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Abstract

"Since the founding of Harvard University in 1636, institutions of higher education have been concerned with students leaving college prior to completing degree requirements" (Jackson, 1992, p.14). The complex ways in which people learn and ultimately persist while attending institutions of higher education is not easily understood or formulated. As research indicates, minority students on predominantly white institutions have particular needs which must be met in order to enhance their achievement and persistence on college campuses (Allen, 1992). Many minority students encounter a variety of problems while enrolled at predominantly white institutions; therefore, there is a need for fresh, innovative, and genuine approaches to enhancing minority students' matriculation rate (Burrell & Trobmsley, 1983).

THE INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC ADVISING AND RETENTION
PROGRAMS ON MINORITY STUDENTS' MATRICULATION

A Research Paper
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by
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"Since the founding of Harvard University in 1636, institutions of higher education have been concerned with students leaving college prior to completing degree requirements" (Jackson, 1992, p.14). The complex ways in which people learn and ultimately persist while attending institutions of higher education is not easily understood or formulated. As research indicates, minority students on predominantly white institutions have particular needs which must be met in order to enhance their achievement and persistence on college campuses (Allen, 1992). Many minority students encounter a variety of problems while enrolled at predominantly white institutions; therefore, there is a need for fresh, innovative, and genuine approaches to enhancing minority students' matriculation rate (Burrell & Trobmley, 1983).

The attrition rate of minority students attending predominantly white institutions has been much higher than that of white students. In 1976, black students' attrition rate were 49.5% higher compared to the attrition rate of 41.4% for white men and 30.9% for white women (Astin, 1977). The issue confronting many predominantly white institutions is the low

graduation rates of minority students compared to the graduation rates of majority students. This is a concern because minority students' attrition rate is usually due to alienation and isolation, not low academic achievement (Hawkins, 1989). If predominantly white institutions are going to recruit, retain, and graduate minority students, they need to make a genuine commitment to the academic and social success of these students (Hawkins, 1989).

Nationwide attention is being given to efforts to increase minority student participation in higher education. Research indicates that by the year 2000 the minority population will become an increasingly larger proportion of the work force, and it is imperative that these men and women are prepared to take on the challenges of providing leadership (Bedford & Durkee, 1989). Minorities cannot achieve full participation in higher education without access, but access alone is not enough. Due to the demand of high work performance that is usually evaluated by examination of employee's skills and educational background, it is imperative that minority students receive a quality education. Selection of an appropriate curriculum and a sound support system

are the keys to minority student academic success (Mingle, 1987).

The purpose of this paper is to examine how effective academic advising and retention programs can influence the retention and graduation rates of minority students. The author will discuss minority students dissatisfaction with academic advising and the barriers they encounter while attending academic advising programs at predominantly white institutions. Secondly, the importance of an institution's goal to recruit, retain and graduate minority students will be addressed. Thirdly, Taylor's retention model (TRM) based on a holistic approach to recruiting and retaining minority students at predominantly white institutions will be considered. Finally, collaboration between academic advising and retention programs will be examined.

Enhancing Academic Advising

In 1800, at Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University, the first academic advising programs were developed to aid students with academic guidance (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968; Rudolph, 1962). During that period, faculty advised students on course selection that best suited their needs and interests

(Brubacher & Rudy, 1968; Rudolph, 1962). With the expansion of course selection through Harvard's elective system, specialists were required to advise students. These affiliations became "... the focus of the identity of an academic profession" (Parsons & Platt, 1973, p. 113).

By the late 1960s, students and administrators criticized traditional faculty advising systems because students were not receiving proper advice from faculty advisors (Bonar, 1982). The decline in student enrollment and student dissatisfaction with academic advising practices during the 1970s, led to a renewed interest in advising by administrators (Bostaph & Moore, 1980; Grites, 1979; Hornbuckles, Monhoney, & Borgard, 1979; Tombley & Holmes, 1980).

