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Experiences of Male Learning Community Participants at a Private Historically Black University

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Walden University

College of Education

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Ryan Griffin

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2018

Abstract

Experiences of Male Learning Community Participants at a Private Historically Black
University

by

Ryan L. Griffin

MSTL, Bethune-Cookman University, 2012

BA, Bethune-Cookman University, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2018

Abstract

Many U.S. colleges and universities have created programs to improve retention and graduation rates of Black male students. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the lived experiences of Black male learning community participants and discover what faculty and staff perceive to be major influences on the retention of this population. The conceptual framework was rooted in Tinto's student integration model and Swail's geometric model of student persistence and achievement. The research questions within this study examined what faculty/staff perceive to be a major influence on the retention of minority male learning community participants. The questions also examined the perceptions of black male learning community participants regarding the major influence on their decision to remain at the selected institution after their first year. Data collection included semistructured interviews with 2 faculty, 2 staff, and 6 student learning community participants, and examination of national and local records. Data coding and analysis revealed 5 themes: college selection, college perception, learning community experience, Black male retention, and Black male mentorship. Findings indicated that most learning community participants returned to the institution based on faculty/staff support and a brotherhood bond with their peers. Faculty and staff reported that the institution could retain more minority male students if faculty/staff engagement with students and male mentorship beyond the learning community were increased. The project included a professional development program on effective minority male mentoring strategies for faculty/staff at the selected institution. This project may bring a new perspective on the idea of minority male retention while providing university officials with qualitative data to increase retention.

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Dedication

“With God all things are possible.”

Matthew 19:26

I would like to dedicate this body of work to my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ, without whom my achievement would not have been possible.

To my wife, Ashanti, who prayed for me, encouraged me, and sacrificed time for me to complete my research.

To my children, Taylor and Ryan, who inspire me every day with their unwavering love and care for me; to my Mother, Ronnie, a single parent who sacrificed many of her own desires and dreams for me to have success.

To my Grandmother, Bernice, a former sharecropper from Georgia who survived the Jim Crow era and solidified a better future for her family.

Finally, to all the Black males who grew up without a father, who statistically should not be successful, the young men who need motivation and encouragement to achieve the impossible.

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Section 1: The Problem

The publication of Tinto's 1975 landmark student integration model marked the start of the national dialogue on undergraduate retention (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Since the 1960s, student retention has been a focus of U.S. institutional strategies (White-McNeil, 2016), which have persisted into the 21st century. The demographics of traditional college students continue to change, and minority male retention rates present challenges. There are approximately 4,200 colleges and universities in the United States, and African American men represent one third of Black students nationally (Aud et al., 2013). Although recent research indicated an overall increase in college enrollment for Black men, graduation rates are significantly lower than those of Black women and White men and women (Hill & Boes, 2013).

In fall 2014, the total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States was 17.3 million (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). There has been a 31% increase in undergraduate enrollment since 2000 (13.2 students), and if the numbers continue to increase at the current rate, by 2025 the enrollment will be 19.8 million (NCES, 2016). Although the data showed an increase in enrollment for all students, these numbers do not illustrate the disparity with Black male students completing college compared to all other students. Kena et al. (2014) reported that between 1990 and 2013, the postsecondary educational completion gap between Black and White students had increased. In 2013, Black students graduated at a rate 44%, which was 22% percent less than their White peers at 66%. The gap between

Black and white male students in that same year was 25% favoring White male students (T. Cross & Slater, 2004; O'Neal, 2013).

The status of Black male students remains an issue in postsecondary institutions across the United States. Black male students accounted for 4.3% of the total enrollment at 4-year colleges and universities in the United States (Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2012; Harper, 2012; Strayhorn, 2008; Wood & Palmer, 2015). However, only one in six Black male students entering college will receive a degree (Feierman, 2010; NCES, 2012). Studies indicated that the educational gap is not limited to race but also includes gender. According to Ezeala-Harrison (2014), the completion rate for Black male students in 2010 was 36% while Black female students had a completion rate of 47%, which increased significantly from 36% in 1990. Nationally the retention and degree completion rates for Black male students remain low, presenting a challenge for colleges and universities regarding the retention and graduation of this population (Robinson, 2014).

