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White Undergraduate Student Engagement at a Public Historically Black University

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

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by

Janelle G. Simmons

MSW, Stony Brook University, 2001

BA, Stony Brook University, 1999

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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April 2017

Abstract

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have provided academic and social support to Black students; however, with an increase in White students attending HBCUs, HBCU leaders have been challenged to acquire a better understanding of the White student population to increase their retention and graduation rates. This phenomenological project study addressed how White undergraduate students' participation in curricular and extracurricular activities influenced their academic success. The conceptual framework included elements from Astin's involvement theory and Helms's White racial identity development model. Eight White undergraduate students at a mid-size public HBCU were interviewed over 2 weeks. Exploratory analysis of one-one interviews and documents indicated minimal problems with peer-to-peer interaction or participation in extracurricular activities, but a slight disconnect between White students and faculty. Findings were used to develop a mentor program to improve relations between White students and faculty, which may increase White students' retention and graduation rates at the HBCU.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my family for their love and support throughout this process. To Ms. Tia Marie Doxey and Ms. Kesha Lee, if it were not for you two I would not have considered pursuing a doctorate. Thank you for believing in me.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The increase of White undergraduates at HBCUs compels administrators to gain a better understanding of their experiences at these institutions (Carter, 2010). One way to assess the White undergraduate experience is through student engagement. Student engagement is defined as the amount of time and energy students choose to devote to activities both inside and outside the classroom (Kuh, 2001). There are two components to student engagement; the first component is students' active participation in academic and social activities. The second is how institutions allocate their resources and structure their curricula and other support services to encourage students to participate in activities positively associated with persistence, satisfaction, learning, and graduation (Kuh, 2001; Kuh, 2009; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991).

Student engagement has become an increasingly important benchmark for institutional quality and a measure of student learning (Kuh, 2009). Student engagement has been linked to positive outcomes such as leadership development (Posner, 2004), identity development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004), critical thinking skills (Anaya, 1996; Pike, 2000), and persistence (DeSousa & Kuh, 1996; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). Critical factors of engagement include student interactions with faculty and staff (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Flowers, 2003; Kuh, 2009), active involvement in campus activities (Astin, 1999; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper, 2003), experiences in diverse environments before entering college

(Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008), and the first-year student experience (Kuh et al., 2008).

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were created to provide Black individuals with a collegiate education not otherwise available (Brown & Davis, 2001). HBCUs were established as early as 1865, and provide opportunities for personal growth and social mobility while promoting racial tolerance (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Allen (1992) identified six goals of HBCUs: (a) maintaining Black and cultural tradition, (b) functioning as a "paragon of social organization," (c) providing economic stability in the Black community, (d) producing role models to interpret the way various dynamics impact Black people, (e) producing college graduates competent to address issues regarding racial inequality, and (f) producing change agents.

There are more than 4,200 degree-granting institutions in the United States; over 100 are HBCUs, which represent 4% of all institutions of higher education (Awokoya & Mann, 2011). Today HBCUs produce 21% of all bachelor's degrees attained by Black students, in addition to producing 25% of all professional degrees (Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, 2014). Beginning in the 1960s, college and university policymakers at HBCUs have faced new issues and challenges that were not major considerations in the past. One of the most noticeable changes has been the influx of White students attending HBCUs. Once the student body at HBCUs diversified, the administration followed suit (Daniels, 2008).

Many formerly segregated universities have increased the number of other-race faculty, staff, and administrators (Conrad, Brier, & Braxton, 1997). Due to desegregation

laws, colleges and universities have been challenged to become more diverse in response to the continuously changing demographics of the student body. The second Morrill Act of 1890 mandated that states with dual systems of higher education provide land-grant institutions for both systems (Lucas, 1994). Unfortunately, with the second Morrill Act in place, HBCUs received considerably less funding, had inferior facilities, and had more limited course offerings than predominantly White institutions (PWIs). As a result, HBCUs were in a position of challenge regarding funding to support sustainability for the institutions.

The landscape of HBCUs changed with 1954's *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision, which declared that segregated educational facilities were unconstitutional. Although this monumental case contributed to the civil rights movement by allowing Black students to attend any institution of their choice, it also decreased enrollment sizes at many HBCUs for Black students and arguably increased enrollment for White students (Carter, 2010). In addition, though most HBCUs have incorporated levels of White participation by establishing diversity training to promote inclusion and by developing scholarships, fellowships, and other programs specifically for White students, there have been concerns as to how desegregation policies may affect the historical and cultural traditions of HBCUs (Foster, Guydon, & Miller, as cited in Brown, 2002). The increase in White undergraduate student enrollment has been most apparent in public and state supported HBCUs (Brown, 2002; Jefferson, 2008). According to the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (2009), White undergraduate students were the largest

non-Black group represented at the 47 member institutions consisting of HBCUs and historically Black law schools.

Even though there have been studies on student engagement at HBCUs, few studies have addressed aspects of engagement of subpopulations such as White undergraduate students on public HBCU campuses (Carter, 2010). This study was conducted to understand the factors affecting White undergraduate student engagement to improve retention and graduation rates at HBCU settings, and how that may affect the institution's ability to survive. Despite the gaps in the literature, some studies have examined the trends of White student matriculation at public HBCUs and provided a foundation for further study (Carter, 2010).

Definition of the Problem

HBCUs have provided students with an education for hundreds of years, and have been challenged with keeping up with PWIs in all academic areas. The problem addressed in this study was the level of White undergraduate student engagement at a public HBCU and how various levels of engagement may affect students' retention and persistence rates. According to Crellin, Aaron, Mabe, and Wilk (2011), most states have assigned funding to colleges and universities based on enrollment numbers but with few incentives for degree completion. Crellin et al. concluded that moving to a performance-based funding model would allow state higher education systems to continue to engage support for colleges and universities. Several states have shifted funding from enrollment numbers to retention and graduation rates. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education outlined regulations that set a threshold for determining institutional success. Slow or

booming graduation rates could indicate an institution's success. If institutions are not graduating their students, their longevity can be in jeopardy.

Problem in the Local Setting

The local context that prompted this study is a Southeastern Academic Institution (SAI), a public mid-size four-year HBCU in the Southeast region of the United States. SAI serves approximately 8,400 students, of which 2,600 live on campus. Of the institution's total enrollment, 5.6% is White, most of whom are full-time students. In 2009, 51 White students earned bachelor's degrees, 102 earned master's degrees, and 42 graduated with a juris doctorate.

The institution is faced with moving beyond serving as a vehicle to increase access and promote equity for the Black population. To compete with local institutions providing opportunities for White students, their engagement is key, which will in turn increase their success rates. In addition, the state university system is expecting SAI to raise retention and graduation rates, enroll students who are better prepared for college, conduct cutting-edge research, and stimulate the state's economy.

SAI is currently in the beginning phases of its 10-year strategic plan, which focuses on the current and future needs of the university. Two of its objectives are to increase student participation in extracurricular activities and foster student learning through new programs and experiences. These objectives will be achieved by (a) implementing software to keep track of student participation, (b) conducting assessments of all campus mentoring programs, (c) completing an analysis of the impact of student participation in mentoring on retention and graduation rates, (d) increasing student

engagement with faculty in research, and (e) expanding opportunities for student-faculty interaction outside of the classroom by 25%. SAI wants to create and sustain an environment of accountability and engagement that will promote student success. Per its mission, SAI will serve its traditional clientele of African-American students and expand its commitment to meet the educational needs of a diverse student body.

White students have been actively engaged at SAI. In 1996, SAI received national attention due to Black students expressing outrage at the institution's explicit efforts to recruit White students. According to the freshman class president, "we want diversity, but we don't want affirmative action thrown back in our face" (as cited in Healy, 1996, p. A2). In 2010, White undergraduate students at SAI discussed their experiences in the campus newspaper. They expressed being uncomfortable, prejudged, and treated differently by faculty. Despite these feelings, the White students believed they benefited from being part of an environment in which they could interact with diverse peers and faculty. Unfortunately, SAI has not conducted any studies to confirm or refute the students' experiences. Per SAI's chancellor at the time, many White students avoid enrolling at HBCUs because of stereotypes such as weak curricula and being generally unwelcoming to non-Blacks.

Problem in the Larger Educational Setting

HBCUs were established where large Black populations existed, primarily in the Southeast, Southwest, and Northeast. Jackson (2001) described the history of desegregation consent decrees and the process of ensuring that every state institution met minority enrollment benchmarks. Jackson noticed that during an 8-year period after the

decree was enacted, HBCUs had exceeded their benchmark by more than 5 percentage points, and then experienced the first decrease in HBCU student enrollment in 10 years following the *U.S. v. Fordice* case in 1992. *U.S. v. Fordice* required states to develop and implement plans to increase minority student enrollment.

Even with inconsistencies, HBCUs could recruit more White students than Black students recruited by PWIs (Jackson, 2001). Over the last 30 years, the White undergraduate student experience has evolved on HBCU campuses (Carter, 2010). However, researchers have not kept pace with explaining its impact and implications. Because there is documented research indicating that Black students enrolled at PWIs experience college differently, it is plausible to think that White students enrolled at HBCUs experience college differently than their Black counterparts.

Investigating White undergraduate student engagement at an HBCU could provide insight to HBCU faculty, staff, and administrators as it relates to programming and pedagogy. The findings may provide information as to how White students learn, which kinds of activities (academic and extracurricular) add value to their educational experiences, and how White students experiences prior to enrolling at an HBCU influenced how they interacted within that environment. Another advantage to studying White undergraduate student engagement at SAI is that the findings may strengthen the argument that HBCUs are a viable option for White students. According to Jost (2003), many have questioned HBCUs' purpose and relevance in higher education; the study findings may indicate that HBCUs have the capacity to provide positive collegiate experiences for a global student population.

Due to the steady increase of White undergraduates enrolling at SAI, educators need to gain a better understanding of their collegiate experience. Examining White undergraduate student engagement on SAI's campus would be one way to accomplish this task. Kuh (2009) theorized two critical features: the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and how the institution allocates its resources and organizes its curricula and other support services to encourage students to participate in activities associated with learning. Students' extracurricular activities are another influential factor of engagement in addition to their experiences in diverse environments prior to starting college and their first-year experience once enrolled (Astin, 1984). Resources, such as programs for White students at new student orientation, and university staff experienced in multicultural affairs need to be available to assist White undergraduate students at SAI. These resources may assist in increasing student engagement by empowering White students and confirming that they are welcome and are an integral part of the university community.

Rationale

Recent data from the State University General Administration showed that the retention rate of White students from freshmen to sophomore year in 2012 was 71%; however, the rate decreased in 2013 and 2014 to 13%. According to national data, 17% of White undergraduates earn bachelor's degrees within 6 years at SAI; this percentage is lower than the Black students' graduation rate of 44% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013). This means that out of 360 White undergraduates enrolled at SAI, only 62 graduate. Ensuring that state-supported HBCUs have the tools necessary to

increase retention and graduation rates of White undergraduate students is of the utmost importance. HBCUs are now compelled to position themselves as powerful academic enterprises designed to meet the needs of a global student population (Minor, 2008; Nahal, 2009). SAI is challenged with ensuring that White undergraduates are engaged and their graduation rates are increasing.

This project study addressed student engagement to understand the educational and extracurricular experiences of White undergraduate students at SAI. I examined how White students engage and experience HBCU life by exploring their beliefs and attitudes regarding race, racism, and society. Findings may provide essential information to HBCU administrators, faculty, and staff on how to support and maintain White students within an HBCU culture. Findings may be used to ensure sustainability while strengthening the foundation of the institution and its student body.

Definition of Terms

African American or Black: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups in Africa, excluding persons of Hispanic descent and international Africans from the African continent (Bickman-Chavers, 2003).

Caucasian or White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).

Culture: The response of a group of human beings to the valid and particular needs of its members (Hoopes & Pusch, 1979).

Diversity: A structure that includes the tangible presence of individuals representing a variety of different attributes and characteristics (Komives, Woodard, & Associates, 1996).

Ethnicity: Racial or national characteristics determined by birth (Komives et al., 1996).

Historically Black college and university (HBCU): Higher education institutions whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).

Minority: A group, or a member of a group, of people of a distinct racial, religious, ethnic, or political identity that is smaller or less powerful than the community's controlling group (Barker, 1999).

Multiculturalism: A state of being in which an individual feels comfortable and communicates effectively with people from any culture (Komives et al., 1996).

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE): A student survey used to collect information about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 1998).

Phenomenology: A common qualitative approach that attempts to gain information on the essence of the human experience (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

Predominantly White institution (PWI): Higher education institutions that were originally created for educating Whites (Gasman, 2011).

Retention rate: The rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage. For four-year institutions, this is the percentage of first-time bachelor's (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall (NCES, 2013).

Student engagement: The amount of time and energy students devote to activities inside and outside the classroom (Kuh, 2001).

White privilege: The concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society that White individuals receive unconsciously or consciously by virtue of their skin color in a racist society (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997).

Significance of the Study

Few studies have addressed the lived experiences of students from other cultures attending an HBCU setting. There is little empirical knowledge of White students' experiences in an educational setting primarily composed of African Americans. For HBCUs to maintain academic competitiveness within the community, they will need to expand their student body and ensure their students succeed. This effort will increase enrollment and enhance the institution's sustainability. In 1987, the United Nations' Bruntland Report introduced the now common definition of sustainability as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (as cited in United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, 2007, p. 1).

For HBCUs' sustainability to occur, an inclusive environment should be developed that increases White students' graduation rates by increasing their engagement and also support from administrators and faculty who work at HBCUs. Hall and Closson (2005) theorized that programs and policies designed to recruit and retain students must promote inclusion while remaining true to the university's mission anchored in cultural heritage and a dedication to serving the Black community. HBCUs have a responsibility to provide resources for all students regardless of the color of their skin.

Guiding/Research Questions

The guiding questions were as follows: (a) In what ways do White students report that participation in curricular and extracurricular activities enhance their college success? (b) In what ways do curricular and extracurricular activities meet the social and educational needs of White students at HBCUs and increase their graduation rates? (c) How does the level of academic or extracurricular participation vary based on gender and academic level?

Astin (1984) indicated that the time and energy students devote to activities on the college campus is the greatest predictor of their cognitive and personal development. Astin also determined that certain positive institutional practices are associated with high levels of student engagement. This project study provided insight on the activities White undergraduate students engage in at an HBCU.

Review of the Literature

The literature search for was conducted using multiple education databases (ERIC, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, and Sage Journals)

through Walden University's library. In addition, I found articles in journals acquired

through my membership in professional higher education organizations. Search terms

included *student engagement*, *White students at HBCUs*, *student engagement at HBCUs*,

White student engagement at HBCUs, *diversity at HBCUs*, *multiculturalism*, *minority*

enrollment at HBCUs, *desegregation at HBCUs*, *White student enrollment at HBCUs*,

and *White student identity development*.

