. *Journal of College Student Retention*. 11(3), 311-322.
- Benjamin, L. (1997). *Black women in academy: Promises and perils*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Berg, G. (2010). *Low-income students and perpetuation of inequality: Higher education in America*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub.
- Bronstein, S. (2007). *Supplemental instruction: supporting persistence in barrier courses*. Thesis (Ed.D.): University of Massachusetts.
- Brown, C. & Bartee, R. (2009). *The broken cisterns of African American education: academic performance and achievement in the post-Brown era*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub.
- Brown, C. & Freeman, K. (2004). *Black colleges : New perspectives on policy and practice*. Westport, CT.: Praeger.
- Burns, P. (2006). *Success in college: From C's in high school to A's in college*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Byrne, D. (2006). *HBCU's models for success: Supporting achievement and retention of black males*. Brooklyn, NY: Word for Word Publishing.
- Carey, C. (2008). *African Americans in science: An encyclopedia of people and progress*. Santa Barbara, CA.: ABC-CLIO.

- Chau J. (2012). More students are enrolled in college and on financial aid, annual report shows. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved March 3 2012, from http://chronicle.com/article/More-Students-Are_Enrolled-in/131320/.
- Chickering, A. & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity*. San, Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Craig, W. O. (2011). Strategies for improving the retention of engineering and technology students at historically *black* colleges and universities (HBCU). *International Transaction Journal of Engineering, Management, & Applied Sciences & Technologies*, 2(5), 561-570.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cuyjet, M. (2006). *African American men in college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Darryl, T. R. (2010). *The influence of student involvement with campus life on the retention of African American students enrolled at Public Historically Black University*. Retrieved from <http://repository.lib.ncsu.edu/ir/bitstream/1840.16/5067/1/etd.pdf>
- Deci, E. & Ryan, R. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Publishing.
- Edgerton, R. & Pew Charitable Trusts. (1998). *Historically Black colleges & universities take a closer look at student retention*. Philadelphia: Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Fleming, J. (2012). *Enhancing minority student and retention and academic performance: What we can learn from program evaluations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Flowers, L. A. (2004). *Diversity issues in American colleges and universities: Case studies of higher education and student affairs professionals*. Springfield, III: C.C. Thomas.
- Fort, E. (2013). *Survival of the historically black colleges and universities: Making it happen*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Frierson, H., Pearson, W. & Wyche, J. (2009). *Black American males in higher education: Diminishing proportions*. Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Gallien, L. & Peterson, M. (2006). *Instructing and mentoring the African American college student: Strategies for success in higher education*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Gasman, M. & Baez, B. (2008). *Understanding minority-serving institutions*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Gasman, M. & Tudico, C. (2008). *Historically black colleges and universities: triumphs, troubles, and taboos*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gasman, M., & Tudico, C. L. (2010). *Historically black colleges and universities: Triumphs, troubles and taboos*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Gravetter, F. J. & Forzano, L. B. (2010). *Research methods for the behavioral sciences*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Hale, F. (2006). *How black colleges empower black students: Lessons for higher education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

- Heidegger, M. (2005). *Introduction to phenomenological research*. Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Jackson, C. (2003). *Historically black colleges and universities: A reference handbook*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Jacobi, M. (2011). Mentoring and undergraduate academic success: A literature Review. *Review of Educational Research*, 61(4), 505-532.
- Jones, L. (2001). *Retaining African Americans in higher education: Challenging paradigms for retaining students, faculty, and administrators*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Kasbeek, D. (2013). *Reframing retention strategy for institutional improvement*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing.
- Landefeld, T. (2009). *Mentoring and diversity: Tips for students and professionals for developing and maintaining a diverse community*. Dordrecht; New York: Springer.
- Leary, M. & Hoyle, R. (2009). *Handbook of individual differences in social behavior*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Lee, K. (2012). *An analysis of the institutional factors that influence retention and 6-year graduation rates at historically black colleges and universities*. Retrieved from <http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/5244/LeeK.MP2012.pdf?sequence=1>