The Local Problem

The problem of retention exists at a historically Black university (HBCU) in the southern region of the United States. In fall 2012, the university enrolled 1,438 undergraduate male students and reported a 60.8% retention rate (Walter, 2013; White-McNeil, 2016). This problem was specifically connected to minority male students who attended the university. Between 2009 and 2012, the first-year retention rate dropped from 70% to 60% (Walter, 2013; White-McNeil, 2016). To address Black male student retention, the university created an all-minority male learning community. A primary objective of the learning community was to increase Black male student retention and

persistence toward graduation at the university. Learning community participants attended the university and linked together in three to four courses per semester. Furthermore, the students had a common reader book that faculty used as a tool to create a shared academic experience for the participants. This community of minority male students had experiences beyond the classroom that included mentoring, tutoring, and service learning projects. Professors assigned to this cohort of students were Black men and women. Motivation for this retention strategy was rooted in the idea that learning communities tend to increase retention by providing more peer-to-peer interactions, student-faculty exchanges, and engagement with the institution, all of which have been shown to improve retention, graduation, and academic progress (Gansemer-Topf & Tietjen, 2015).

The first cohort of the minority male learning community participants was created in the fall of 2012 with 11 Black male students, who demonstrated a 63% retention rate from fall 2012 to fall 2013 (Walter, 2013). In 2013, a new cohort started with 21 Black male students, and that year (fall 2013 to fall 2014) the retention rate was 57% for the participants (Walter, 2013). The two cohorts combined showed a 59% retention rate (Walter, 2013). In 2013 the retention rate for first-time freshmen students at a private nonprofit 4-year institution with open enrollment was 64% (NCES, 2015a). This population of students was selected for the current study based on their race, gender, high school standardized test scores, and classification (first-time freshman). These minority male students had a unique perspective on the learning community and its impact on their college experience. The primary purpose of this project study was to explore the lived

experiences of minority male students participating in a gender-specific learning community at the selected institution.

Rationale

A 4-year private nonprofit institution with open enrollment was selected for this project study. According to the NCES (2015a), the national student retention rate for private nonprofit institutions with open enrollment was 64%. This institution had a 60% retention rate with its entire male population (Walter, 2013). The numbers become more alarming given the 6-year degree completion disparity between female students and male students at the institution. NCES (2015a) reported that 53% of female students completed their degree within 6 years compared to 42% of male students. Data collected from NCES indicated that minority male student retention is an issue at the selected institution. However, these numbers do not explain why students leave or remain at the institution after their first year of college. Therefore, I conducted this study to examine the lived experiences of minority male students who participated in a gender-specific learning community created to increase retention and persistence at the selected institution.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

In the past decade, researchers have addressed issues facing boys and men of color in the United States (Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014). Discourse on matters concerning these individuals (particularly those of African American descent) has been elevated in scholarly communities and among practitioners. The significance of the educational disparities faced by college-age men of color has led to an increase in research and scholarly publications (Palmer et al., 2014). Harper is one of the main

contributors to this area of scholarly research on Black men (Black Male Education Research Collection, n.d.; Harper, 2012). Furthermore, various journals are publishing articles on the subject (Palmer, et al., 2014).

The primary focus of this project study was to explore the lived experiences of minority male students who participated in a gender-specific learning community at the selected institution. I examined the challenges that Black male students encounter in the postsecondary educational system. Ezeala-Harrison's (2014) study showed that Black student enrollment in higher education across the United States reached an all-time high over the past decade. However, a more important statistic is the proportion of Black students who earn their degree. According to national data, two thirds of Black men who start college never finish (Palmer et al., 2014). Ezeala-Harrison's (2014) research showed that more than half of the Black men who start college will not finish, including those at HBCUs. The 2013 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students at all private nonprofit institutions in the United States was 65%, and for male students it was 62% (NCES, 2015a). As the data are examined based on race and ethnicity, Black male students are still trailing their White male counterpart (Ezeala-Harrison, 2014). Black male students also trail their Black female counterparts who have experienced an increase in retention in the past two decades (Ezeala-Harrison, 2014).