The experiences of White students attending HBCUs are missing from the

literature. Few studies addressed the emerging presence of White students on Black

campuses or addressed their levels of engagement, including their social and academic

experiences (Brown, Richard, & Donahoo, 2004). Most of the research occurred between

1972 and 2004. Over the last 5 years, only nine primary research articles have been

published; of those nine, three were newspaper articles. All articles from 1972 to 2010

(the last article pertaining to White undergraduate students at HBCUs was published

during that year) were reviewed. The following section presents the theoretical

framework, historical and current knowledge, as well as the gaps in the literature.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study was a synthesis of Astin's (1984)

involvement theory, data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

benchmarks, and Helms' (1990) White racial identity development model. Astin's

involvement theory is used to explain the quantity and quality of the student's

experiences in college and its impact on student success. The NSSE data are used to

assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high

levels of learning and development. Helms's White racial identity development model is used to understand racism and White privilege. I synthesized elements from these sources to construct a framework for measuring how HBCUs perform in student engagement, particularly with the White undergraduate student population.

Astin's (1984) theory states that every institutional policy and practice can affect the way students spend their time inside and outside of the classroom. Administrative decisions about nonacademic issues affect student involvement, which is defined as the amount of physical and psychological energy a student devotes to the academic experience, which occurs along a continuum. Factors that encourage student involvement include living on campus, faculty-student interactions, and participating in student government. Astin's theory has been widely used in higher education as a foundation for gaining a better understanding of student engagement and to encourage higher education administration, faculty, and staff to focus more on the level of student engagement inside and outside of the classroom.

The NSSE is an instrument that has been used to assess student engagement at over 1,400 institutions since 2000 (NSSE, 2010). First-year and senior students voluntarily complete the 15-minute survey for higher education administrators to improve undergraduate education, inform state accountability, support accreditation efforts, and facilitate national and sector benchmarking efforts. All institutions use the data to refocus conversations about factors that most affect undergraduate quality, resulting in enhanced institutional improvement efforts.

The last part of the conceptual framework that guided the study was Helms's (1990) White racial identity model, which is used to describe a linear development in six stages through which White individuals progress. Helms's model includes opportunities to reflect on cultural inheritance, in addition to reassessing beliefs and attitudes. The six stages are as follows: (a) contact, (b) disintegration, (c) reintegration, (d) pseudo-independence, (e) immersion/emersion, and (f) autonomy. The first three stages consist of statuses in which White individual may be resistant to recognizing their White privilege. During the contact stage, Whites may not be aware of their White privilege. They may not realize that racism exists because they do not understand the negative effects of racial stereotypes. During disintegration, White individuals may have differing levels of White privilege awareness. They may experience a conflict between racial moral dilemmas and denying that racism exists. As a result, they may avoid cross-racial interactions. In the reintegration stage, Whites may regress to earlier racist beliefs of White superiority.

The remaining three stages of Helms's model involve developing a nonracist identity. The pseudo-independence stage consists of Whites engaging in both social consciousness and more covert racist behaviors. White students may be conflicted in their perception of White privilege awareness. In the immersion/emersion stage, White students begin to understand how individuals contribute to racism and to reexamine what it means to be White. In the final stage of autonomy, Whites have worked to form meaningful cross-racial relationships and have an increased desire for social advocacy.

Astin's involvement theory, NSSE data, and Helms's White racial identity model provided insight and context for studying how HBCUs measure student engagement and

factors influencing White undergraduate student engagement at HBCUs. Understanding student involvement and the development of White racial autonomy in HBCUs, and the resources that exist to increase student engagement, may provide a springboard for institutions to delve into how effective they have been in executing their mission among their minority populations. Through understanding student engagement among minority populations, HBCUs may increase their long-term sustainability. With student populations becoming increasingly diverse, this is of critical importance.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

As HBCUs entered the 1970s and 1980s, they were no longer the sole provider of higher education for Black students (Joseph, 2007). Their role in the African American community and in society needed to be redefined. The conundrum facing HBCUs was to ensure that they were equipped with the tools needed to address global and economic challenges (Cantey, Bland, Mack, & Joy-Davis, 2012).

With the United States electing its first Black president in 2008, HBCU critics believed that racism was no longer an issue, and therefore there was no need for HBCUs. However, according to Davis, Mack, Washington, and Cantey (2010), "an inherent need exists for both race and gender based organizations post an Obama election, as current political, educational, and workforce climates continue to embrace oppressive attitudes and actions toward people regarding race or gender" (p. 1). Concerns have been raised as to whether HBCUs have "lost their way" (Allen & Jewell, 2002, p. 242), turning from their traditions due to an increased emphasis on high standardized test scores and high

national rankings. Other concerns include increased enrollment of non-Black students, lack of accreditation, lack of funding, and lack of effective leadership.

Lack of accreditation of specific programs can adversely affect HBCUs because most have not fully transitioned into offering accredited graduate programs. Difficulty in recruiting and retaining doctoral level faculty has also contributed to the problem. The goal of accreditation is to ensure that higher education institutions are meeting the required quality standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). As early as 1928, HBCUs have received accreditation (Cantey et. al, 2012). Currently, there are a number of HBCUs across the country that either have lost or are in danger of losing their accreditation; the same goes for some of their curricula. Once an institution or academic program loses accreditation, student enrollment decreases. If student enrollment decreases, institutions may be forced to close. According to Davis in a report by the Southern Education Foundation (2010), HBCUs have been subject to sanction for failure to comply with reaffirmation requirements. If the HBCU does not lose accreditation, sanctions may be imposed. These sanctions may be viewed as proof that deficiencies exist, which can hurt an institution's reputation.

In addition to the loss of accreditation, HBCUs have been affected by a severe lack of funding. Although HBCUs have a long history of securing sufficient funding and adequate resources, some institutions struggle to remain sustainable. Traditionally, federal funding such as Title III has provided financial assistance. Title III grants funds to HBCUs to enhance the educational process of their students. Title III funding strengthens

existing facilities and establishes new ones, offers financial management, and boosts academic resources (U. S. Department of Education, 2013).

Leadership of HBCUs is the last of the most daunting challenge HBCUs face, as the institution is only as strong as the person in charge. Leadership also impacts how funding can be secured to sustain the institution. In addition, leadership sets the climate of the workplace. The process of selecting a new HBCU president has been considered to be a political process in which entities such as the board of regents and state legislators are intentionally selecting incapable leaders (Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2002). At Alabama A&M University, the faculty senate president responded to the institution's choice of the university president (it was the sixth president in 12 years) by saying "we don't get the kind of leadership and attention we need" (as cited in Healy, 1996, p. A2). That same year, a third of the faculty voted no confidence in its president. HBCUs must obtain effective leadership, and there must be more good faith effort by institutional boards to find and retain these individuals. These individuals must have the ability to build relationships with public officials (in particular state legislators) and be proactive in securing funding. Leaders must "have a firm understanding of the academic enterprise, management, finances, personnel administration, information system, and planning" (Foster, as cited in Nichols, 2004, p. 222).

To address these challenges, HBCUs will need to maintain their accreditation and provide students with curricula that will prepare them for "social, political, and economic platforms within society" (Cantey et al, 2012, p. 14). Cantey et al. (2012) further stated the following:

To further sustain excellence through recruitment and retention of faculty,

HBCUs must increase the number of African American Ph.D. level faculty as this

helps to increase the available number of accredited programs. Additionally, there

is a need to attract existing African American doctoral faculty through

competitive salaries. Attracting and retaining faculty directly coincides with

funding at universities. For presidents, deans and other leaders, fundraising in the

form of grants, alumni development/contributions, and corporate and individual

donations needs to be improved. One suggestion is to invest in the development of

a strategic plan to foster alumni, corporate, and individual relationships while

improving existing threats and challenges. (pp.16-17)

Even though these challenges are chronic, they can be addressed. Many HBCUs

have begun the change process, though some HBCUs are taking longer than others.

Evans et al. (2002) observed that many HBCUs have been transitioning to universities

and have begun to increase the offerings of undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Moreover, to enhance and provide additional opportunities for individuals regardless of

race, HBCUs have begun to provide distance education courses and online degree

programs, competing with PWIs. However, the continued development of HBCUs will

depend on their leadership committed to ensuring a "culture of excellence" (Cantey, et al,

2012, p. 20).

Even though HBCUs and PWIs both provide a college education, there are some

differences. For example, HBCUs address academic shortcomings differently

(Richardson & Harris, 2004). HBCUs are considered to have open-door policies,

admitting students who would ordinarily be denied admission at other institutions because of low SAT/ACT scores or grade point average. PWIs are seen as "self-serving institutions" that make the admissions process a "cutthroat competition" (Brown II & Ricard, 2007, p. 121), which results in HBCUs having a negative image.

The influx of White students on HBCU campuses has caused challenges. Brown (2002) explored the implications of White student enrollment at an HBCU in the Southeast with a large White student population and concluded that the shift in race at the institution (termed *transdemography*) posed a threat to the HBCU's sustainability. This was due to the decreased enrollment of Black students in an attempt to satisfy desegregation mandates.

Most students enrolled at HBCUs are on some sort of financial aid. Pell grants, work aid, federal loans, scholarships, veterans' benefits, and social security benefits are means to assist these students in pursuing a college education. These types of funds are unstable because they are dependent on the government, resulting in some HBCUs subsidizing tuition and fees to make up the difference. This reduces the institution's operating funds. Another issue related to funding has to do with staff salaries. Because of a lack of resources, faculty salaries at HBCUs are lower than their PWI counterparts. Palmer and Griffin (2009) noted that salaries represent "the largest item in college and universities budgets" (p. 11). Gasman et al. (2007) discovered that associate professors at HBCUs make an average of $53,070; this is compared to the average associate professor salary at all institutions overall of $60,073. There has also been the challenge of alumni giving. In comparison to PWIs, HBCUs receive fewer endowments and contributions

from alumni, both essential to the institution's success. HBCUs also tend to have lower expenditures for each full-time student and poorer physical facilities (Kim, as cited in the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2010).

Earlier Studies on White Students at HBCUs

Previous studies on White students attending HBCUs primarily focused on the increase of enrollment, retention, and graduation rates (Abraham, 1990; Wells-Lawson, 1994). Abraham's study assessed the impressions of White students at HBCUs and Black students at PWIs. Survey data was obtained from 20 HBCUs and 20 PWIs and were analyzed for information on student demographics, racial attitudes, satisfaction with institution, minority recruitment, college choice, and academic and social climate. Study findings included the following:

(1) Most opinions about campus climate often reflected status and not race.

(2) Generally, students were open-minded when it came to race relations.

(3) Many of the White students opposed special considerations for minorities.

(4) Sincerity of minority recruitment efforts were questioned by the participants.

(5) Students who identified as being a part of the minority group indicated a lack of opportunity to express their concerns.

Wells-Larson's 1994 study was similar to Abraham's research. Data collection involved questionnaires distributed to 7,428 students at 30 HBCUs and PWIs. The study concluded that race, school type, and engagement made a difference in the prediction of academic performance, feelings of discrimination, and student perceptions of diversity accommodation when student background characteristics are taken into account.

However, there was no difference in academic performance between Black and White students at HBCUs when background characteristics were controlled.

With the same controls at PWIs, Blacks earned significantly lower grades. They reported higher ratings on feelings of discrimination than White students at HBCU campuses though White students at HBCUs also reported such feelings. Finally, there was no difference in the quality of faculty-student relationships reported by White students at HBCUs and PWIs, while Black students at HBCUs experienced better relationships with faculty than Black students at PWIs.

Strayhorn (2010) stated that several conclusions could be drawn from the limited literature but "empirical support for these assertions is severely limited" (p. 510). Although the research surrounding White undergraduate students at HBCUs is minimal, it is an emerging body of knowledge. Researchers have used both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore perceptions and experiences. These findings will provide information to more appropriately develop strategies and programs to best meet the needs of the White undergraduate student population on the HBCU campus.

Reports from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2006) continue to show White student enrollment of 34,673 across all HBCUs and could increase as the immediate transition to college rate increased. In 2008, the rate was 69%, up from 49% in 1980 (NCES, 2010). Brown (2001) stated that the increases of the number of White students enrolled at public HBCUs were due to the influences of desegregation laws. Desegregation laws forced states to distribute resources equally; this meant that even though not explicitly stated HBCUs needed to be integrated.

A Changing Focus: Student Engagement

Research on student engagement emerged in the 1990s and has become a viable construct in higher education due to the work of George Kuh and others. Carter (2010) concluded that participation in organizations built confidence and provided students with an avenue to explore other opportunities. In their study, Kezar and Kinzie (2006) found that an institution's mission had an impact on creating an engaging environment. Kuh et al (2008) examined the different types of student engagement and persistence in college by using NSSE data and institutional records and concluded that student engagement in educationally purposeful activities and persistence rate was not linear. Also, the researchers also found that students with high levels of student engagement of an academic nature had a lower probability of persisting than those of medium-to-low levels. However, high levels of social student engagement were positively related to student persistence. Research by Stewart, Wright, Perry, and Rankin (2008) proved that involvement in extracurricular activities such as clubs, organizations, and athletics was an effective means to facilitate integration into the campus environment. Tieu et al (2009) examined the impact of extracurricular activities on college success and determined that activities led by an adult or authority figure and are guided by a set of rules have more of a positive influence.

A predominant theme in student engagement literature is the benefits of student-faculty interaction. Astin (1987) found that "frequent interaction with faculty is more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic" (p. 525). Kuh (2009) determined

that positive faculty opinions about various programs increased the likelihood of students participating. Laird, Smallwood, Niskode-Dossett, and Garver (2009) described the four roles faculty play in assessing student engagement. Faculty served as a source of data, as an audience, as a data analyst, and as a beneficiary of assessment knowledge. As a source of data, information that faculty provides from student observations can be used to assess how often students are engaging in different exercises. Surveys such as the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), and the Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE) are often administered to access data and pair student and faculty findings. As an audience, faculty should be privy to assessment findings and be presented using various approaches. As data analysts, faculty participate in the assessment process by utilizing their analytical skills on the student engagement data that has been collected. Faculty are able to dispense their academic proficiency and political clout, which in turn are beneficial to institutions. Finally, as beneficiaries of assessment knowledge, faculty can use the data to inform the creation and adaptation of campus programs and activities geared toward instructional improvement.

Other studies have included student engagement's impact on student development and learning outcomes (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Strayhorn, 2008), and student engagement of college experiences based on race (DeSousa & Kuh, 1996), gender (Harper, Carini, Bridges & Hayek, 2004), student classification (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie & Gonyea, 2008; Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot & Associates, 2005), and institutional size, type and structures (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates,1991; Porter & Swing, 2006; Ryan, 2008). Kuh

et al. (2008) determined the relationships between key student behaviors and the institutional factors and conditions that foster student success. Student-level records were merged from different institutional types to investigate the connection between student engagement, academic achievement, and persistence. The data concluded that "student engagement in educationally purposeful activities is positively related to academic outcomes as represented by first year student grades and by persistence between the first and second year of college" (p.555). The results also showed that student engagement has a redeeming effect on first year grades and persistence to the second year of college. Porter and Swing (2006) investigated how aspects of first year seminars affect early intentions to persist. The researchers added to the literature on first year seminars and persistence by combining institutional level data to data from the First Year Initiative (FYI) survey, an instrument that provides aggregated student self-reports of learning outcomes from participation in a first year seminar.