- Lindsay, B. & Justiz, M. (2001). *The quest for equity in higher education: Toward new paradigms in an evolving affirmative action era*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Love, B. J. (2010). Issues and problems in the retention of black students in predominantly White institutions of higher education. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 26*(1), 27-36.
- Mikyong, K., & Conrad, C. F. (2006). The impact of historically black colleges and universities on the academic success of African-American students. *Research in Higher Education, 47*(4), 399-427.
- Montgomery, J.C., Jeffs, M., Schlegel, J. and Jones, T. (2009). The first year introduction program as a predictor of student academic performance. *Journal of Applied Research in the community college, 17*(1), 60-64.
- Moss, W. (2013). *Benedict College*. Available at
<<https://hbcuconnect.com/colleges/8/benedict-college>>
- Newkirk, V. (2012). *New life for historically black colleges and universities: A 21st century perspective*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- Ortiz, A. & Santos, S. (2009). *Ethnicity in college: Advancing theory and improving diversity practices on campus*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Palmer, R. & Wood, L. (2012). *Black men in college: Implications for HBCUs and beyond*. New York: Routledge.
- Palmer, R., Hilton, A. & Fountaine, T. (2012). *Black graduate education of historically black colleges and universities: trends experiences and outcomes*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

- Pan, W. & Bai, H. (2009). A multilevel approach to assessing the interaction effects on college student retention. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 11(2), 287-301.
- Pryor, J. et al. (2009). *The American Freshman: national norms, Fall 2009*. Retrieved from <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/pubs/TFS/Norms/Monographs/TheAmericanFreshman2009.pdf>.
- Reichert, M., & Absher, M. (2013). Taking another look at educating African American engineers: The importance of undergraduate retention. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 86(3), 241-253.
- Rocconni, L.M. (2011). The impact of learning communities on first-year students' growth and development in college. *Research in Higher Education*. 52(2), 178-193.
- Rowser, J. F. (2001). Are African American students' perceptions of their needs an implication for retention? *Journal of Black Studies*, 27, 718-726.
- Schuh, J.H., Kones, S.R., & Harper, S.R. (2010). *Student services: A handbook for the profession*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing.
- Seidman, A. (2009). *College student Retention: Formula for student success*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Skipper, T. (2003). *Involvement in campus activities and the retention of first year college students*. Columbia, SC: National Resource Center.
- Snowmont, J., McCown, R. & Biehler, R. (2012). *Psychology applied to teaching*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

- Strommer, D. (1993). *Portal of entry: university at colleges and undergraduate division*. Columbia, S.C: National Resource Center for the Freshman Year Experience.
- Sutherland, T. et al. (2002). *Active learning toolkit*. Sarasota, FL: American Accounting Association.
- Swail, W.S. (2000). Preparing America's disadvantaged for college: programs that increase college opportunity. In A. F. Cabrera & S. M. La Nasa (Ed.), *Understanding the college choice of disadvantaged students*. New Directions for Institutional Research, No. 107 (p. 85–101). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Swail, W.S., Redd, K.E., & Perna, L.W. (2003). *Retaining minority students in higher education: A framework for success*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, III: University of Chicago Press.
- Tinto, V. (1996). Reconstructing the first year of college. *Planning for Higher Education*, 25(1), 1–6.
- Townsend, R. D. (2007). Improving African American student retention through social involvement and first-year programs. *The Bulletin*, 75(6), 1-3. Retrieved from <http://www.acui.org/publications/bulletin/article.aspx?issue=454&id=5474>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *Federal student financial aid handbook*. Retrieved from www.ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1112FSAHbkVol1Ch1.pdf.
- Upcraft, L. & Gardner, J. (1990). *The freshmen year experience: Helping students survive and succeed in college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey - Bass Publishers.

- Watson, L. (2002). *How minority students experience college: Implication for planning and policy*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Webberman, A.L. (2011). Academic coaching to promote student success: An interview with Carol Carter. *Journal of Developmental Education*. 35(2). 18-20.
- Whitt, E. J., et al. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Williams, D., Howell, S. & Hricko, M. (2006). *Online assessment, measurement, and evaluation: Emerging practices*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Publishing.
- Wolfe, B .D. and Kay, G. (2011). Perceived impact of an outdoor orientation program for first-year university students. *Journal of Experiential Education*. 34(1), 19-34.
- Wright, H. G. (2008). *An analysis of the use of continuous quality improvement in the retention of African American males at historically black colleges and universities*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI.
- Yeakey, C. & Henderson, R. (2000). *Surmounting all odds: Education opportunity, and society in the new millennium*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Structured Open-Ended Questions for Interview