Definitions of Terms

African American/Black: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Cognitive factors: Swail's geometric model of student persistence often relates this factor to the knowledge, intelligence, and critical thinking skills that a student brings to a college environment. An important element of this factor is the student's ability to solve problems and make decisions. Examples include academic rigor, study skills, learning skills, time management, etc. (Bennett, Bormann, Lovan, & Cobb, 2016; Swail, 2003).

Graduation rates: The number of students entering the institution as full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students in a particular year compared to the number completing their program within 150% of normal time to completion (NCES, 2015b).

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs): Colleges and universities established prior to 1964 with a mission to serve African Americans (Palmer et al., 2014).

Institutional factors: Swail's geometric model of student persistence associates these factors with the ability of an institution to provide support to students both academically and socially. These factors are at the base of the model because the institution often sets the foundation for college success. Examples include recruitment, admissions, financial aid, student services, academic services, curriculum, and instruction (Bennett et al., 2016; Swail, 2003).

Learning community: A cohort of students who take two or more courses together. Frequently, the courses are organized around a common theme, and many learning communities require students to be involved in associated out-of-class activities (Pike, Kuh, & McCormick, 2011).

Persistence rate: The percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year (Fain, 2014).

Retention rate: The rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage. For 4-year institutions, this is the percentage of first-time bachelor's (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are enrolled in the current fall (NCES, 2015b).

Social factors: Family support, peer support, career goals, educational legacy, and the ability to survive in social situations, which impact student persistence according to Swail's geometric model (Bennett et al., 2016; Swail, 2003).

Significance of the Study

This case study was significant because brought a new perspective to the study of minority male student retention. According to Palmer, Davis, and Hilton (2009), education has played a central role in the lives of Black men and women. However, Black male students have not fared well in higher education (Harper & Newman, 2016; Palmer et al., 2009). Research suggested that African American male students face a variety of challenges that seem to affect their ability to complete their postsecondary education. Data from the NCES suggested that female students constitute more than half of postsecondary enrollment across all racial/ethnic groups; however, the gender gap is most pronounced between Black male and Black female students (Arthur, 2016; Palmer et al., 2009).

National statistics showed that 70% of high school students will enroll in some sort of postsecondary education within 2 years of completing high school, but only half

of those students complete a degree (Bragg & Durham, 2012). Those percentages tend to decrease substantially when looking at African American male students, with approximately 35-50% enrolling in college and only half of those graduating (Strayhorn, 2009). Strategic methods are needed when creating a model to benefit these students.

Administrators, faculty, and staff at an HBCU have come together to deal with the Black male student retention issue (McNeil, 2016). After looking at national trends and conducting research on successful Black male initiatives, I chose the university as the site for this study to examine the experiences of Black male students in a learning community designed to improve retention of this population. This case study focused on the students who remained at the selected institution, and their experiences while participating in a gender-specific learning community.

Research Questions

In recent years, there has been an increase in scholarly reports on minority male students and their inability to complete their postsecondary education. In response to the increase in literature on minority male (specifically Black male) students in higher education, many institutions across the United States have created programs and initiatives that specifically target this population. Most researchers focused on why students left the institution as oppose to why they remained. The primary purpose of this project study was to explore the lived experiences of minority male learning community participants. I also investigated what faculty, staff, students believed to be the factors that impact retention among minority male students at the selected institution. The following research questions (RQs) guided the study:

RQ1: What do Black male learning community participants perceive to be a major influence on their decision to remain at the selected institution after their first year?

RQ2: What do faculty and staff perceive to be a major influence on the retention of minority male learning community participants?