Additional studies examined the impact of engagement on outcomes such as cognitive development (Anaya, 1996; Baxter Magolda, 1992; Kuh, 1995; Pike, 2000), moral and ethical development (Jones & Watt, 1999; Liddell & Davis, 1996; Rest, 1993), student persistence (Berger & Milem, 1999; Tinto, 1993), and identity development (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Most of the studies concluded that there is an explicit relationship between student engagement and student success. Using phenomenology, Harper and Quaye found that participation in extracurricular activities enabled the Black students studied to recognize the value of sharing diverse views with others of a different racial background, which enhanced their identity development as Black individuals. Pike

studied whether differences in reported cognitive development were a direct result of

membership in a fraternity or sorority, an indirect result of Greek students' involvement,

or a false result in students' backgrounds. Using existing campus data, Pike determined

that the relationships among background, college experience, and cognitive development

constructs were the same regardless of whether or not the student was a member of a

fraternity or sorority. However, their levels of social involvement and gains in general

abilities were different.

Dissertation studies from Hazzard (1996) and Daniels (2008) assessed college

choice, and investigated the White experience at HBCUs relating to social adjustment,

involvement in extracurricular activities, and racial identity development. The researchers

concluded that White students attended HBCUs because of its proximity to home, low

cost, and program offerings. Demographically, White students that attended HBCUs were

older, part-time students who commuted to campus and enrolled in graduate programs in

high-demand fields such as education, business, and engineering (Hall & Closson, 2005;

Nixon & Henry, 1990). The late 90s saw a surge in research that examined the reasons

White students attended HBCUs due to reasons that could be categorized as personal or

social rather than tangible. Elam (1972) and Daniels (2008) found that White students at

HBCUs wanted to immerse themselves in a culturally sensitive environment. The

immersion allowed White students the opportunity to be in a classroom that shared

diverse views. Nixon (1988) postulated that whites were interested in fulfilling the

objective of racial understanding. However, the research showed that there was a

negative correlation with supportive campus culture and White undergraduate student

enrollment. Daniels suggested that this is due to many of the student services programs being aimed at Black students.

HBCUs and Student Engagement

Except for recent studies (Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006; Nelson Laird Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes, 2007), literature is limited regarding student engagement at HBCUs, particularly White student engagement. This represents a significant gap compared to the immense literature on the experiences and engagement of Black students attending PWIs. Harper et al. (2004) explored gender differences in student engagement among African American undergraduates at HBCUs. Their findings suggested that women and men experienced equivalent gains on eight dimensions that included activities such as the nature and amount of student engagement inside and outside of the classroom. Kimbrough and Harper (2006) determined that Black males are less engaged on HBCU campuses and lacked a presence in popular student organizations. In a comparative study, Nelson Laird et al. (2007) used NSSE data and found that Black seniors at HBCUs were more likely to be engaged than their counterparts attending PWIs. They were engaged to a greater degree in effective educational practices and reported gaining more from their college experiences.

HBCUs were included in The Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) study that was coordinated by NSSE and the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The results of the survey indicated that HBCUs and other minority serving institutions required students to participate in effective educational

activities and employed faculty and staff to ensure more frequent, meaningful contact

with students (Bridges, Kinzie, Nelson Laird, & Kuh, 2008). This study set the stage for a

more in-depth investigation to examine the experiences of White students attending

HBCUs and how these institutions facilitate student success.

Other Reasons Whites Enroll at HBCUs

Whites reasons for enrolling at HBCUs included feelings of isolation at their

predominantly White grade schools (Freeman & Thomas, 2002), cost (Brown & Stein,

1972), proximity to the campus from their residence (Brown, 1973; Farrel, 1982; Lyons,

1980) and academic reputation (Hazzard, 1996). Research also demonstrated that White

students at HBCUs experienced few barriers to their adjustment (Closson & Henry,

2008), no overt incidents of racism (Nixon & Henry, 1992), perceive HBCUs as friendly

environments (Elam, 1978), and have positive interactions with faculty (Closson &

Henry 2008; Hall & Closson, 2005). While these findings are important, the researchers

did not delve deeper as to how White students initiated or developed strong relationships

with faculty on the HBCU campus.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, researchers offered a different perspective of

White undergraduate students at HBCUs by use of interviews and reflection. These rich

descriptions were used as a tool to recruit other White students. Morehouse College, a

private all-male HBCU in Georgia, has a history of enrolling and graduating White

males. Joshua Packwood was the college's first White Valedictorian in 2008. When

asked about his experience at Morehouse he stated the following: "I have been forced to

see the world in a different perspective that I don't think I would have gotten anywhere

else" (Goldman, 2008, para.7). In contrast, there have been studies reporting less than favorable experiences for White undergraduate students enrolled at HBCUs. Many have reported harassment by Black peers and faculty, feelings of isolation, disregard by faculty in the classroom, or racist behaviors from Black students (Abraham, 1990; Nixon & Henry, 1992). In 2009, Hampton University crowned Nikole Churchill as the first White Miss Hampton. Her win was not well received by some Hampton students and alumni. In response, Churchill wrote a letter to President Obama expressing the university community's reaction:

> It would be much easier to say that possibly some were not accepting of the news because I wasn't the most qualified contestant; however, the true reason for the disapproval was because of the color of my skin. I am not African American…Despite the unfortunate beliefs that I should not have won, I am desperately trying to focus on those who believe in me and support me and my goal to represent this beautiful, multicultural, campus the very best way that I can. (Essence Magazine, 2009, para. 6)

Despite Churchill's negative experience, she received numerous congratulatory remarks from members of the Hampton community and regretted bringing negative attention to the institution due to the comments of a few. Peterson and Hamrick (2009) concluded that White males were more disadvantaged with respect to developing as racial beings in the HBCU setting. In addition, fostering greater engagement in campus life and the local community provided opportunities for White students to view themselves as a

"situated member" (p. 55) of the campus community thus increasing retention and graduation rates.

White College Students in Transition

Other studies examined White student's college experiences related to social adjustment, campus involvement, and racial identity development. Brown's (1973) study found that White students primarily interacted with Black individuals in academic and work environments. White students had no difficulties expressing their opinions in the classroom but were unable to participate in extracurricular activities due to time constraints. The few that had time to experience campus life participated in athletics, clubs, and organizations. As part of her doctoral dissertation Elam (1972) administered a racial attitude scale to Black and White students at Bowie State College (now Bowie State University) and determined being the minority at an HBCU had a positive impact on racial attitudes. Elam also gained an understanding as to why White students chose to attend HBCUs. Elam's research supported the results of Brown's study in that White students were comfortable in the HBCU environment. Race did not prevent them from becoming more active in extracurricular activities.

Standley (1978) learned that White students were comfortable in the HBCU classroom; however, there was some ambiguity as to how they "fit in". Survey responses illustrated that a "humanistic campus environment" (p.12) needed to be further developed. Libarkin (1984) conducted a follow up to Brown's 1973 study that added information on social adaptation to minority experiences. According to the White students studied, they improved their understanding of Black people "with the

concomitant modification of racial attitude" (p. 94). Wells-Lawson (1994) studied

whether White students at HBCUs were as likely as Black students at PWIs to be

dissatisfied with faculty, receive lower grades, and experience racism. The findings

reported that there was no difference in academic performance or faculty-student

interactions however, White students who attended HBCUs experienced less racism than

Black students at PWIs. Conrad, Brier, and Braxton (1997) added to Elam's 1978 study

by employing an open-ended, multi-case study design, which found that the availability

of programs in high-demand fields on the undergraduate and graduate level, institution

reputation, and offering of programs through alternate delivery methods provided

additional insight on student choice.

The WRC model is based on "characteristic attitudes held by a person regarding

the significance of being White, particularly in terms of what that implies in relation to

those who do not share White group membership" (Rowe, Behrens, & Leach, 1995, p.

225). There are seven types (also known as statuses) of WRC: avoidant, dependent, and

dissonant are known as "unachieved" statuses, which are characterized by the absence of

exploration or commitment. Someone in the avoidant status ignores, minimizes, or denies

consideration of race/ethnic issues, a dependent individual holds superficial racial

attitudes or adopts other's beliefs, and dissonance can "mark transitions between sets of

racial attitudes" (Peterson & Hamrick, 2009, p. 36) and create unresolved discrepancies

between beliefs and recent experiences. Conflictive, dominative, integrative, and reactive

are "achieved" statuses in which exploration and commitment have been accomplished

(Rowe et al., 1995). The conflictive status "mirrors the tensions between values of

equality and individualism as obvious racial/ethnic discrimination is opposed while

programs and policies to reduce the effects of discrimination are also opposed" (Peterson

& Hamrick, p. 35), those who are dominative believe in an inherent superiority, an

individual with an integrative status accepts his/her White heritage along with regard for

issues faced by members of the minority. Those in the integrative status use a considerate

approach to the complexities of racial issues while promoting positive social change.

Finally, in the reactive status, individuals acknowledge that others have been the

recipients of injustice and work to respond to the injustices. The researchers found the

respondents experienced disconnect with the campus social environment, which

permitted them to spend more time in an environment in which they were the majority.

They avoided participating in class discussions for fear of being criticized, and engaged

in self-censoring. Self-censoring was used as a tool to keep their White privilege intact.

Rowe et al. assumed that white racial consciousness and racial awareness were related

and that dissonance and the manner in which it is settled is the primary cause for change

in racial attitudes.

Closson and Henry (2008) assessed the social adjustment of White students on

HBCU campuses. Through a mixed method design, which consisted of focus groups and

identity racial scales, the researchers found that White students had positive experiences

at HBCUs. They did not feel isolated, had positive relationships with faculty, and chose

to attend an HBCU primarily because of scholarships. Strayhorn (2010) measured the

influence of faculty-student interactions on overall satisfaction with college among White

students at HBCUs by using data from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire

(CSEQ). Unlike previous studies that showed White students having positive interactions with faculty, Strayhorn's study focused on the frequency of interactions, which he found to be few. Results concluded that faculty-student interactions were the most positive predictor of White students' satisfaction at HBCU campuses.

The aforementioned studies combined expanded the knowledge base regarding the influx of White students on HBCU campuses. They contributed to the research literature by delving deeper "into the intricacies and experiences of White students in minority roles" (Carter, 2010, p. 12). While the research is useful, current understanding of the White undergraduate student experience at HBCU is limited and lacks accuracy. Most of the research focused on demographic profiles and factors that influenced institution choice. In addition, the weight of the evidence is based primarily in studies more than 10 years old. Additional research was needed to explain White undergraduate student engagement at HBCUs and how the engagement influenced their satisfaction.

Black Students at PWIs vs. White Students at HBCUs

There has been abundant research pertaining to Black student retention and graduation rates while enrolled at PWIs; unfortunately, the same cannot be said pertaining to White students enrolled at HBCUs. Moreover, the research is varied, ranging from a comparison of Black students at PWIs to Black students at HBCUs, to earlier studies of White students and their transition to an HBCU.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found that attending PWIs did not enhance the educational attainment of Black students. Tinto (1987) and Fleming (1984) both suggested that for a variety of reasons, Black students were less likely to persist until

graduation. The literature has displayed that other life issues interfered with graduation of

Black students. Tinto (1987) also stated that Black students were most likely to leave

college due to failure to adjust socially in an unfamiliar environment. Sedlacek (1999)

studied Black students' experiences at PWIs over a twenty-year period and found that

Black students experienced feelings of disconnect. Phillips' (2005) research indicated

that Black students felt marginalized, believed that equal opportunity did not exist on the

college campus, felt isolated, and were forced to represent the Black race in classes in

which they were the only Black student. This trend has suggested that the success rate for

Black students is steadily declining. They face serious challenges when they attend PWIs,

which presents a major hurdle for academic success (Fleming, 1984). There is strong

evidence to suggest that HBCUs reduce some of the barriers to engagement for Black

students and are more successful in facilitating academic success.

Implications

Based on the data findings, HBCUs will be able to reevaluate current policies,

programs and services in an effort to increase White student engagement. As other ethnic

minority groups enroll at HBCUs, administrators will need to be aware of the special

needs of that population and provide programming and resources to assist in their

transition into a culturally sensitive environment. These goals must be accomplished

while maintaining the historical significance of the institution. The implications of this

study may result in the development of a peer-mentoring program that can be executed

through the Enrollment Management Division on the HBCU campus that has a

multicultural focus.

Summary

Section one provided an introduction on the influx of White students at HBCUs and a review of literature pertinent to examining White undergraduate student engagement at HBCUs. The section began with a brief history of HBCUs, followed by the influence of higher education desegregation laws on White undergraduate student enrollment. The research focused on the student engagement experiences of White undergraduate students at a Southeastern Academic Institution, a public HBCU located in the Southeast. Findings from the literature review provided a frame of reference and understanding for the study.

In section two, the research methodology and protocol will be presented. Data collection and analysis strategies will be discussed. Finally, I display the findings from the interviews conducted of White undergraduate students at the SAI. Section three will discuss the project developed as a result of the data. In section four, I will reflect on my personal and professional growth as a result of completing the project study.

Section 2: The Methodology

In this section, I describe the procedures and methods used to gather and analyze the data needed to investigate White undergraduate student engagement at the SAI. To answer my research questions, I selected a qualitative approach using a phenomenological design. Moustakas (1994) theorized that phenomenological designs are used to examine participants' feelings, thoughts, perceptions, observations, and reflections on the phenomenon and to describe the essence of the collective experience. This was accomplished by capturing the thoughts of White undergraduate students regarding their level of engagement in the HBCU environment. This section presents the research design, sample, and data collection processes. In addition, I discuss the process for analyzing, interpreting, and protecting the data. I include the measures taken to protect participants and ensure that ethical considerations were followed to protect all participants.

Research Design and Approach

For over 100 years, phenomenology has been evolving as a research design (Thomas et al., 2007). Husserl (as cited in Patton, 2002) attempted to gain an understanding as to what people experience and how they interpret the world. Phenomenological studies address "affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 26). The job of the researcher is to learn how participants perceive the world through various experiences. Biases about the phenomenon are put aside (known as bracketing) during data collection and analysis so as not to interfere with analyzing participants' perceptions of the phenomenon. The goal

of phenomenology is to "understand a phenomenon by allowing the data to speak for

themselves" (Osborne, 1990) and is not intended to test a hypothesis. Phenomenology

was the most appropriate method to examine White undergraduate student engagement at

HBCUs because the purpose was to understand the experiences of a group of students

who, for the first time in their lives, may be considered the minority.

For phenomenological research to be successful, more than one participant is

recommended in case attrition occurs or a participant does not fully explain the

phenomenon through his or her responses. This also allows for data saturation. Another

challenge to phenomenological research is the researcher's ability to interpret nonverbal

communication. These nonverbal behaviors do not necessarily convey lived experience.

Phenomenological research is suitable for the university environment because the study

of students, faculty, and staff can affect social change by improving relations among

members of the university community. This research was accomplished through

extensive examination of a small sample to understand the experiences of the participants

(Creswell, 2003). Interviews were the primary method of data collection to gain the

essence of the experiences. Interviews allowed for participants' perspectives to emerge.