The search for a concrete definition of academic advising was difficult. According to Fordyce & O'Branion (1971), academic advising is helping students with the choice of curricula and plans for making adequate progress within their course of study. Richardson (1965) postulates that academic advising's major concern is with educational programming. Evidence suggests that there is little consensus on the definition of academic advising in the

literature. A commonality found in the literature is that academic advising aids in course selection and career options. Perhaps the dilemma of meeting students' needs is due to the inconsistent definition of academic advising within each institution's mission and philosophy statement. Nevertheless, research has indicated that on many campuses, academic advising programs need improvement in providing students with accurate information (Bonar, 1982).

Even though the mission statement or philosophy of institutions vary, all institutions of higher education offer academic advising to their students. Typically, academic advising programs provide students with scheduling and career options; however, the primary focus of academic advising is class scheduling. Due to the large number of students that use academic advising services, it should not be surprising that some students get lost in the system. Unfortunately, many of those lost are minority students (Taylor, 1985). Many minority students who attend predominantly white institutions often get lost in the mainstream because institutions are limited in providing intimate academic advising (Taylor, 1985). The mission of many institutions

is to serve all students. This entails providing services to a vast number of students; therefore, follow-up on students is often not provided (Hawkins, 1989). Referrals to other departments are given frequently because of the high number of services offered and the superficial conversations engaged in by advisors and students (Hawkins, 1989). This impersonal advising is not effective for some minority students, and they begin to feel powerless and meaningless (Suen, 1983). In order to address feelings among minority students, advisors must be prepared to respond to a variety of student needs (Kramer & Spencer, 1989). With the growing trend of student diversity in colleges, the developmental needs of minority students demand that academic advising becomes a priority. Minority students need one-on-one- contact, follow-up and academic support programs which address the many different reasons why they become discouraged during their college experiences (Hawkins, 1989).

Academic advising support services have been recognized as a way to increase minority students' retention (Glennan, 1976; Noel, 1978; Scher, 1979). At predominantly white institutions, academic advising

personnel must develop effective retention strategies in advising minority students (Jackson, 1992). They need a retention program that offers a holistic approach which encompasses every "rung" of the educational ladder (Richardson, 1989, p. A48). They need supportive services that include, but are not limited to academic advising, financial aid counseling, tutorial assistance, career assessment and personal development and social counseling, resource availability, and faculty involvement (Taylor, 1985; Hawkins, 1989; Jackson, 1992).

Minority students' ultimate goal is graduation. Although access is not problematic, attrition rates are a problem. In order for minority students to graduate, they need to participate in a retention program that includes a holistic approach to academic success (Taylor, 1985). For this reason, a commitment to retain minority students must come from the president of the institution. Moreover, the mission statement of the institution should include how it is going to aid in the retention of minority students.

A mission to retain students

The importance given to retention should be reflected in the school's mission statement. Boyer

(1989) asserts that effective leaders believe deeply in their mission. According to Hawkins (1989), if predominantly white institutions are to recruit minority students and ensure them social and academic success, then the commitment to their success must come from the president of the institution. This commitment to minority students should include minimizing academic attrition, providing adequate financial aid packages, appropriate advising and counseling, culture enrichment, and ensuring the support of faculty and staff (Hawkins, 1989; Taylor, 1985; Branson, 1987). Academic achievement is not the reason most minority students leave college (Fleming, 1985).

Minority students' attrition is usually attributed to the powerlessness and social estrangement they experience because they did not learn the system, and that they were not aware of the resources available to them as they matriculated (Fleming, 1985; Suen, 1983). It is essential that college presidents understand the needs of minority students on their campuses before students are recruited.

Furthermore, an assessment can be done by all presidents to see if the commitment to retaining

students is authentic by asking one question. "Are they simply being recruited for cosmetic purposes? Or, are institutions actually committed to equal educational opportunities for all students?" (Hawkins 1989, p. 177). If minorities are going to be recruited, then the finest retention programs should be available to help them in overcoming both personal and academic crisis (Pascarella, 1984). A brief history of retention will be provided for the reader so he/she can have a clear understanding of how retention programs enhance academic success for minority students.