Review of the Literature

I conducted a review of literature related to factors that influence the retention and persistence of minority male students at a private HBCU in the southern region of the United States. This review was designed to synthesize current research on the following topics: Black male students in higher education, Black male students at HBCUs, the African American education experience, school culture, Black retention strategies, social integration, first-year programs, learning communities, and challenges facing institutions of higher learning. The search terms used in varying combinations were *Black males*, *minority males*, *retention*, *persistence*, *historically Black institutions*, *higher education retention challenges*, *learning communities*, and *higher education*.

I searched for peer-reviewed articles from databases in the Walden Library and resources from a local library. The databases included The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, and the EBSCO collection. All articles were examined for relevance and timeliness to develop a strong foundation for the study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study included Tinto's theory of integration (1993) and Swail's (2003) geometric model of student persistence and achievement.

Tinto defined integration as the extent to which an individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution, and abides by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in that community or subgroups of it. Tinto's research highlighted two primary forms of integration that are essential for student persistence and retention. The first is social integration, which involves an individual's peer-to-peer interactions, participation in extracurricular activities, and day-to-day interactions at the institution (Davidson & Wilson, 2013; Tinto, 1993). Academic integration involves the full range of an individual's experiences that occur in the traditional and nontraditional domains of the academic systems of the university (Davidson & Wilson, 2013; Tinto, 1993).

Tinto (1993) suggested that students who feel satisfied with academic systems, social systems, and campus life are more likely to persist. Tinto noted that integration within the college community could only be achieved through social and intellectual interactions with other students. Furthermore, when a student's integration increases, the student's commitment to personal goals and the institution is strengthened (Davidson & Wilson, 2013; Tinto, 1993).

Swail's (2003) geometric model places the student in the center of the model. Tinto (2000) stated that most models of student retention and attrition fail to address the connection between classroom and retention, the situation where the institution has the closest connection to the student. According to Swail, "the central purpose of this model is to provide a user- friendly method for discussion and to focus on the cognitive and

social attributes that the student brings to the campus, and the institutions role in the student experience” (p. ix).

The geometric model highlights three forces that affect students and their decision to stay or leave an institution. Cognitive factors relate to the knowledge, intelligence, and critical thinking skills that a student brings to a college environment. An important element of this factor is the student’s ability to solve problems and make decisions. Examples of cognitive factors are academic rigor, study skills, learning skills, and time management (Bennett et al., 2016; Swail, 2003). Social factors include family support, peer support, career goals, educational legacy, and the ability to survive in social situations (Bennett et al., 2016; Swail, 2003). Institutional factors include the ability of an institution to provide support to students both academically and socially. These factors are at the base of the model because the institution sets the foundation for college success. Examples of institutional factors are recruitment, admissions, financial aid, student services, academic services, curriculum, and instruction (Bennett et al., 2016; Swail, 2003).

The strength of this model is its ability to provide administrators and practitioners with a better understanding of the relationship between institutional practice and the academic and social needs of the campus population. The use of Tinto’s theory of integration and Swail’s geometric model for student persistence and achievement helped guide me in reviewing literature on the topic and provided a foundation for gathering data. In this study, I combined the two models to examine the impact of social, cognitive, and institutional factors on learning community participants. This approach allowed me

to examine the influence of all minority male learning community on retention. Figure 1 illustrates the factors that impact the lived experiences of learning community participants at the selected institution. This figure puts the student at the center of these factors.

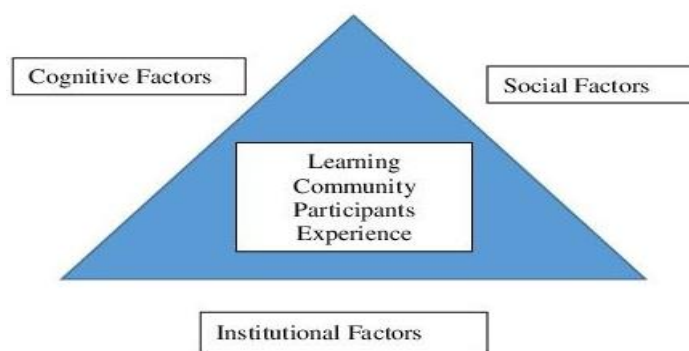


Figure 1. Factors that impact the lived experiences of learning community participants.