Eight interviews were conducted over 2 weeks.

Another data collection method frequently used is document analysis. Document

analysis includes public and private records such as annual reports, institutional surveys,

strategic plans, and university records to explain and understand the central phenomenon

in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2007). Documents "provide the advantage of being in the

language and words of the participants, who have usually given thoughtful attention to

them" (Creswell, 2009, p. 231). Documents used for analysis were SAI's strategic plan, institutional data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), institutional data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), and graduation data from the institution's office of research, evaluation, and planning. The data provided insight as to the student climate at SAI, in particular White undergraduate students' interactions on campus and their graduation and retention rates.

Qualitative research includes intensive fieldwork using interviews, observations, and document analysis (Creswell, 1998). A qualitative approach was chosen because the study focused specifically on student engagement. Qualitative research provides the best means to examine individuals in social settings to learn how they understand and cope with their surroundings (Berg, 2007). Other research designs were considered but rejected. Quantitative research designs did not allow for intensive inquiry into the perspectives of White undergraduate students at HBCUs. Capturing their detailed experiences via quantitative measures would have been difficult. Quantitative research impedes access to specific types of data and reduces a relationship to statistical tests; it does not allow the researcher to delve deeper into why a particular relationship exists.

Other qualitative research methods were considered but rejected. For example, a case study was considered. However, the goal of the study was not to draw conclusions about an individual or group in a particular context but to gain information pertaining to White undergraduate student engagement at HBCUs. Case studies involve data sources to provide a complete understanding of an event or situation. Numerous data sources were not required for my study. Grounded theory was also considered but not chosen because

rich descriptions are not the primary focus of this design. Grounded theory begins with data collection and from the data a theory is developed. Understanding the perceptions of the minority experience at an HBCU did not require the development of a theory. Therefore, grounded theory was not appropriate for this study.

NSSE survey data were collected during the fall semester within the 2011-2012 academic year over the course of 2 weeks. I compared NSSE data of White and non-White students attending HBCUs and found that student engagement does occur. The responses of the White students were statistically more positive to questions on overall college satisfaction. White students reported a higher satisfaction of their educational experience than non-White students and were to attend the same institution again if given the opportunity. However, White students did not experience as much interaction with faculty as expected. The data from NSSE were used to answer the research questions by providing information on how undergraduates spend their time at the institution and the relationships they had developed and the impact on their success. NSSE also provided baseline data to assess how White students perceived their engagement and the institution's efforts to facilitate engagement. The data from the interviews were collected and analyzed using NVivo software to answer the research questions. Through the coding process, themes emerged.

Participants

Although the White student population is increasing on HBCU campuses, it is still relatively small when compared to the Black student population. In 2001, 11% of students enrolled at HBCUs were White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

Using enrollment management data from SAI, eight students were selected: two from each class year (one male and one female). Additional criteria were as follows:

- participants must identify themselves as White/Caucasian,

- participants must have full-time student status,

- participants may be male or female, and

- participants may live on campus or commute.

From the list provided by the dean of the university college, potential participants were recruited using an alphabetical list organized by class (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) and a recruitment flyer. Out of the 8,400 students, approximately 500 were White. Using the enrollment data, every other student on each list was selected until 10 potential participants were reached from each class year for a total of up to 40 students.

The students selected to participate received an invitation via their SAI email and telephone information provided by the SAI. The contact information was confidential and was shared only with the researcher. The number of solicited participants was higher than the target number in anticipation of students declining the invitation. The deadline to respond was 5 days after the invitation was sent. Once the targeted number of students agreed to participate, they were asked to sign informed consent forms. My phone number and email address was included on the form so participants could contact me during the study. In addition, I included contact information of my committee chair as well as the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval number for my study is 05-14-14-0132368. The students were assured that their participation was strictly voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. They were informed of procedures

that would be implemented to protect them from harm and how confidentiality would be

maintained. These procedures included providing participants with pseudonyms to

protect their identities and explaining data security methods. At the conclusion of the

interviews, participants received a gift card valued at $20. Participants were made aware

of the compensation when asked to participate. Each interview lasted 30 minutes.

In this study, a gatekeeper was not required because I had access to the students.

The students connected with me after they gained admittance to the university and had

already developed a working relationship. This relationship included assisting the

students in the academic advising and course registration process, providing resources,

and facilitating programming.

Data Collection

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provides information and

assistance to institutions to improve student learning. The survey is administered to

hundreds of colleges and universities each year and is used to assess the extent to which

college students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning

and development. NSSE has five benchmarks of effective educational practice, which are

based on 42 key questions from the survey that capture many vital aspects of the student

experience:

1. Level of academic challenge (LAC) involves institutions emphasizing the
   importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student
   performance.

2. Active and collaborative learning (ACL) features activities that allow students to work with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material.

3. Student-faculty interaction (SFI) features activities in which students engage with faculty inside and outside of the classroom.

4. Supportive campus environment (SCE) provides a set of conditions in which the campus provides positive working and social relations.

5. Enriching educational experiences (EEE) encourage a campus climate in which complementary learning opportunities inside and outside of the classroom amplify the academic program.

Based upon NSSE's goals and applications personified by the five benchmarks, I determined that using the benchmarks would be appropriate for formulating the research questions and interview protocol, which was used as a stand-alone protocol to generate ideas and reaction to survey questions. NSSE is a national survey and is recognized as a valid instrument to assess student engagement (Kuh, 2009). In addition, the benchmarks were aligned with the study's focus. The individual survey questions would not capture the rich data needed for this qualitative study. Finally, the NSSE benchmarks were appropriate for this study because the benchmarks lessened the "halo effect," which is "the possibility that students may slightly inflate certain aspects of their behavior or performance" (Kuh, 2003, p. 3).

Once participants were selected and agreed to participate in the study, interviews were scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time. Interviews were held in my office behind closed doors. The interviews were semistructured and consisted of open-ended questions.

I used the interview protocol (Appendix E), which included the parameters of the study. All participants signed forms stating their informed consent. Participants were allowed to withdraw at any point, and their data would have been destroyed. Prior to the interviews, I tested the questions using individuals with more than five years experience working in higher education and adjusted the questions based on feedback. Statements from the participants were audiotaped and transcribed to analyze the essence of the students' experience. The interview questions were used to answer the research questions by facilitating conversations about improving undergraduate education and student engagement from the student's perspective.

Participants were comfortable sharing their experiences because they already knew how integral my role was in their transition to the university. That professional transparency enabled me to gain the trust of the participants. The challenge was setting aside previous interactions with the participants and assessing the data as if I was meeting the participants for the first time. Every effort was made to remove racial biases and biases related to personal and social perceptions of the HBCU experience. I did this by maintaining a neutral role during the interview process.

The data collected provided insight on the individual's active participation in academic and cocurricular activities. In addition, the data indicated whether the concept of White privilege was a factor in how participants were treated by faculty, staff, and students. As data were collected, I used a reflective journal to highlight my thoughts regarding the data and observations. Data were secured in a password-protected file on

my computer, and all field notes were locked in a file cabinet**.** Only I have access to this information. Data will be kept for 5 years and then destroyed.

It was important during the data collection process that I kept in mind the main reason I chose to conduct this study. Research on college student development has indicated that the greatest predictor of cognitive and personal development is student engagement (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Furthermore, research has indicated that high levels of student engagement are correlated with certain positive institutional practices (Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Most recently, Carini et al. (2006) determined that student engagement is positively linked to critical thinking skills and grades.

The best indicator of student engagement originated from Chickering and Gasmon's (1987) *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*. The principles included encouraging contact between students and faculty, developing reciprocity and cooperation among students, encouraging active learning, giving prompt feedback, emphasizing time on task, communicating high expectations, and respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. These principles were defined by students' motivation and interest to be engaged in academic and extracurricular activities and attempts made by the institution to allot resources, whether it be fiscal or human. Institutions successful in adhering to these principles directed students' energy towards appropriate assignments and engaged them at high levels.

Data Analysis Results

According to Maxwell (2005), "the experienced qualitative researcher begins data analysis immediately after finishing the first interview or observation, and continues to analyze the data as long as he or she is working on the research, stopping briefly to write reports and papers" (p. 95). An exploratory analysis occurred immediately after the conclusion of the interviews. This analysis obtained a general sense of the data and actualized how the data was organized, and determined if additional information was needed. Once interview data was collected it was transcribed. Transcripts were read line by line and most frequently mentioned topics were identified and grouped into themes. Three to five themes were developed for each research question.

After themes were determined, they were then coded next to the appropriate section of the transcript. Coding consists of making notations next to pieces of data relevant to answering the research questions (Merriam, 2009). Another method involved constant listening of the audiotaped interviews. This was necessary as key words or experiences were revealed. To ensure the best possible accuracy and credibility of the findings, this study validated findings through member checks, external audits, and triangulation. Member checks required me to solicit feedback from the participants who were interviewed. Member checks verified that the participant's perspective was correctly reflected in my analysis. The external audit solicited the assistance of an individual not related to the study to review the research and provide suggestions and feedback. In addition, they signed the confidentiality agreement. In the case of the SAI,

individuals not affiliated with the institution were selected to serve in this capacity to minimize bias.

Triangulation improves the validity and reliability of research (Golafshani, 2003). Methodological triangulation was used for this study. Validity was established when the conclusions from each of the participant interviews were compared and similar results were found.

Based on the results of the data, a possible project included developing a multicultural center on the HBCU campus. Patton (2007) stated that multicultural centers make a significant impact on Black Students at PWIs. They serve to address issues of isolation and invisibility of underrepresented populations. It is possible the same could hold true for White students at HBCUs. However, university administrators must consider the ramifications of such a decision, in addition to answering questions regarding the multicultural center's leadership and how to assist the White student population without alienating the students HBCUs were historically built to serve.

The Process

Participants were identified via a list the researcher received from the dean of the university college. Emails were sent to 40 participants; seven responded. An eighth participant volunteered as his friend was one of the seven that responded and was interested in the study. Interviews were scheduled over a period of two weeks. The participants consisted of five males and three females. Two were freshmen, four were juniors, and two were seniors. Unfortunately, no sophomores or females that classified as a senior responded to the participation request. Five of the eight transferred to the SAI

within the last 3 years. All of the participants were born and raised in the state, and ages ranged from 18-36 years.

Each interview was recorded using the voice memo app on my iPhone and then emailed so data could be stored and password protected on my computer. All recorded interviews were then erased from the phone. After all interviews were completed, the audio interviews were reviewed then transcribed into a textual format. Participants were asked to review their transcribed interviews for accuracy and make additions or corrections to more accurately represent their thoughts and feelings. Once the member checks concluded, transcripts were coded using NVivo software. Interviewer notes from a journal were also collected and organized. Once the transcribed interviews were coded, the data was examined to develop a plan for the actual analysis. They were examined repeatedly to indicate emerging themes. A friend not affiliated with the study or the institution reviewed the data and provided suggestions and feedback. Finally, the data was reviewed again to ensure the themes that emerged were justified.

Triangulation occurred when the interviews were compared to see if there were similar results. There was difficulty finding data that challenged the study's findings, mainly because the topic has not been heavily researched. Gibbs (2007) recommended that researchers have procedures to check for reliability. Reliability was established when transcripts were reviewed for mistakes. Data was constantly compared with the codes by writing memos about the codes and their definitions. This prevented drifts in the definition of codes and shifts in the meaning of the codes during the process.

Themes

Five themes developed from the interviews: Why an HBCU, student engagement, interactions with faculty, interactions with peers, and race relations on campus. These themes added to the validity of the study.

Common Reasons Why White Students Choose an HBCU

The reasons why the participants decided to attend an HBCU were consistent with previous studies. Location, recruitment of "minority" students, cost of tuition, and the majors offered were primary themes. "Michelle" a 28-year old junior, stated:

> Well, I hope to be a teacher, and I wanted to be able to connect with my future students. And I live in a demographic that is very multicultural. So I wanted to attend this HBCU. Um, I was drawn in by the motto of the school of education preparing educators for diverse cultural contexts. Um, and I think it's a great fit for me.

"Nicole," a 22-year old junior reflected on her experience:

> It's actually, I was looking at all the catalogues for psychology, because I've known since I was like, fourteen that I was gonna be a psychologist. And I was reading all the course descriptions on what was being taught and what kind of psychology classes were being offered at all the universities….SAI met the requirements that I had for what I wanted to learn with psychology.

Major availability was also a reason for "Dustin," an 18-year old freshman:

> Number one, the main reason is because what degree my major is, what I'd do post-grad, I mean, post-undergrad, when I go to graduate school, it has a very

good program which I'm gonna be majoring in criminal justice, and I want to become a lawyer and they have one of the best law programs on this side of the coast.

"Jake," a 24-year old senior, mentioned the importance of cost and distance:

Finances, as far as cost efficiency….distance, based on where I was located at the time. And knowing I wanted to commute, ah, for a short time, at least, it made more sense to come here than to go a lot of other places.

For "John," a 36-year old senior, SAI was his only choice:

I got four kids. I had nothing to my name. I still really basically don't. I'm just getting by right now just being a server and being able to live here has helped that dramatically just because the sheer factor that it doesn't cost all that much to live here versus up north where it is just out of control. I would have never been able to go back to school up there. Never.

Others were recruited. "Sandra," an 18-year old freshmen, received numerous emails from SAI to apply:

I kept getting emails to apply, to apply, to apply, so I applied. I got in and me and my mom came on a tour and whenever we came, I don't know, just going around campus and seeing everybody, they were so nice. It just felt like home. It felt right.

The same thing happened to "Cody," a 21-year old junior and former athlete who was originally recruited to play football but an injury curtailed ended his dreams:

I already received letters from SAI already so they were already in my top

choices, so, I just had to reapply as a regular student instead of an athlete, so, I got

accepted here first, so I decided to go here.

Unfortunately for "Dennis," a 23-year old junior, he denied an opportunity to receive a

full scholarship upon graduation from high school from SAI and instead attended another

university. Things did not go as planned and he transferred to a community college after a

year. He earned his Associates and then transferred to SAI, and wished he had attended

SAI immediately (and thus receiving a full scholarship) upon graduation: "And to this

day, I regret not taking it then. It's kind of ironic, now I'm coming and paying to go here

now."

Student Engagement

Participants were asked to discuss ways in which they were the most engaged on

campus. The responses ranged from not being involved to being an athlete or being a

member of a club or organization. What was surprising was that some of the

organizations that the participants were members of were historically for Blacks.

Dustin, Cody, and Jake were part of organizations geared towards Black males. Dustin

and Cody were part of a program that focuses on Black male achievement; they were

both asked to elaborate on their experiences in this program. Dustin shares his reasons for

joining such a program:

You give back to your community 'cause you don't know what you can do. Me

personally, when I was two weeks old, I was diagnosed with e-coli and spinal

meningitis, and they couldn't tell if I was going to live one day or the next, and

now since I made it out I feel like I should do something just to pass it on. Me

being lucky enough to live, I went through all that, at least I could try and make

somebody else's life better.