Minority Student Retention

Federal legislation led to minority students' access to postsecondary education. "The U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* set the fundamental standard for minority access to higher education: Admission to publicly supported colleges and universities may not be denied on the basis of race" (Preer, 1981, p. 1). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was implemented to deter any institution receiving federal funds from racial or ethnic discrimination. Since minority students were being underrepresented in predominantly white institutions,

"Affirmative Action programs were launched in response to the mandate of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Preer, 1981, p. 7). The federal government, through the Higher Education Act of 1965, established a set of special programs known as the TRIO Programs to aid students who are underrepresented in higher education (Thurman, 1986). The TRIO programs include Upward Bound, Talent Search, Student Support Services and Educational Opportunity Center. These programs were developed because of the economic, political, and social problems of the 1960s when there was a "(1) a desperate need for an educated work force, (2) an increasingly powerful civil rights movement, (3) a renewed egalitarian education concept, and (4) a growing philanthropic support for higher education" (Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966, p. 50).

Upward Bound is a pre-collegiate program which encourages economically disadvantaged high school students to attend and graduate from postsecondary education. According to Colvin (1984), "Upward Bound participants are four times more likely to earn a baccalaureate degree as compared to minority non-participants" (p. 93). Talent Search programs encourage high school students, as well as high school

dropouts, to continue their education. According to Thurman (1989), fifty percent of all matriculated Talent Search students were enrolled in postsecondary institutions in 1982. Student Support Services programs provide academic support services to eligible college students. Taylor (1985) postulates that students who participate in the program their first year are more than twice as likely to complete their first year of college than students who do not participate in the program. Educational Opportunity Centers promote postsecondary education in communities with large populations of low-income adults who are unaware of education and career opportunities.

Special services, minority programs, retention programs and educational opportunity programs are terms used interchangeably at institutions of higher education to refer to special programs. One factor contributing to the success of these program is their student centeredness. They provide assistance such as financial aid, academic and personal counseling, career exploration and development, cultural enrichment, and tutorial assistance, but their most important service is treating all students with dignity and respect, regardless of their academic

or financial status (Thurman, 1989). This positive reinforcement goes a long way in facilitating academic success (Pascarella, 1984). These programs have continued to provide equal educational opportunity for all and provides a holistic approach to retaining students. Most special services support students by helping them reach their ultimate goal of graduating, by utilizing every aspect of the student's total development.

Retention: Supporting Students by Helping them Graduate

Advising minorities is a unique and rewarding challenge for predominantly white institutions. Academic advisors are usually the first contact minority students have with the institution (Burrell & Trombley, 1983). If their initial contact is positive, then the stress of being a minority student is usually reduced (Burrell & Trombley, 1983). However, a vast number of minority students' first contact at predominantly white institutions is not positive, and this adversity usually affects their academic performance (Maynard, 1980). According to Taylor (1985), every division should be sensitized to minority students' needs and differences to help

alleviate any adversities they will encounter during their first contact on campus. Taylor (1985) asserts that if a student's personhood is affirmed, then adjustment to the environment and persistence towards graduation will be facilitated.

For this reason, Taylor developed a retention model in 1985 at the University of Wisconsin Madison to serve minority student attending predominantly white institutions (Thurman, 1989). According to Taylor (1985), a puissant and effective retention program should be encouraged and shared by staff, faculty, administrators and students. Taylor's retention model (TRM) is based on a holistic approach to recruiting and retaining minority students.