Black Male Students in Higher Education

Retaining students in higher education is an ongoing crisis, particularly among Black men (Mitchell, 2015). Over the past several years, the subject of Black men and their postsecondary education has become a primary focus for administrators, faculty, and staff at institutions across the United States. The primary reason for the enhanced focus on this population is institutions' ability to recruit, retain, and graduate students while maintaining a competitive edge within the educational pipeline. Retention and graduation rates are major factors contributing to an institution's reliability and financial stability (Farmer & Hope, 2015). All U.S. colleges and universities have been mandated

by federal and local/state governments to produce graduation data of their students (Farmer & Hope, 2015). These data can either make or break the reputation of a university and can cause an institution to lose needed funding.

Brock (2010) reported that access to higher education has increased over the past 40 years. However, student success in college as measured by persistence and degree attainment has not improved. Research indicated that Black male students have the lowest college completion rates compared to their White and Asian counterparts (Strayhorn, 2010). Although most ethnic subgroups have seen significant increases in college and university attendance and graduation, Black male students have shown declines in these categories over the last quarter of a century (Farmer & Hope, 2015).

According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2009), “More than 4.5 million African Americans hold a 4-year college degree.” However, many of the degrees were earned by Black women. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education reported that the Black male graduation rate was 35.2% and Black female graduation rate was 43.1% (Kena et al., 2014). In that same year, White female students graduated at a rate of 64.9%, which was nearly double the rate of Black male students (Farmer & Hope, 2015). These statistics suggest that the Black male student population is facing severe challenges regarding postsecondary degree attainment.

In many instances, the challenges facing Black male students begin prior to enrollment at an institution of higher learning. Scott, Taylor, and Palmer (2013) noted that the problems that impede completion of high school for Black male students affect their enrollment and participation in postsecondary institutions. According to the U.S.

Department of Education (2010), Black students made up only 12% of the total population of high school students in 2010. The same report showed that over 55% of these students did not graduate from high school. Kena et al. (2014) reported that 3.1 million public high school students (81%) graduated on time with a regular diploma in 2012. Asian/ Pacific Islanders had the highest graduation rate (93%), followed by Whites (85%), Hispanics (76%), American Indians/ Alaska Natives, and Blacks (68%) (Kena et al., 2014). Anthony, Kritsonis, and Herrington (2007) argued that a high percentage of Black male students are taught by White women, and much of the Black adult male representation in primary and secondary settings is custodial staff or sport instructors.

Black Male Students at Historically Black Institutions

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) have been responsible for educating and empowering Black students for decades. Soon after the Civil War several churches and philanthropic foundations funded the creation of private colleges primarily for the children of recently freed slave's families (Levine & Levine, 2014). In 1890, when the second Morrill Act was passed stipulating that "no appropriations would go to states that denied admissions to the colleges on the basis of race unless they set up separate but equal facilities." Representatives from 17 states implemented changes in education policies, which created a boost in the formation of public Historically Black Institutions (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 119). Currently, these institutions are still shouldering the burden of educating Black students many of whom are underprepared, low-income, first-generation, and at-risk students (Mitchell, 2015).

In the United States, HBCU's comprise only 3% of the nation's 3,688 institutions of higher learning, but they are responsible for educating more than 50% of Black professionals in the nation (Hoffman, 1996; Little Known HBCU Facts, 2009). These institutions of higher learning enroll more than 370,000 and graduate a considerable share of all Blacks who earn their degree (Little Known HBCU Facts, 2009). Toldson (2014) states that in 2014, one out of every 10 Black males who were enrolled in college attended an HBCU. Furthermore, these institutions of higher learning are responsible for conferring 70% of the degrees awarded to Black physicians and dentists in the United States (Fletcher, 2013). However, these institutions like others across the United States are facing challenges when it comes to retaining and graduating Black males.