Dustin is in the process of joining the SAI's chapter of 100 Black Men, a national

organization with a purpose of improving the quality of life and enhancing educational

and economic opportunities for Blacks. Cody reflected on his reason for joining:

I guess it's the new, um, the male program to help, um, minority students uh, be

successful and keep on the right track, so, uh, I wanted to be a part of that because

it probably would have helped a lot freshman year, and it did, I still use them as

resources all the time, not as involved as I was freshman year, but that's normal,

all the new freshmen are, I'm in cohort 3, so it's an old one, they're on cohort 6

now. But I love the program; it's great.

Jake decided to join a Black Greek letter organization and shared why:

(Joining a Black Greek letter organization) allows me to do a lot of community

service, a lot of events, uh, really show my face on campus, as well as help out a

lot of freshmen and sophomores while they're coming up and helping them have

an easier transition into college.

The other participants are part of numerous clubs and organizations on campus such as

the Spanish Club, Golden Key International Honor Society, the Pharmaceutical

Engineering Club, and served as orientation leaders. Sandra is the only athlete that was

interviewed, but is a part of other organizations as well. Twice a week, the SAI has an

event that is sponsored by the Student Activities Board in which there are no classes for

an hour. Students congregate in the student union to listen to music, watch student performances, and earn opportunities to win prizes. Dennis shares his experience during that timeframe:

> I would come here to the student union and just talk to different people. It's like, sometimes it was someone I didn't know, like I'd be in the lunch line and I'd just sit there and have a conversation with someone I didn't know. And that's how I met my buddy Alex and a bunch of the other people up there at the Mary Town Center and that's how I met the core group of friends that I never thought I'd actually have here, I thought I was gonna be the guy who just sat in class by himself, did his work, and then just went on his way.

Interactions with Faculty

Per Gasman and Palmer (2008), HBCU faculty are praised for their commitment to teaching and student development through supportive relationships. For most of the participants, faculty served as effective teachers and role models for White undergraduate students. Participants could mention names of faculty that had a huge impact. These faculty significantly influenced the levels to which they engaged. The current climate of fewer resources for higher education institutions, coupled with increasing diversity on HBCU campuses, will require faculty to assume responsibility extending beyond teaching and providing services, which will make for more meaningful contributions to student life (Carter, 2010). Nicole reflected on the three years she has been at the SAI and her interactions:

Yes, I had Frank LeWay, he's in the university college? He's been my advisor,

he's awesome, he's great, he like, handled so much that I needed him to help me

and it made me feel less stressed out. And all my interactions with my psychology

teachers...I haven't had any white psychology teachers, so I don't know if I will,

depends on the classes I end up taking. I don't pick, I don't even go to that Rate

My Professor thing, I pick the class based on the title, and if I like what it says,

that we're gonna do in the course description. And they've all been very nice,

welcoming. I had Miss Allen for advanced gen, she was really helpful in helping

me figure out what I was gonna do beyond undergrad.

Jake praises the faculty in the History Department for pushing him to become involved in

other activities. John mentioned staff in the Financial Aid Department and the

Administrative Support Staff in his major department as most helpful. Dustin shared an

interesting perspective in regards to the faculty and staff on campus:

Like, all of my professors are not my race. I have one that's Chinese, one's Indian,

the rest are African-American, and they do try to tempt me to become engaged on

campus, 'cause I'm from a small town that nobody's ever heard of, and you're at

new place, what are you supposed to do? You try to get engaged and you have

people to help you. They've done that for me. Some people go bowling at the

game room, done that, and then CSP, UHP, they just helped me get very

interactive.

Cody shares how it was the staff and not the faculty that has made an impact:

Mr. Nam, our administrator, he encouraged me to get involved with a bunch of

the organizations on campus such as SAAB, which I'm in now The teachers pretty

much just treated me normal, with the classes, they didn't specifically seek me out

to get me to engage with other people. I didn't seem like the type that needed the

push, I was already engaged with other people all the time.

Based on the responses, White students were engaged in academic clubs and

organizations originally created for students of color. In these situations, the students

were welcomed with open arms.

Interactions with Friends/Peers

At the SAI, a White student interacting with peers different from them is

inevitable. Hall (2009) argued that engagement is a learned behavior than can be shaped

by "the structural diversity in pre-college environments" (p. 23). This structural diversity

provides unique opportunities for diverse peer interactions inside and outside of the

classroom. The relationships described by the students ranged from informal and

collegial to more intimate. Most of the interactions have been through collaborative

group work and assignments in class. They believed the small, communal environment

within the departments and organizations on campus contributed to their ability to

develop strong relationships with other students.

Nicole had a lot to share in this area:

No, I interact with my roommate a lot, 'cause we live together, and being in

psychology and moving here and then entering the psychology department, I'll see

a lot of the same faces a lot and I'll talk to them, and in my speech classes I talk to

people that I see outside of it...in my speech class, I am the only white person. It doesn't really bother me whatsoever. My high school was the same, I lived in Georgia before I moved here and that's kind of always been... I've never felt uncomfortable, I feel perfectly fine. I actually feel more comfortable than I do around white people sometimes. That's just more personal preference…Everyone's so just, really seems like they enjoy what's going on. Everyone's always laughing, good time...people hold the doors open, that's one thing I notice, like, that's the nicest thing, everyone's holding doors open for people, swiping cards and helping you in, holding a bunch of stuff...I like it, it's enjoyable.

Jake shared similar sentiments:

Outside of my organization, I have, you know, most other people that I hang out with would be African American. I have some Caucasian friends that go here, then I have, um, one Hispanic friend, who's actually my line brother, who I was friends with before we crossed together, so. Um, I have a mixed bag, but it's kind of always been that way for me anyway, especially coming from uh small county high school in Lee County. I'm kinda just used to hanging out with everybody, so for me, this isn't any different. It's just a slightly bigger environment."

Sandra had a challenging start to the academic year but showed some improvement:

I met a lot, like, my roommate has friends from around here that came here too and I got to know them and during the week of welcome I got to know them better. I sat beside [them and also] made new friends on the bus and talked to

them and exchanged phone numbers and text and all that. During week of

welcome I really didn't talk a lot. I didn't interact with people. I'm really shy so I

didn't really know what to say or what to do. I don't know. I just felt nervous and

didn't know what they'd think of me if I didn't know that right thing to say or

something like that so I didn't really talk."

John shared that he does not look at race when interacting with others:

I don't see race as anything. I look at people for their character. I don't care about

race. It doesn't bother me. It is not even an issue to me. Dr. Ray…he's my go to

for my lab modules and he is my teacher for processing, and he is also my lab

module teacher plus Dr. Sexton. He's white. But he is Rob's boss. I interact with

Robb the most and he is African American. I also interact with Dr. Sexton as well,

but mainly Robb, and also have another person who is in with me in my lab

module. His name is David Bowlen and he is African American and we interact

as well. I interact with a lot of people downstairs as well and a bright building.

Some are white, some are African American, I don't care. It doesn't matter to me.

I'm just here to try and get better and learn more, to learn as much as I can. If I

can learn more with anybody it doesn't matter their race."

Dennis echoed John's sentiments:

Um, well usually the people that I interact with are African-American. Some are

Asian, some are white, and...that's mostly how I interact with them. We just talk,

sometimes we go to the cafe and eat together, or we go to the library and just talk

on the third floor, just talk, and see how everyone's day was doing, just being

concerned about everybody else.

When Dustin first enrolled at the SAI, his interactions were minimal:

My first week I didn't really interact because I didn't know how to act at an

HBCU, most of the people they were all calm and laid-back and they'd get along

together, and I'm just at this new place, I don't know how to act, so I just really

stood back and watched and seen what they done… I interact with are African-

American. Some are Asian, some are white, and... that's mostly how I interact

with them. We just talk, sometimes we go to the café and eat together, or we go to

the library and just talk on the third floor, just talk, and see how everyone's day

was doing, just being concerned about everybody else.

Cody interestingly shared that he meshes better with peers outside of his race, mainly

because of his interactions with diverse populations prior to attending college. He

considers himself to be popular among his peers:

I kind of float around and talk to any group of people on campus, but I guess I

was like, not everybody knows me but they know me because they're all, "Hey,

it's that white guy," everyone knows me in that sense, but a lot of people still

KNOW me."

The participants interacted more with Black students due to the environment they were

in, but did make it a point to interact with fellow White students, and other races not a

part of the study (Latino, Asian, etc.).

Race Relations on Campus

The opinions of the participants were somewhat mixed in regards to this area. While most of the participants did not a have any issues acclimating to campus, Michelle shared a very interesting experience:

I do feel I am treated differently, um, I feel in some instances, that, more pressure is put on me to achieve, like, um, more work is required for me to achieve the same grade as someone who is not white. And in other instances, I feel like, people assume that I that I attend for financial reasons, that I'm receiving funding for being white at a HBCU. Um, which isn't true, but people have their pre…there's a rumor going around on that. Everyone who's not black gets some sort financial help. Um, it's racist and not true. So, and then, before people realized that I'm married, there's a stigma between um, females here, who think I'm here to steal a good black man for myself. I've actually been yelled at on more than one occasion, um, so I try to always wear my ring, but, you know. It's just, and with the negative differences there have been positive differences. I feel like I'm approachable, so when someone has a question, and um…like, on my way here to see you today, someone needed to find a building, and stopped me, even though there was, um, other non-white people walking around, and I looked like I knew where I was, or I was just approachable, so that's a benefit too.

Jake had a similar experience:

Being the only Caucasian student in those classes, actually, being the only person of non-African American descent, it appeared, it just felt, out of place…um…

when I was first going to sporting events not really knowing that many people, it

felt out of place.

Sandra questions her presence on the campus:

Sometimes I feel like they don't want me here like I am intruding. If that makes

sense? And, like, sometimes I hear things like "Why is she here? She's white."

And so. Yeah. Those are a few things I've heard walking around campus.

Based on the data overall, each participant has been able to succeed at SAI.

However, there are challenges that need to be addressed to increase the graduation and

retention rates of White undergraduate students.

Ways White Students Report Student Engagement on NSSE

In 2010, 7% of freshmen and 11% of White seniors participated in the NSSE. Questions

were selected to address the ways White students report that participation in

extracurricular activities enhance their college success. The following questions on the

NSSE were analyzed:

- To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your

  knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas (question

  #11)?

- How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution

  (question #13)?

Sixteen areas were analyzed in the first question. There areas were: acquiring a broad

general education, acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills, writing clearly

and effectively, speaking clearly and effectively, thinking critically and analytically,

analyzing quantitative problems, using computing and information technology, working effectively with others, voting in local, state, or national elections, learning effectively on your own, understanding yourself, understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, solving complex real world problems, developing a personal code of values and ethics, contributing to the welfare of your community, and developing a deepened sense of spirituality. Participants rated using a scale of very much to very little.

In looking at the responses to this question, more than 50% responded either "Quite a bit" or "Very much" in fourteen out of the sixteen areas that Southeastern Academic Institution contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development. Areas in need of improvement included voting in local, state, and national elections, and developing a deepened sense of spirituality. The percentages of these areas in which the responses were "Very little" or "Some" were 57.9% and 63.2%, respectively. Regarding the second question, participants could rate the question on a scale of Poor to Excellent. A resounding 81.5% felt that their entire educational experience was either good or excellent.

Engagement Activities and Graduation Rates

To address the ways curricular and extra-curricular activities meet the social and educational needs of White students at HBCUs and increase graduation rates, the following questions were analyzed:

- In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following (question #1)?

- During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities (question #2)?

- During the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following (question #6)?

- Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution (question #7)?

- Mark the box that best represents the quality of your relationships with people at your institution (question #8)?

- To what extent has your experience at this contribution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas (question #11)?

- How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution (question #13)?

- If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending (question #14)?

The first question had 23 activities in which participants had to share the frequency in which they engaged. Results showed hereinafter: Very often: asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions (65.8%), prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in (35.1%), worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources (55.3%), included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments (44.7%), put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions

(31.6%), used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment (36.8%), used

email to communicate with an instructor (60.5%), had serious conversations with

students of a different race or ethnicity than your own (52.6%).

Participants mentioned that the following activities were done often: made a class

presentation (31.6%), worked with other students on projects during class (36.8%),

worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments (44.7%), put

together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during

class discussions (31.6%), discussed grades or assignments with an instructor (39.5%),

worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or

expectations (39.5%), discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside

of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.-52.6%), had serious conversations

with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political

opinions, or personal values (36.8%).

Participants sometimes did the following: talked about career plans with a faculty

member or advisor (36.8%), discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty

members outside of class (52.6%). There were a large number of participants that never

came to class without completing readings or assignments (52.6%), and tutored or taught

other students (paid or voluntary-42.1%).

During the academic year being studied, 60.5% participants' stated that their

coursework emphasized memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from their courses and

readings so they could repeat them in pretty much the same form either quite a bit or very

much. In addition, 89.5% said that their coursework emphasized analyzing the basic

elements of an idea, experience, or theory. In regards to their coursework placing an emphasis on synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships, 76.4% of participants surveyed stated this. Coursework that emphasized making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods had the same percentage as analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory. Finally, 84.2% of participants studied said that their coursework emphasized applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations.

Question #6 of the NSSE asked participants the frequency in which they engaged in six activities. Those activities consisted of attending an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance, exercised or participated in physical fitness activities, participated in activities to enhance spirituality, examined the strengths and weaknesses of views on a topic or issue, tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective, and learned something that changed the way one understood an issue or concept. Five of the activities had the majority of participants participating to some degree, while 55.3% of participants never attended an art exhibit, or any of the performing arts.

Question 7 of the NSSE focused on what participants have done or plan to do prior to graduation. Those studied had to respond one of four ways: done, plan to do, do not plan to do, and have not decided. This is how the results added up:
Done: Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment (50%), community service or volunteer work (71.1%), participate in a learning

community or some other formal program (39.5%), foreign language coursework

(57.9%); plan to do: culminating senior experience (39.5%); do not plan to do: work on a

research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements

(52.6%), study abroad (55.3%), or take part in independent study or a self-designed

major.

Participants surveyed had to evaluate their relationships with faculty members,

administrative personnel and offices, and other students. They felt that faculty members

were available, helpful, and sympathetic, administrative personnel and offices were

helpful, considerate, and flexible, and other students were friendly and supportive.

Question 11 of the NSSE was analyzed under the first research question but applied here

as well as a student's experience will impact graduation rates. When participants were

asked if they would go to the same institution if they could start over again, 76.3% said

they would definitely or probably attend, while 23.7% probably or definitely would not.

Level of Engagement Based on Gender and Academic Classification

To address the level of academic or extracurricular participation based on gender

and academic classification, demographic data from the NSSE was reviewed. As the

NSSE only surveys freshmen and seniors, those were the only class standings that there is

data on. An astounding 84.2% of seniors participated in the survey, compared to 15.8%

of freshmen. Even though there was a small percentage of the White freshman and senior

population that took part in the NSSE, the majority of students that participated were

White (84.2%). In regards to gender, 63.2% of females while 36.8% of males took part in

the survey.