There are seven interrelated components or links that makeup the TRM. The links are: (a) pre-collegiate, preparing high school students for postsecondary education; (b) recruitment/admissions, ascertaining ways to attract minority students and aiding in the preparation of college materials; (c) matriculation, providing avenues for a smooth orientation; (d) retention, informing students of resource programs which will aid in academic success; (e) graduation, instilling in students the ultimate

goal, which is graduation; (f) post graduation, encouraging minority students to apply to graduate school; (g) and alumni, using graduate students as incentives and role models for students who are still persisting. The TRM is designed to lessen some of the frustrations minority students experience while on campuses by providing a variety of services. Taylor postulates that minority student retention should be viewed as a total college effort involving all aspects of the institution. Retention efforts used by different student affairs offices support the institution's mission of developing the whole person.

Only the six of the links which pertain to effective strategies for academic advising will be addressed. The link that will not be discussed is the pre-collegiate link because it prepares disadvantaged students for college not college success itself

The second link in the model is recruitment and admission. A good strategy for recruitment and admission is to know how to recruit minority students and retain them by providing them with adequate information. The most important factor to consider

while recruiting minority students is financial aid (Taylor, 1985; Hawkins, 1989). Taylor (1989) states that "failure to provide adequate financial resources for minority students can be just as effective in a discriminatory fashion as denying admission based on race" (p. 35).

According to Burrell and Trombley (1983), advisors should address financial aid issues with sensitivity. If the academic advising personnel cannot aid students in this area, then they should collaborate with financial aid personnel to keep minority students abreast of their financial status. "Financial aid awards must be reviewed and improved, particularly considering federal cuts that will have the greatest impact on minority students" (Hawkins, 1985, p. 177). If students are in financial difficulty, then the advisor should refer students to the financial aid office to learn of part-time employment work-study or appropriate options that are personalized to students' needs (Burrell & Tromble, 1983).

Matriculation is the third link in the model. This link ensures that each student receives proper advising enabling him/her to enroll in appropriate

classes. According to Taylor (1985), misinformed students often sign up for courses based on catalog descriptions of classes instead of courses suited to their educational background. Many academic advising programs provide adequate advising, but retention programs schedule students based on their educational background or partake in intrusive advising, an aggressive approach to advising (Jackson, 1992)

Thus, matriculation serves as the foundation for a smooth orientation to college. Taylor asserts that an effective orientation program informs students about what support services are available to aid in their retention and graduation. Students in general find campuses perplexing; therefore, an orientation program is vital because it introduces students to campus (Fleming, 1984). Stodt (1987), points out that "a well designed orientation program initiates student's involvement with the college, assists with adjustment, fosters college friendships and interaction with faculty, and explores the student's career choices" (p. 101). This coupling of academic preparation and interpersonal social skill development seems one of the strongest factors

influencing student persistence (Gordon & Grites, 1984). Astin (1977), Tinto (1985), and Upcraft (1985) have found that students are more likely to remain in school when they feel a part of and actively involved in campus activities. To foster a good relationship with minority students, "a good advisor (a) discusses academic and career options; (b) inquires about student's awareness of the racial makeup of staff and students; (c) informs students of social and academic organization; (d) and informs students about the community that cater to minority interests such as businesses, barbershops, beauty shops and stores that stock products for minorities (Hawkins, 1985, p. 177). According to Taylor (1989), this link is usually ignored because it is assumed that students will receive the assistance they need. It is imperative that institutions stress the importance of participation in orientation programs to minority students (Fleming, 1984).

According to Taylor (1985), retention is the fourth link in the TRM which encompasses a wide array of programs and services. The services that are essential in retaining minority students are the resource centers, study skills, career and placement,

counseling and academic advising. These services are critical during minority students' freshmen year (Richardson, 1965). Taylor (1989) states that "minority students will continue to enroll in college academically underprepared" (p. 113). Remedial programs such as writing labs, math labs, reading labs, learning centers, tutorial labs, and specialized courses are essential in retaining students. Taylor postulates that remedial education is of paramount importance because "to deny minority students additional help once they reach the college ranks is to punish them twice, to limit their career options, and to exonerate the institutions that prepared them" (Taylor, 1985, p. 54). Good advisors do not load students with too many difficult courses when they are experiencing adjustment to a different cultural environment during their first semester/quarter (Jackson, 1992; Garnett, 1990). Special services aimed specifically at minority students are more effective at increasing retention than services designed for all students (Thurman, 1985).