APPENDIX A

Structured Open-Ended Questions for Interview

1. Please describe your first-year experience in school.
2. Do you think that all freshmen like studying in this institution?
Please state reasons for your answer.
3. Despite your experience as a freshman, what motivates you to continue studying in this institution?
4. Are there any unique factors in this institution that makes you like it and want to continue studying here?
5. What practices does the institution use to retain freshman students in this institution
6. Do you think that anti-racial and anti-ethnic differences are used in these institutions to as a means of retaining freshman students?
Please state reasons for your answer.
7. In your view, what can Historically Black Colleges and Universities do to retain freshmen during their first year of experiences?
8. What advice would you give to freshmen students joining this institution to enhance their retention in the institution?
9. What do you think about freshmen retention in Historically Black Colleges and Universities during their first year of study?
10. What is your idea of Black student's experience during the first year of study in these institutions?

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Dear Participant:

My name is Samuel L. Hinton and I am writing to request permission to conduct a survey to describe the “Factors that affect retention among freshman students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” This study originated from the Benedict College Department of Service-Learning and Leadership Development during the years of 2008-2011. The purpose of this study is to describe some factors that affect retention among freshmen students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities during the first-year experience.

The information collected from this study will be useful to college administrators, academic departments, faculty, staff, student support services, and students. The researcher as partial fulfillment of the requirements is conducting this study for the degree of Doctor of Education at Argosy University.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be directed to an online survey that will ask you to address questions regarding your first-year experiences as a freshman. There will also be some demographic questions for you to answer during the survey and some open-ended questions for you to answer during the interview process. The survey will take up to 20 minutes to complete and the interview 30-45 minutes to complete. Audiotaping will be recorded to help the researcher capture the in-depth lived experience from the participant. You are free to decline to answer any particular questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation in this study is voluntary. All surveys will remain confidential. Additionally, all surveys and questions will be stored in a lock file cabinet for ethical consideration.

By signing this letter of consent, you are agreeing to participate in this study. This letter of consent is attached to the front of the survey. If you have any questions about the study you may contact Samuel L. Hinton at (704) 877-2025 or sl_hinton@hotmail.com, Dr. Susan Adragna at sadragna@argosy.edu or Dr. Cal Berkey at cberkey@argosy.edu

Thanks you for your assistance,

Participants Signature

Date

Participants Written Signature (please print)

Date

Researchers Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Survey

APPENDIX C**Survey****Factors That Affect Retention Among Freshman Students At Historically Black Colleges and Universities.****1. Ethnic origin (circle one):**

- White not Hispanic
- Black not Hispanic
- Hispanic
- Other (please specify)

2. What is your gender (check one)?

- Male
- Female

3. What is your age?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 35-46
- Other (please specify)

4. What is your relationship status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorce
- Separated

5. What is your current employment status?

- Employed for wages
- Self-employed
- Out of work for more than 1 year
- Out of work for less than 1 year
- A homemaker
- A student
- Retired
- Unable to work

6. What is your parents' current income in U.S. dollars?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000-\$19,999
- \$20,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$39,999
- \$40,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$150,000
- Over \$150,000
- Would rather not say

7. What state are you from?**8. Was Benedict College your first college choice?**

- Yes
- No

9. Do you plan to complete your undergraduate degree at Benedict College?

- Yes
- No

10. Are you concerned about ability to finance college education?

- Yes
- No

11. Are you satisfied with Benedict College?

- Yes
- No

12. How many hours a week do you study?

- 0-1hrs
- 2-4hrs
- 5-7hrs
- 8-10hrs
- 10 or more hours

13. How frequently do you study with other students?

- 0-1hrs
- 2-4hrs
- 5-7hrs
- 8-10hrs
- 10 or more hours

14. How frequently do you visit a Professor during his/her office hours for academic help?

- After every class
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Before or after a graded assignment/test

15. Do you feel academically prepared for the first year experience? If the answer is no, please explain your answer.

(Yes or No)

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain

--

16. How frequently do you come late to class or miss class?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

17. How frequently do you feel overwhelmed by all a student has to do?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

18. What is the highest academic degree that you intend to obtain?

- Bachelors
- Masters
- Doctorates
- None

19. What are your chances of changing your major?

- High
- Moderate
- Low
- None

20. How frequently do you take advantage of student support services?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never