Summary

Based on the interviews and the NSSE data, it was determined that there is a minimal problem with peer-to-peer interaction or participating in extracurricular activities. White students are most engaged in fraternities and sororities, academic organizations, and athletics. However, the data has shown that there is a slight disconnect when it comes to relationships with faculty.

The students interviewed mentioned mostly positive relationships with faculty. They could supply the names of individuals that played a role in their transition to the HBCU environment. They were thankful for the assistance faculty provided in helping them overcome some of their challenges. However, the NSSE data told a different story.

Section 3: The Project

To address the disconnect that was demonstrated in the data between White students and faculty, a mentor program will be implemented to allow White students in the HBCU setting to interact more with faculty outside of the classroom. This will provide students with more collaborative opportunities, which may increase their graduation rates.

Rationale

Data analysis indicated that interactions were lacking between White undergraduate students and faculty at SAI. Data from the NSSE showed that the White students had no intentions to interact with faculty outside of the classroom or in one-on-one activities such as independent studies. A mentor program was chosen because mentor programs provide a relationship that extends beyond the traditional advising affiliation. Studies support the influence of mentoring relationships on successful student outcomes (Golde & Dore 2001; Paglis, Green, & Bauer, 2006).

A student is more likely to persist to graduation when working with a mentor. A consistent factor across institutions is the interaction between the student and faculty member (Holley & Caldwell, 2012). Regardless of the origin of the mentoring relationship, having a mentor offers students the opportunity to interact with role models and garner support for their development and socialization experiences. Institutions have executed mentoring programs for an array of at-risk student populations such as first-generation college students, educationally ill-prepared students, financially constricted

students, and students who lacked support from family. However, research involving

women and minorities in mentoring programs is lacking (Budge, 2006).

Review of the Literature

I conducted the literature search using multiple education databases (ERIC,

Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, and Sage Journals) through

Walden University's library. In addition, I found articles in journals acquired through my

membership in professional higher education organizations. Search terms included

mentoring, *mentor programs*, *benefits of mentoring*, *peer mentoring*, *e-mentoring*, *online

mentoring*, and *mentoring in higher education.* The formal study of academic mentoring

can be traced back to 1911 with the University of Michigan's engineering factory (Crisp

& Cruz, 2009). There were articles related to mentoring of Black students at PWIs;

however, there were no articles addressing the mentoring relationships of White students

at HBCUs.

Elements of Mentoring

Mentoring occurs in different forms; it can be formal (structured and

characterized by goals and objectives) or informal (unstructured and formed via

spontaneous interaction). The outcome of the mentoring program is not only the

program's goals and objectives, but also the type of relationship between the mentor and

mentee (Leidenfrost, Strassnig, Shutz, Carbon, & Schabmann, 2014). Kram (1985)

described three stages of mentoring: initiation, cultivation, and separation and

redefinition from the mentee's perspective. In the initiation phase, a "strong positive

fantasy emerges" (Kram, 1985, p. 614) in which the mentor is admired and respected due

to his or her ability to provide guidance. In the cultivation phase, the relationship between the mentor and mentee continues to grow. The boundaries of the relationship have been analyzed, and uncertainty no longer exists. In the third phase, separation and redefinition from the mentee's perspective, there are compelling changes in the mentor/mentee relationship. The mentee begins to experience newfound independence and tests his or her capacity to function effectively without the mentor's assistance. In some cases, the mentoring relationship ends prematurely, which may cause the mentee to panic as he or she is forced to work without the mentor before being ready. Zachary (2000), building on Kram's work, identified four stages of mentoring: preparing, negotiating, enabling, and coming to closure from the mentor's perspective. The preparing phase involves the mentor seeking personal motivation and readiness to serve and establishing clarity with the mentee regarding their roles. During the negotiating phase, ground rules are formed and both parties come to an agreement on learning goals. During the enabling phase, mentor and mentee continue to communicate and reflect on the learning experience. Finally, in the closing phase, the mentor and mentee assess whether learning goals had been met and celebrate improvements.

In 2001, Davidson and Foster-Johnson outlined important elements of mentoring. Those elements include the significance of achievement or acquisition of knowledge between the student and mentor, attention to long-term professional development, formulation of mutual benefits for the mentor and student, development of a highly intimate relationship, and spotlight on the expertise the mentor brings to the relationship. These elements have been used to develop mentor programs at institutions such as the

University of Missouri-Columbia and Arizona State University (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001).

Bell-Ellison and Dedrick (2008) researched mentoring relationships between doctoral students and faculty. Bell-Ellison and Dedrick concluded that although doctoral students generally yearn for mentors who serve as role models, value the student, are considerate of their time, and provide research support, successful institutional attempts to promote the doctoral student-mentor relationship have been motivated by demographic and cultural factors such as age, gender, and race. Rose (2005) found that older students were less likely to find mentoring an essential part of the doctoral student experience, but international students found the student-mentor relationship to be priceless. For them, the relationship provided coping strategies toward cultural adjustment. The mentoring process is also influenced by academic discipline. Nerad and Cerny (1993) found that doctoral students in the natural and laboratory sciences were more likely to have recurring interactions with mentors than their peers in the arts and sciences and humanities.

Rewards of Mentoring

The number of mentoring programs has grown dramatically over the years due to not just the research, but testimonials from those who have profited from the experience (Green-Powell, 2012). Successful mentoring relationships continue beyond graduation. The mentor observing the mentee growing and learning is confirmation of the mentor's efforts; mentees personalize features they admire in their mentor, thereby cultivating themselves.

Organizations, regardless of size, can also benefit from mentoring. This is due to the quality and quantity of projects and work-related initiatives that are directly related to the ability of the organization's people to collaborate and surpass expectations. As a result, those individuals have high self-esteem, and their work makes an exceptional impact on their customers and clients.

Types of Mentoring

Peer Mentoring

Besides the usual type of mentoring (faculty/staff and student), peer mentoring is as another viable option. Peer mentoring is popular among institutions of higher education as it assists in the integration of students into the university community. According to Haythornthwaite (2008), students identifying with their peers is important to their success. Clifton, Perry, Stubbs, and Roberts (2004) stated that peers enhance the individual's sense of coping, which provides perceived control over his or her academic progress. Peer mentoring consists of more experienced students supporting new students during their academic and personal development. Peer mentoring has been shown to increase student retention and improve the interpersonal skills of the mentors (Muldoon, 2008), improve the first-year college experience (Tariq, 2005), and improve academic performance (Ashwin, 2002, 2003). Leidenfrost et al. (2014) examined the impact of a peer mentoring program and different mentoring styles. They concluded that mentees benefited from the peer mentoring program independently of the mentor's mentoring style.

Other studies focused on peer mentoring and student diversity. Best, Hajzler, and Henderson (2007) reported that peer mentoring had been used as a technique for the improvement of the international student transition. Devereux (2004) discussed the use of peer mentoring as a way to improve intercultural relationships. A similar format could be used to assist the assimilation of White students at SAI.

E-Mentoring

Over the past 10 years, there has been enormous growth of knowledge communities and collectives over the Internet (Ruane & Koku, 2014). These collectives provide learning opportunities that enable people to not only gain individual knowledge but also contribute to the distribution of knowledge (Westberry & Franken, 2013). In addition, advances in technology have facilitated the development of ingenious programs to support student learning (Barab, 2003). Online mentoring, or e-mentoring, has become a popular alternative to face-to-face mentoring, especially because online learning is the fastest growing area of education (Boyle, Kwon, Ross, & Simpson, 2010).

There has been increasing interest in e-mentoring; however, research regarding its effectiveness is limited. Boyle et al. (2010) investigated mentoring needs at a university in the United Kingdom and determined that due to many institutions using social media, online mentoring is most beneficial. Hodges, Payne, Dietz, and Hajovsky (2014) examined the use of two mentoring programs found that e-learning assisted students in four areas: receiving study and scheduling tips, practicing to interact with professors by practicing with e-sponsors, receiving helpful advice that would apply to other courses, and learning to advocate for themselves.

McEwan (2011) found that social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have been found to help students increase social capital and provide access to academic resources, among other benefits. Ruane and Koku (2014) used social network analysis to probe the patterns of student synergy in online peer-mentoring sites within a teacher education program. The results showed that the online peer-mentoring sites supported interaction primarily among first-year and third-year students. First-year students controlled the flow of the communication, while third-year students had more impact in relationship development. Ruane and Koku also determined that first-year students need to be better engaged in future peer-mentoring settings, which will strengthen first-year students' transition to their degree program.

Unfortunately, empirical research is limited regarding how mentoring actually works (Lunsford, 2011). In addition, much of the existing literature seems to imply that the mentoring relationship flows from mentor to mentee and not vice versa (Sekowski & Siekanska, 2008).

Project Description

According to Anderson and Shannon (1998), mentoring is a process in which a more experienced person, serves as a teacher and role model to a less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development (p. 40). The goals of the mentoring program, which is called Helping All Achieve Success (HAAS), are as follows:

- promote individual learning experiences that develop leadership skills;

- provide an array of opportunities to gain and practice skills such as decision-making, career development, and education planning; and

- establish relationships with faculty and staff outside of the classroom, which in turn will promote a positive academic experience.

Project Evaluation Plan

An essential part of the program development process is the evaluation plan to determine what worked and what did not and to make modifications for future projects. For this project, I decided summative data would be collected for the program's assessment. Summative evaluation is outcomes based and is used to assess a program at its conclusion and provide feedback via the use of a written test (Glazer, 2014). Summative evaluation may include open, closed, multiple choice, true/false, Likert scale, and fill-in-the-blank questions. At the conclusion of the mentoring program, both the mentor and mentee will receive this evaluation. The types of questions asked will include perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program, program challenges, and program recommendations.

The answers will assist program administrators and stakeholders in improving the program for future participants. These individuals will meet at the conclusion of the program to review the evaluations. The open-ended questions will provide the qualitative data needed to make improvements. Qualitative data were the impetus for the development of the mentor program; it is appropriate that the same type of data be used for its improvement.

Project Implications

Social change implications include improved relations between White undergraduate students and faculty, staff, and peers, which may increase retention and graduation rates of White undergraduate students. The mentor program was based on the interviews with the students and the discrepancies between their responses and the NSSE data. The program provides an opportunity for the mentee (White undergraduate student) to share his or her fears and accomplishments with the mentor, while the mentor provides a listening ear and the resources to aid in the White undergraduate experience.

Implications for the local community involve implementing the mentoring program at other HBCUs across the state. SAI is one of many HBCUs in the state. Because the original study focuses on public HBCUs, the goal would be to pilot this program at the other four. As each institution completes a full year of the program, the program administrators and stakeholders would meet for a daylong session to share best practices and as a collective unit, make modifications if necessary. As enrollment increases of other races (Asian, Latino, etc.) at HBCUs, the current program can be modified to welcome these populations.

Program Implementation

Before the inception of a new idea, one must plan for possible resources. Program planners must be aware of all existing supports, and be prepared for any barriers that may exist. The following subsections will discuss the mentoring program's resources, existing supports, and potential barriers.

Program Resources

In order for a mentor program to be successful, there needs to be institutional buy in. A proposal, which consists of institutional data, will be needed. In addition, a guide or toolkit, such as The Elements of Effective Mentoring, should be acquired to ensure that the mentoring program ensure safety, effectiveness, and sustainability. Because HBCUs are already challenged with doing more with less, a current employee of SAI will need to serve as program coordinator as the funds to hire a new person will be limited. Soliciting grant funding is an option; however, it is important to remember that grant funding is also limited. It will be the program coordinator's responsibility to determine additional funding to sustain the program.

Existing Supports

Existing support for the mentoring program include the Enrollment Management Team, as they are concerned with not only admitting students into the institution, but making certain the student stays at the institution. The Vice President of Student Affairs is another support as the Student Affairs Division is primarily responsible for engagement activities that occur outside of the classroom. Departments under Student Affairs include, but are not limited to (and can vary by institution), Residence Life, Student Activities, New Student Programs, Career Services, Student Health and Counseling, and Student Rights and Responsibilities. Representatives from these departments would serve on the program planning committee, in addition to a representative from Enrollment Management. A representative from University Public Relations will be needed to assist with communication and marketing.

Potential Barriers

Lack of funding is a potential barrier. As previously mentioned, grant funding will need to be acquired and once the grant has ended, institutional funding will be needed to sustain the program. With state institutions receiving less funding, this could be problematic. Another barrier could come from Academic Affairs. There has always been the "great divide" between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, which could make funding the mentoring program amounting to nothing. A liaison between the two areas will be essential so each side can discuss the pros and cons, and determine as a cohesive unit how both sides can benefit from such a program.

Program Timeline

Program development and implementation will take eighteen months. The first two months will entail reviewing mentoring guides and toolkits, forming the committee and assigning the program coordinator (who will also serve as chair of the committee). Program purpose, goals, and objectives with be determined, in addition to program model and program outcomes. Here, the representative from University Public Relations will be instrumental in formulating a communications and marketing plan. Once all of these tasks have been completed, the program coordinator/committee chair will present the proposal to senior leadership to secure support.

Once buy-in in secured, the committee can proceed with planning. They will establish selection criteria for the mentors, create application materials, and hold an informational for interested faculty and staff. At the informational, potential mentors will receive the application and be given a deadline for completion. During this time, a

mentee needs form will be created. This form will ask for demographic information from the mentee and request for information such as academic and career goals, interests, and skills. The form will be the basis for mentor-mentee matching. All incoming students that classify on their admissions application as being White will automatically become a participant of the mentor program and be assigned a mentor.

During the fourth and fifth months, potential mentors will be interviewed and selected. Because background checks are required to become a University employee, checks will not be conducted a second time. Also during this time, trainers will be secured. The committee will determine if anyone at SAI is qualified to facilitate mentor training; if not, training will be outsourced. Criteria for pairing the mentors and mentees will also be established during this time period. During month six, mentors will begin orientation and training while incoming students start attending new student orientation activities.

During the seventh month (which at this point is the middle of summer), the mentors and mentees will be matched. Mentees will receive a letter in the mail with their mentor assignment, and an invitation to attend the program kickoff, which will be held during Welcome Week. The months following the kickoff will include monitoring the program, facilitating monthly in-service programs for participants, collect informal feedback, determine the summative evaluation plan, and finally, prepare to recruit mentors for the next academic year. Mentors can choose to participate for another year if their schedules allow.

The final two months will be the conclusion of the program, a "graduation ceremony" for mentees, and the evaluation process. The data collected with aid the committee in making changes before the next group of mentors and mentees are selected. Lastly, committee members will reflect and disseminate findings.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of student participants and mentors are varied and can be complex depending on the individuals involved and the nature of the relationship. Stakeholders have an important role of supporting a mentor program by providing fiscal and human resources.

Mentors are responsible for the following:

- demonstrating a willingness to commit to the process,

- outlining the terms of the mentoring relationship,

- communicating with mentees on a regular basis,

- sharing their thought process with the mentee,

- participating in training and other in-service activities,

- providing progress reports,

- serving as a coach and provide feedback,

- maintaining confidentiality, and

- guiding mentee toward completion of the program.