Farmer and Hope (2015) reported that the 6-year graduation rate for African American Males at 4-year public institutions and private nonprofit colleges is less than 40% (Farmer & Hope, 2015, p 3). Harper's (2006) research discovered that 67% of African American males that enter college do not graduate within six years. Farmer and Hope (2015) argued that the low graduation rates of African American males at HBCU's are linked to various reasons. For example, many students enrolled at HBCU's are from low-income families, which in many instances did not have adequate educational resources, and neither parent nor grandparent attended college (Hope & Farmer, 2015). In addition, a great majority of HBCU's have limited financial resources and endowments needed to provide more scholarships for the population of students they service. Hope and Farmer (2015) assert that HBCU's inability to provide sufficient aid packages to its

upperclassmen to remain in school and finish has greatly impeded upon the successful retention and persistence of the students that attend these institutions.

As stated earlier, many of the issues connected to the successful retention and persistence of African American males start prior to them enrolling into an institution of higher education. Hope and Farmer (2015) assert that the high dropout rates at HBCU's are connected to the large number of African American males that do not enter college with strong academic preparation and study habits. Furthermore, Black men face other challenges that prohibit their success in higher education such as access to college preparatory curricula in high school and an over emphasis on exceling in sports rather than academics (Hope & Farmer, 2015). The factors that impede upon the success of Black males has been an issue for years and in many instances educators and policymakers have come up with educational outcomes that remain stagnant and, in some cases, ineffective (Fisher, 2015).

The African American Education Experience

Costner, Daniels, and Clark (2010) asserted that the public educational system does not address the educational needs of Black students. African Americans comprise 15% of the population, 26% of juvenile arrests, 44% of youth who are detained, 46% of the youth who are judicially waived to criminal court, and 58% who are in state prisons (Green, 2014). Green also argued that these statistics originate from problems within the school system. Way (2011) stated that stringent behavior management regimens have been incorporated as a way to address unwanted behavior problems within the school system. Way (2011) contended that the harsh discipline practices often target and are

disproportionately applied to minority students (James, Bunch, & Clay-Warner, 2015).

The issues that are faced by African American students differ from those of other races (Berliner, 2006; Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Lancaster, Lenz, Meadows, and Brown, (2013) stated that the differences include cultural, gender, and racial bias. Ford and Helms (2012) discussed disparities in urban and suburban schools. _Poor academic performance, low social status among peers, and dropout rates are factors that are frequently quoted as being a part of the behavioral issues. Empey and Lubeck (1971) examined delinquents and non-delinquents and found that family dynamics, which include broken homes, relationships with parents, parental harmony, and failing grades in school are directly correlated with behavioral issues in the student's home and school. However, when the data was closely analyzed, school push out and dropout effects student behavior.(Empey & Lubeck, 1971; Lee, 2015).

McNeil, Capage, and Bennett (2002) stated that Black student expectations for behaviors differ from culture to culture (Rawlings, 2015). Educators assume that Black students engage in behaviors such as submissiveness, dependence, language acquisition, and motor skills. A student's growth and maturity norms are different among each ethnic group and are affected by a family's socioeconomic status. Moreover, a child's ethnicity, in terms of how they are reared has a direct influence on their educational expectations. Understanding the development of African American children is essential when assessing their learning style and needs (Lancaster, Lenz, Meadows, and Brown, (2013).

Green (2014) argued that although schools lack the attention given to African American children in education and social settings, much of it has remained consistent.

Over the past three decades, researchers analyzed the educational experiences of Black students, particularly in the area of academic achievement. These investigations focused on problems encountered and the effect they have on academic achievement in learning environments throughout their educational matriculation and in an urban school setting (Lewis et al., 2008; Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Townsend, 2000). While many of these studies have identified Black students as having a poor educational support system and behavioral issues (Lewis et al., 2008; Townsend, 2000), there has been limited literature that discloses the impact of the academic performance of African American students.