Moreover, effective retention programs address socio-cultural adjustment problems which minority

students encounter (Fleming, 1984). Advisors should promote self-esteem in their students. As noted earlier, the high attrition rate for minority students is also related to powerlessness and social estrangement; therefore, students need to feel they belong or are a part of the institution (Hawkins, 1985; Pascarella, 1984). A caring and sensitive community is one of the key ingredients for student persistence (Boyer, 1990).

The fifth and sixth links of TRM are graduation and post-graduation. Even though some minority students take an extra year to graduate compared to the majority students, the ultimate goal is graduation (Taylor, 1989). According to Taylor (1989), institutions should ascertain what areas minority students are concentrating in, and analyze whether students are receiving the needed guidance to explore other majors. Genuine advisors confront students when they are being unrealistic with their career aspirations. Reid-Wallace (1992), a black woman, and the Education Department's top higher education official, asserts that minority students should be held in the highest regard. Reid-Wallace stated in the Chronicle of Higher Education, "People

feel, and I think they're wrong, that they can't say to a person of color, Black or Hispanic, 'This is not acceptable this is weak, this is not very good'" (p. A 28). If advisors take the time to cultivate a meaningful relationship with their students, then advising will be done appropriately. Once students excel and complete their undergraduate studies, academic advisors should encourage them to attend graduate school. In spite of the financial obstacles that prohibit minority students from participating in advanced studies, minority students should be encouraged to attend graduate school (Taylor, 1989).

Alumni is the last link in the TRM. Minority alumni are a valuable asset in the recruitment and retention cycle. "Since former students have made their way through the institution's educational system, they serve as proof to other perspective minority students that graduation is a possible achievement" (Taylor, 1989, p. 100). Alumni can sell the school to perspective students, and what better way to recruit new perspective minority students than to have alumni as role models (Taylor, 1989, p. 100). There is a need for minority role models on predominantly white campuses.

The TRM was used to identify differences between services provided by academic advising and retention programs. Retention programs aid students in areas where academic advising programs are lacking, and provide services to minority students who generally get lost in the mainstream. According to Thurman (1989), it would be wise to keep academic advising and retention programs separate because retention programs are usually small, and offer minority students the intimate attention they need. However, it is possible that the two programs can work together to aid in the student's total development

Collaboration Between both Programs

Educating the whole student requires support from each division; therefore, each division must have an effective support system which will facilitate the growth and development of each student. Some divisions must accommodate the needs of students by relying on each other. For example, minority students have an array of special needs that the advising department can not address; therefore, they will need the assistance of a retention program to aid with certain crisis. The volume of students academic advising personnel help will not allow them

to adequately meet all the needs of the students. Even though their mission is to advise all students, they cannot provide all of the services minority students need. The two programs, academic advising and retention programs, can establish a collaborative relationship that aids in student development.

When academic advisors see minority students in need of more than advising, then they should refer them to retention programs where they will be able to receive the assistance they might need such as tutorial services, supplemental instruction counseling, and academic and career assistance. All of these services are essential in retaining minority students, and they are all housed under one program. If academic advising and retention programs work together, the message that comes through to minority students is that faculty, staff, administration, and peer counselors care about them (Noel and Levitz 1965).

Conclusion

In this paper, the author has highlighted the functions and operations of academic advising and retention programs with focus on minority students. The two programs are different, yet researcher indicates that they can work together to reduce

minority students' attrition rates and improve minority students' graduation rates.

Academic advising cannot realistically provide all the services some minority students need.

Therefore, to prevent minority students with unique needs from being lost in the mainstream, minority students should participate in retention programs to provide the intimate advising services they require. A collaborative retention effort between the two programs will ultimately provide maximum benefits to minority students in ensuring them academic success.

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