Mentees are responsible for:

- collaborating with the mentor to identify strengths and weaknesses,

- communicating expectations of mentoring relationship,

- taking initiative and being proactive in their development,

- participating in orientation and other in-service activities,

- maintain confidentiality,

- when receiving feedback being an active listener, and,

- evaluating the mentor's performance and the mentoring program as a whole.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths

The mentoring program will benefit White students at the SAI, by providing psychosocial support, advice on scholarship, information on the institution, constructive criticism, and informal feedback. The mentoring program will also provide an avenue for the mentor and mentee to develop a relationship fostering a diverse exchange of ideas with a better understanding of the White experience in an HBCU environment.

Faculty/Student Interactions

During data analysis, I observed discrepancies between the NSSE data and what students reported in interviews regarding faculty-student interactions. Faculty are a critical link and are influential in student engagement. Carter (2010) referred to faculty as the "nexus" (p. 323).

A few participants mentioned becoming involved in clubs and organizations due to faculty interactions. This functional interaction (Cox & Orehovec, 2007) began as the beginning stages of mentoring but evolved into a more meaningful relationship. This finding shows the important role of faculty in ensuring that students are aware of and become interested in cocurricular programs and activities. In addition, because of a faculty member's validation of a program, students deemed the program worthy of participation.

The mentoring program would also demonstrate the role of faculty as effective teachers who promote learning. The interviews showed that there was a positive perception of the faculty and staff. These types of relationships led to an increase in

participation in activities outside of the classroom. The faculty/staff serve as facilitators who present a unique opportunity for both learning and encouraging interaction between diverse peers and promoting responsibility and independence (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998).

Staff/Student Interactions

Based on the results of the interviews, staff and administrators also influenced student engagement. Although most of the data (especially the results of the NSSE) focused on relationships with faculty, some of the students mentioned the role program administrators and academic advisors played in ensuring that they were engaged in the HBCU environment. This finding is aligned with studies emphasizing the role staff play in student engagement (Kuh, 2009).

In looking at the male students' responses, I observed that many of the staff and administrators encouraged them to become involved in extracurricular activities, which increased their interaction with students of different backgrounds. However, this was not consistent with the intended benefits for Black versus White students. The literature indicated that HBCU staff and administrators believed that the relationships they formed with students were shaped by an "ethic of care" and a means to give back to the Black community through cultural advancement (Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, & Strayhorn, 2008). In addition, the HBCU staff and administrators described their relationships with students as familial and serving as a support network to ensure students could transition seamlessly into the college experience (Hirt et al., 2008). However, the NSSE data

exhibited that students did not have the desire to interact with faculty in activities beneficial to the college experience such as independent study.

Project Limitations

This study is limited in scope as the focus was based solely on the White student's perceptions and self-reporting of their engagement. The experience of the participants was not compared to their Black counterparts nor other student populations on campus. Hence, the sample narrows the focus and limits the study's generalizability.

Conclusions Regarding the White Student Experience

According to data collected in this study, White students were engaged in clubs and organizations (both academic and social) and interacted with peers different from them on a regular basis. Based on the findings, I made two conclusions regarding the White undergraduate experience on an HBCU campus.

The first conclusion was that race matters. Although there were no reports of racism by the students interviewed, a few (primarily the females) were reminded of their Whiteness. However, they were still able to learn from their peers. Second, student interactions with faculty are essential to the successful transition of White students to the HBCU environment. Based on the data, student engagement was a mutual exchange between the student and faculty; however, the level of engagement was driven by the effort each party put forth. In the next two sections, I discuss these conclusions and their implications, and offer recommendations for future research and practice.

Race Matters

Race matters on all campuses, especially the HBCU campus. Although this study focused only on White undergraduates, they recognized that their race played a role in their student experience. They stood out when they joined Black Greek letter organizations and organizations that primarily focused on the Black college experience. The impact of race was seen more when the participants mentioned their diverse experiences in high school (or another institution if they transferred). The impact of race was also seen when students were recruited and offered scholarships to attend an HBCU.

Interacting with diverse peers was another illustration of the impact of race. John discussed how many of his peers would contact him regularly because he was someone many felt comfortable going to for help. Cody was seen as "that White guy" everyone knew because he was very involved on campus. For those who lived on campus with roommates of a different race, this offered opportunities for growth.

Finally, White identity development offered an example of the complexity of race, which demonstrated the different ways students viewed the implications of hyper visibility and being the minority. Michelle reported that she had to voice her opinions more than the Black students because she was one of the few providing the "White opinion," which was challenging. She felt isolated on campus at times and was accused of trying to take "the good Black men" for herself. Some, like Cody, did not pay attention to race.

The importance of race within the HBCU setting creates opportunities for the institution to be cutting-edge while introducing challenges regarding maintaining the

institution's traditions and norms. Advertising race has an explicit impact on the manner in which White students perceive themselves and others on the college campus. If White students are comfortable at an HBCU, they will be more likely to participate in curricular and extracurricular activities, which in turn will increase their retention and graduation rates. On the other hand, if HBCUs are not seen as being inviting through their faculty, staff, facilities, and programs, White students will be less likely to engage (Carter, 2010).

Reciprocal Exchange of Student Engagement

According to study results, White student engagement occurred at the SAI. There were opportunities for White students to participate on campus. The level of engagement varied, however, from those who engaged in some form of the campus experience (such as athletics) to those who exerted more energy in various avenues offered by the institution. These students were not only involved in academic organizations but social ones as well. They attended campus events and took advantage of research opportunities.

Although the level of engagement differed, the main characteristic was the White student's breadth of participation in activities that had an educational purpose. This finding exhibits how a student's passion and desire to engage, coupled with institutional resources, can be beneficial but may fail due to the lack of developing a blueprint and the lack of intentionality of both parties. Both the student and the faculty member must be intentional and have a strategy for engagement to occur.

<center>**Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**</center>

Recommendations include the creation of a multicultural center that would focus not just on White students but all students regardless of race. There are approximately

100 multicultural centers on college campuses across the United States (Cooper, 2014); this does not include the 140 centers that focus strictly on Black studies. A multicultural center would increase involvement and increase intellectual dialogue.

Another alternative would be to follow SAI's lead and make its Black initiatives inclusive for White students. One of the students interviewed shared his experience being a member of two of the institution's Black-focused initiatives, and praised those programs for their support. He had been able to learn more about himself as an individual and the Black undergraduate experience while shedding insight on his experiences to his non-White peers. White students can educate and help university administrators answer difficult questions regarding student retention among the White population.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change Scholarship

Over the past eight years in this doctoral program, I have grown as a scholar. My research, study, and critical thinking skills have improved, and have been challenged by the faculty and my colleagues to think outside of the box. I have grown to respect and appreciate everyone involved in this process, from the committee, the URR, the IRB, and the Writing Center.

This study was beneficial in many ways. First, it allowed me to expand scholarship through my work by interviewing White undergraduate students. When I first received the offer to work at an HBCU, I was excited to be given the opportunity to work in an environment in which the Black population was the majority. Being a part of this population made me feel like I was giving back to my community. However, on my first

day, I realized I did not fit in. I was a young, Black female (the youngest of directors in the Division of Student Affairs at the time) from New York City with a heavy accent. It was brought to my attention on more than one occasion that I was "not from around here." If I felt like an outsider as a young, Black female from the city, I was curious about how White people felt, in particular the students. Therefore, I sought to develop a mentoring program to work with what I called "the new minority."

Project Development and Implementation

This qualitative study presented a unique opportunity to expand my knowledge base on project development and implementation. A program designed to address a local problem resulted from this project study. I learned the steps required to plan, implement, and evaluate a program. In addition, I learned how to gain institutional buy in and the importance of data in informing decisions.

In this project study, I created a mentor program to assist in the assimilation of White undergraduate students, which may increase their retention and graduation rates. This problem was raised in the local setting (SAI) but is part of a larger problem at the 107 HBCUs across the United States. Public HBCUs are state supported and required to diversify their student population. I collected data by conducting face-to-face interviews and reviewing data from the National Survey of Student Engagement. By analyzing the students' responses and the survey data, I was able to develop a project grounded in data. In addition, I outlined the specifics of project evaluation and implementation with the goal to make this a model program for other HBCUs.

Leadership and Change

This project helped me realize that the role I play as a scholar-practitioner is significant to student success. Not only do I provide students with the resources to help them survive in the college environment, but I also empower them to ask questions, become involved, and provide feedback. The feedback (especially from White students) will be the impetus for change at HBCUs. Being a leader in my department made me more empowered to plan and implement the mentor program. In addition, having the support of my supervisor and colleagues made me even more excited to implement the program.

<div align="center">

Reflection on Importance of the Work

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The results of this study indicate the different opportunities and challenges HBCUs experience. According to my experience as an employee of a public HBCU, there are more opportunities than challenges. HBCUs are in a great position to offer White students an opportunity to reflect on their Whiteness while integrating them into the institution without feelings of isolation. HBCUs can create "racially cognizant environments" (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 68) and empower students to understand that race still matters and how their understanding of their Whiteness can lead them to be confident change agents. While conducting this study, I learned the importance of scholarship, project development and evaluation, and leadership and change. I was also able to analyze myself as a scholar, a practitioner, and a project developer.

Directions for Future Research

Future research may assist in driving this mission forward, including a

longitudinal study of White students in the HBCU environment. An ethnographic design

would provide researchers an opportunity to conduct fieldwork by examining the White

student from freshman year to senior year, concentrating on a specified environment,

long-term interactions, and the generation of thick description to explain the experience

from start to finish (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). This research design may also shed

light on the meaning of race and how it is constructed at public HBCUs and how

experiences on these campuses influence students' identity development.

Researchers can also examine the quantity and quality of interactions between

White students and faculty and how White identity development can be used to construct

their meaning of race and those of their peers. Examining the frequency and intensity of

these interactions may shed light as to how the interactions design and affect the student

experience.

Investigating the Black undergraduate student experience at HBCUs may be

helpful as it may provide data to determine similarities and differences between Black

and White students. Such an inquiry may provide conclusions to inform opinions Black

and White students have of each other and how these opinions impact interaction with

their peers and their overall college experience.

As mentioned in the beginning of this study, additional research is needed. More

examination is needed regarding student engagement at HBCUs and how these

institutions facilitate this engagement. The data will be essential in understanding how

students are impacted. When reflecting on the conceptual framework of this study, using the NSSE benchmarks were helpful in assessing White student engagement in the HBCU environment. HBCUs should rely on data such as NSSE to really assess how they can increase student involvement, and provide the ease students need to be able to work with faculty beyond the classroom.

Conclusion

The participants in this study join a growing population of White students attending HBCUs. These experiences have lent insight as to why they decided to attend an HBCU, and primarily, how to become involved in an environment where for the first time they are the minority. The increasing diversity at HBCUs and the academic success of its students place these institutions in a great position to respond to questions regarding their purpose in higher education.

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Appendix A: The Project

The Helping All Achieve Success (HAAS) Mentoring Program

The Helping All Achieve Success (HAAS) mentoring program assists White undergraduate students in the HBCU environment. The program exemplifies essential features of a mentoring program, using other mentoring programs across the country as a guide.

Description and Goals

The goals of HAAS will be as follows:

- Promote individual learning experiences that develop leadership skills;

- Provide an array of opportunities to gain and practice skills such as decision making, career development, and education planning;

- Establish relationships with faculty and staff outside of the classroom, which in turn will promote a positive academic experience.

Program Purpose

The purpose of HAAS is to improve the White undergraduate student experience at HBCUs. The program is designed to ease the transition of this population through developing a relationship with faculty over a period of an academic year. This will in turn enhance student engagement, and increase retention and graduation rates.

The appendices must adhere to the same margin specifications as the body of the doctoral study. Photocopied or previously printed material may have to be shifted on the page or reduced in size to fit within the area bounded by the margins.

Program Timeline

A more detailed explanation of the timeline for project development and

implementation is below:

Months One and Two (January-February)	Review mentoring resources (mentoring toolkit)
	Create program committee; assign current SAI employee to serve as chair and program coordinator
	Determine purpose, goals and objectives, program structure, mentoring model, and program outcomes
	Formulate communications and marketing plan
	Formulate resourcing plan
	Present proposal and secure buy-in from senior leadership for sponsorship and resourcing
Month Three (March)	Establish mentor selection criteria
	Develop and disseminate marketing materials for a call for mentors
	Create application form for mentor candidates and establish application deadline
	Hold informational meeting(s) for potential mentors
	Create mentee needs form
Month Four (April)	Conduct interviews with mentor applicants
	Determine and select trainers for mentors
Month Five (May)	Select mentors for upcoming academic year

Month Five (cont.)	Determine orientation and training schedule for mentors Establish mentor/mentee matching criteria
Month Six **(June)**	Mentor training and orientation
Month Seven **(July)**	Match mentors and mentees Send mentees a letter with mentor assignment
Month Eight **(August)**	Program kickoff during Welcome Week that allows for the first mentor/mentee meeting Provide program schedule and activities
Months Nine-Sixteen **(September-April of Following Year)**	Ongoing monitoring and support of program Facilitate in-service programs for participants Determine a system to receiving regular feedback from program participants Begin the recruiting process for the next cohort of mentors
Month Seventeen **(May of Following Year)**	Collect data from mentors and mentees Host a "graduation ceremony" for mentees that have successfully completed the program Program committee reviews program initiative progress and makes modifications as needed Mentor interviews/selection process for next cohort
Months Eighteen **(June of Following Year)**	Ponder on and disseminate findings

Mentor Position Description

Mentors in the Helping All Achieve Success (HAAS) Mentoring program provide support to undergraduate students that identify as White. Mentees are assigned during the summer and are provided ongoing support to ensure their continued educational, personal, and professional success. HAAS Mentors are a key part of the SAI community, supporting the learning, development, and exploration of the students.

Mentor Qualities:

- Caring
- Active listener
- Available and flexible
- Dependable and enthusiastic
- Open-minded
- Resourceful

Mentor Responsibilities:

- Attend mentor training and orientation
- Meet in-person with mentee for one hour a week. Additional contact by phone or e-mail is also allowed, as needed.
- Communicate once a month with HAAS Program Coordinator.
- Participate in all ongoing in-service programs.
- Attend program events, including the program kick-off and "graduation ceremony" at the end of the program year.
- Provide all data for program evaluation.

Time commitment
Mentors will be matched with a student for a minimum of 10 months.

Benefits

- Guide young adults towards achieving their education and career goals
- Experience the gratification of watching a student grow, develop skills, and be empowered
- Enhance growth by modeling good values and judgment
- Learn more about diversity and its future

Mentor Application

Name: _____ **Department: _____**

Address:_____ **State, City, Zip: _____**

Phone: _____ **Email: _____**

Supervisor Name: _____

Supervisor Phone Number/Email: _____

1. **Why do you want to be a mentor?**

_____

2. **Do you have any previous experience volunteering or mentoring?**

_____

3. **Do you have any hobbies or special skills?**

_____

4. **What support or resources would you need to be successful as a mentor?**

_____

5. **Do you/did you have a mentor? What was successful and challenging about your mentoring relationship?**

_____

Please read this carefully before signing:
By signing below, you attest to the truthfulness of all information listed on this application.

I have read and understood the program's rules, regulations, and responsibilities for becoming a mentor. If selected I will follow the rules of the program and be a dedicated mentor. I agree if selected, I will attend the training and orientation and dedicate at least one hour a week with my mentee.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please attach a letter of support from your supervisor and return by (add deadline

here). Thank you for your interest in the HAAS Mentoring Program!

Mentor Interview

Name:

Interview date and time:

Why do you want to be a mentor?

What does an ideal mentor-mentee relationship look like?

What are some of the challenges college students are facing today?

What do you think the most important aspect of the mentoring relationship would be?

What is the most important advice you would share with your mentee?

What skills and interests do you have that you'd like to share with a young person?

What would you expect of your mentee?

What would you hope to accomplish in your mentoring relationship?

How would you handle a mentee who does not want to participate?

Do you have any obligations that would prevent you from committing fully to the program?

Mentor Training and Orientation Outline

By the end of the training, participants will:

- **Understand the purpose of mentoring and apply it to the college experience**
- **Learn how to use mentoring in the development of other people**
- **Learn how to develop, maintain, and transition the mentoring relationship**
- **Understand the mentor-mentee relationship.**

Week One-What is Mentoring?

- The role and responsibilities of a mentor
- What does mentoring look like?
- The power of relationships

Week Two-Skills and Techniques

- Active listening
- Effective mentoring skills
- Constructive feedback
- Shifting context

Week Three-Creating a Mentoring Relationship

- Stages of development
- Mentee expectations
- Creating a mentor-mentee agreement
- Developing a relationship/planning engagement
- Guiding principles

Week Four-Fine Tuning and Transitioning the Mentoring Relationship

- Mentoring do's and don'ts
- Coping mechanisms
- Mirroring
- Validation
- Transitioning the relationship
- Conclusion

Mentee Match Form

Name: _____

Intended Major: _____

Address:_____ **State, City, Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Tentative Major: _____

1. What are your interests? Hobbies?

2. Name three of your strengths.

3. Name three of your weaknesses.

4. What would you like to gain from the mentor/mentee relationship?

5. What academic opportunities/activities outside of classes are you interested in pursuing?

6. What sort of extracurricular organizations are you part of or interested in pursuing? Do you hold any leadership roles?

7. What are your professional goals after graduation?

8. What sorts of professional opportunities (jobs, internships) have you participated in or are interested in participating in?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Mentor/Mentee Program Activities

- Mentor discusses areas of growth for mentee and tentative plans for working on them

- Career development discussion; have mentee take Myers-Briggs test

- Mentor allows mentee to shadow them for the day

- Cultural values discussion and its impact inside and outside of the classroom

- Monthly lunch dates

- Discussion on goal setting

- Discussion on time management

- Discussion on study strategies

- Attend lectures, sporting events, and student organization events together

- Discussion on learning opportunities

- Personal branding discussion

- Lunch/dinner etiquette

In-service Training Topics

- September: Relationship building

- October: Communication skills

- November: Time management

- December: Conflict resolution

- January: Diversity and Inclusion

- February: Mentoring best practices

- March: Sharing and modeling values

- April: Beyond the program

<u>Program Evaluation</u>

Summative evaluation using a Likert scale and open-ended questions. Questions can be modified. Questions for students may include the following:

- My mentor provided guidance and knowledge (Likert scale).

- The mentor program met my expectations (Likert scale).

- This relationship will continue beyond the formal process (Likert scale).

- I learned more about the institution because of my mentor (Likert scale).

- I became involved in campus activities because of my mentor (Likert scale).

- What were the greatest challenges?

- What were the strengths of the program? What were its weaknesses?

- Would you recommend this program to other students? Why/Why not?

Questions for mentors may include the following:

- I would volunteer to serve as a mentor next year (Likert scale).

- I developed a positive relationship with my mentee (Likert scale).

- The training and in-service programs were sufficient (Likert scale).

- My mentee effectively uses their time to ensure developmental goals are met (Likert scale).

- My mentee communicated with me on a regular basis (Likert scale).

- I recommend my mentee for further professional or personal development activities (Likert scale).

- My mentee participated in most program activities (Likert scale).

- Would you recommend this program to other mentors? Why/Why not?

Appendix B: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "An Examination of White Undergraduate Student Engagement at a Public Historically Black University" I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
2. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
3. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
4. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
5. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
6. I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to

comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: Date:

Appendix C: Field Test Request

Date:

Dear Colleague:

I am working on a doctoral study, entitled, "An Examination of White Undergraduate Student Engagement at a Public Historically Black University".

My research examines student engagement among White undergraduate students at HBCUs and its impact on their retention and graduation rates. Due to the steady increase of White undergraduates enrolling at HBCUs, educators need to gain a better understanding as to their collegiate experience. Examining White undergraduate student engagement on HBCU campuses would be one way to accomplish this task. The study will attempt to answer the following questions: (a) In what ways do white students report that participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities enhance their college success? (b) In what ways do curricular and extra-curricular activities meet the social and educational needs of Caucasian students at HBCUs and increase graduation rates? (c) How does the level of academic or extracurricular participation vary based on gender and academic classification? I will be recruiting 8-10 students to participate in my study.

I am conducting a field test of my interview questions and seeking three to five experts to participate. The purpose of the field test is to ensure that the interview questions are appropriate for the population and will not unnecessarily put participants through distress or discomfort. A field test helps to ensure that the questions asked during the interview are clear, appropriately worded, open-ended and in alignment with the overall research question proposed in my study.

As an identified expert in the field, I would very much appreciate your expertise and feedback on the proposed interview questions. If you are willing to participate in the field test, please review the interview questions to determine if you think they are appropriate for my research question and provide written feedback. I am hoping to obtain field test results by [reasonable deadline].

Please also provide basic information about your professional training and credentials including the following information:

- Name
- Highest Earned Degree
- Professional Discipline
- Licensing/Certification and/or Additional Credentials
- Years in the Field

Thank you again for your time and input!

Sincerely,

Janelle Simmons
Ed.D. Candidate, Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership
Walden University

Appendix D: Letter to Request Use of Research Site

Date:

Dear SAI,

As a doctoral student at Walden University, I am requesting permission to conduct my dissertation research study titled "An Examination of White Undergraduate Student Engagement at a Public Historically Black University" under the direction of my chair, Dr. Michael Butcher.

The purpose of the study is to determine if the engagement of White undergraduate students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities affects their retention and graduation rates. The primary activity will be conducting interviews. I am requesting to conduct interviews of 8-10 undergraduate students who identify as being White/Caucasian. I expect that this project will end not later than [Enter Date Here].

I will provide a copy of all Walden University IRB-approved, stamped consent documents before I begin the research. Any data collected will be kept confidential and will be stored in a password-protected computer and a locked file cabinet at the researcher's home and only the researcher will be able to review this information.
I will also provide a copy of the aggregate results from this study upon your request.

If you have any concerns about this request, please contact me at (516) 967-2340 or at janelle.simmons@waldenu.edu

Sincerely,

Janelle Simmons

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Study: An Examination of White Undergraduate Student Engagement at a Public Historically Black University (HBCU)

  Time of Interview:
  Date:
  Place:
  Interviewer: Janelle G. Simmons
  Interviewee:

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of White Undergraduate students enrolled at a public HBCU and how those experiences affect their retention and graduation rates. You were chosen for this study because you identify as being Caucasian/White and you are currently enrolled full-time at a public HBCU.

I will ask you to give personal information about yourself, such as your age, gender, occupation, and education level, and answer questions during an interview about your experiences as a White undergraduate student enrolled in at a public HBCU. The process should take no more than an hour and a half. Data will only be collected once.

To protect confidentiality, each interviewee will receive a pseudonym to protect identity. In addition, data will be kept secure in a password protected computer and a locked file cabinet at the place of my residence**.** Data will be kept for a period of at least five years, as required by the University.

[Interviewee reviews and signs informed consent form.]

Questions:

1. What is your classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior)?

2. Are you a transfer student? If so, when did you transfer?

3. What factors led you to enroll at a public HBCU?

4. Discuss the ways in which you are the most engaged on campus.

5. Whom do you interact the most with on a regular basis and what is his/her race?

6. Do you live on or off-campus? If you live off campus, please discuss the impact it has had on your campus engagement.

7. Describe the nature of your interactions during new student orientation and Week of Welcome activities.

8. Describe the dynamics with faculty, staff, and administrators on campus that are not of your race. Have these individuals attempted to encourage you to become engaged on campus?

9. How do you think you are perceived on campus:
    a. By other students?
    b. By White faculty, staff, and administrators?
    c. By Black faculty, staff, and administrators?

10. Describe your interactions with peers who are students at this institution. What are their races? Do you consider them to be friends?

11. Are you a member of a club or organization in which you are the only White student? What is that like?

12. Have you ever felt isolated on campus? In which settings?

13. Do you feel you are treated differently as a result of your skin color? How and why?

14. Do you want to share any additional information?

15. Do you have any questions?

Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this interview. Again all responses will be kept confidential. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions after today.

Appendix F: National Survey of Student Engagement 2011

National Survey of Student Engagement 2011
The College Student Report

1 In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? Mark your answers in the boxes. Examples: ☒ or ◼

	Very often	Often	Some-times	Never
a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Made a class presentation	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Come to class without completing readings or assignments	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Worked with other students on projects **during class**	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Worked with classmates **outside of class** to prepare class assignments	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	☐	☐	☐	☐
q. Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	☐	☐	☐	☐
r. Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐
s. Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
t. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
u. Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	☐	☐	☐	☐
v. Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	☐	☐	☐	☐

2 During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
a. **Memorizing** facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. **Analyzing** the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. **Synthesizing** and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. **Making judgments** about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. **Applying** theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	☐	☐	☐	☐

3 During the current *school year*, about how much reading and writing have you done?

a. Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings

None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment

None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. Number of written papers or reports of **20 pages or more**

None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. Number of written papers or reports **between 5 and 19 pages**

None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

e. Number of written papers or reports of **fewer than 5 pages**

None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4 In a *typical week*, how many homework problem sets do you complete?

	None	1-2	3-4	5-6	More than 6
a. Number of problem sets that take you **more** than an hour to complete	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Number of problem sets that take you **less** than an hour to complete	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5 Mark the box that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work.

Very little　　　　　　　　　　　　Very much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6 During the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

	Very often	Often	Some-times	Never
a. Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	☐	☐	☐	☐

7 Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?

	Done	Plan to do	Do not plan to do	Have not decided
a. Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Community service or volunteer work	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Foreign language coursework	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Study abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Independent study or self-designed major	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐

8 Mark the box that best represents the quality of your relationships with people at your institution.

a. Relationships with **other students**

Unfriendly, Unsupportive, Sense of alienation　　　　　　Friendly, Supportive, Sense of belonging

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

b. Relationships with **faculty members**

Unavailable, Unhelpful, Unsympathetic　　　　　　Available, Helpful, Sympathetic

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c. Relationships with **administrative personnel and offices**

Unhelpful, Inconsiderate, Rigid　　　　　　Helpful, Considerate, Flexible

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9 **About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?**

a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | More than 30 |

Hours per week

b. Working for pay **on campus**

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | More than 30 |

Hours per week

c. Working for pay **off campus**

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | More than 30 |

Hours per week

d. Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | More than 30 |

Hours per week

e. Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | More than 30 |

Hours per week

f. Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | More than 30 |

Hours per week

g. Commuting to class (driving, walking, etc.)

| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | More than 30 |

Hours per week

10 **To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following?**

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
a. Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Providing the support you need to thrive socially	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Using computers in academic work	☐	☐	☐	☐

11 **To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?**

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
a. Acquiring a broad general education	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Writing clearly and effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Speaking clearly and effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Thinking critically and analytically	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Analyzing quantitative problems	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Using computing and information technology	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Working effectively with others	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Voting in local, state, or national elections	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Learning effectively on your own	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Understanding yourself	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Solving complex real-world problems	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Developing a personal code of values and ethics	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. Contributing to the welfare of your community	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	☐	☐	☐	☐

12 **Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?**

☐ Excellent
☐ Good
☐ Fair
☐ Poor

13 **How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?**

☐ Excellent
☐ Good
☐ Fair
☐ Poor

14 **If you could start over again, would you go to the *same institution* you are now attending?**

☐ Definitely yes
☐ Probably yes
☐ Probably no
☐ Definitely no

SAMPLE

15 Write in your year of birth: `1` `9` `☐` `☐`

16 Your sex:
☐ Male ☐ Female

17 Are you an international student or foreign national?
☐ Yes ☐ No

18 What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Mark only one.)
☐ American Indian or other Native American
☐ Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander
☐ Black or African American
☐ White (non-Hispanic)
☐ Mexican or Mexican American
☐ Puerto Rican
☐ Other Hispanic or Latino
☐ Multiracial
☐ Other
☐ I prefer not to respond

19 What is your current classification in college?
☐ Freshman/first-year ☐ Senior
☐ Sophomore ☐ Unclassified
☐ Junior

20 Did you begin college at your current institution or elsewhere?
☐ Started here ☐ Started elsewhere

21 Since graduating from high school, which of the following types of schools have you attended other than the one you are attending now? (Mark all that apply.)
☐ Vocational or technical school
☐ Community or junior college
☐ 4-year college other than this one
☐ None
☐ Other

22 Thinking about this current academic term, how would you characterize your enrollment?
☐ Full-time ☐ Less than full-time

23 Are you a member of a social fraternity or sorority?
☐ Yes ☐ No

24 Are you a student-athlete on a team sponsored by your institution's athletics department?
☐ Yes ☐ No (Go to question 25.)

On what team(s) are you an athlete (e.g., football, swimming)? Please answer below:

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

25 What have most of your grades been up to now at this institution?
☐ A ☐ B+ ☐ C+
☐ A- ☐ B ☐ C
☐ B- ☐ C- or lower

26 Which of the following best describes where you are living now while attending college?
☐ Dormitory or other campus housing (not fraternity/sorority house)
☐ Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within **walking distance** of the institution
☐ Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within **driving distance** of the institution
☐ Fraternity or sorority house
☐ None of the above

27 What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) completed? (Mark one box per column.)

Father	Mother	
☐	☐	Did not finish high school
☐	☐	Graduated from high school
☐	☐	Attended college but did not complete degree
☐	☐	Completed an associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.)
☐	☐	Completed a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)
☐	☐	Completed a master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)
☐	☐	Completed a doctoral degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)

28 Please print your major(s) or your expected major(s).
a. Primary major (Print only one.):

b. If applicable, second major (not minor, concentration, etc.):

THANKS FOR SHARING YOUR RESPONSES!
After completing the survey, please put it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope and deposit it in any U.S. Postal Service mailbox. Questions or comments? Contact the National Survey of Student Engagement, Indiana University, 1900 East Tenth Street, Suite 419, Bloomington IN 47406-7512 or nsse@indiana.edu or www.nsse.iub.edu. Copyright © 2010 Indiana University.

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