Family dynamics. Constable and Lee (2004) highlighted the importance of a family and its impact, as the first educators in the child's academic life. African American families have a perpetual love for each other. They also desire educational achievement for their children, but lack the knowledge of how to navigate the system (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Milner IV, 2013; Cody, 2014). As a result, it is of high importance that African Americans are positively influenced and present in their child's scholastic achievement, as well as be seen taking on proactive roles, including volunteering.

A study on the impact of family engagement on student achievement charged all families of all ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds to decide what they can do to support their child's learning at home (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Balfanz, Bridgeland, Fox, DePaoli, Ingram, & Maushard, 2014). Henderson and Mapp (2002) concluded that African American families could offer educational support to their child in the home and school. Factors such as ensuring a supportive environment, along with

discipline, security, and responsibility, are essential to academic success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Balfanz et al., 2014).

It is important that African American parents communicate their educational expectations to their children. Children should be encouraged in the toddler developmental stage that they could go to college. Maintaining a family support and setting early educational goals are two strong predictors of academic success (Tierney & Auerbach, 2004). It is important for African American families to discuss their academic expectations, college, and careers in early childhood.

Academic achievement. Ford and Helms (2012) discovered that Black students typically have lower test scores than their White counterparts. Ford and Helm (2012) revealed that African Americans are not normally consulted or involved in the test-making process. The lack of African Americans influence in education is reflected in the testing material or information related to the material outlined on a standardized test. As a result of Black students are not being exposed to the educational materials to adequately prepare them for standardized testing. Black students are often ill prepared to complete the standardized tests, which are described as unintentionally and culturally discriminatory (Ford & Helms, 2012). Black students struggle daily to battle the intentional and unintentional injustices embedded in the educational system but are expected to excel in those settings (Green, 2014).

Hawkins and Lishner (1987) stated that researchers have emphasized that a student's lack of achievement in school is exacerbated by other factors other than academic skills. A student's performance in school is also affected by their relationships

with their classmates and teachers. All individuals encountered within the academic setting play a role the student's progress (Aceves, Hinshaw, Mendoza-Denton, and Page-Gould, 2010). Black males have often been viewed as inferior in society (Oliver, 2008). Black males have been stereotyped as thugs, committing crimes, being affiliated with gangs, and incarceration. Black males from the most affluent neighborhoods are also stereotyped with this negative persona (Oliver, 2008). Negative stereotypes regarding Black males become widespread in society, resulting in their devaluing, which originates from the images highlighted in society that categorize Black males as deviant and violent.

According to Frierson, Pearson, and Wyche (2009), critical influences in college enrollment of Black males include factors such as stereotyping, discrimination, violence, incarceration, and identity development dictate the quality of campus life for Black men. Among these, Black students who attend predominantly White institutions of higher learning reported that racial discrimination occurs at a higher rate than at a \HBCUs (Frierson, et.al, 2009). Today, Black males can earn or achieve a 4.0 grade point average through their college matriculation but, are typically stereotyped given their urban appearance opposed to their quality (Frierson, et.al, 2009). Within this 21st century, Black males still must prove they are not the negative image that society portrays them as (Powell, 2008).

A major discouragement for Black students is standardized testing. Since 1971, the U.S. Department of Education has annually administered a standardized test known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NAEP, also known as the nation's academic report card, it is the only national representation and assessment of

America's public and nonpublic education institution for each grade level. According to the NCES (2011), trends of academic performance, based on NAEP scores, have been observed since 1970. The goal of the NAEP is to measure the knowledge and skills in the various academic subject areas (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). The long-term goal of NAEP data is to analyze the trending and changes in academic achievement among students over time.

The NAEP provides a current view of the unbalanced effects of standardized tests between Black students and their White counterparts. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores are designed to forecast how well students will perform in college. In 1986, the average SAT reading score for White students was 524, and in 2011 it increased to 528 (NCES, 2011). For African American students, the average SAT reading score in 1986 was 428, and it remained the same in 2011. In 1986, the average SAT math score for White students was 514, increasing to 535 in 2011 (NCES 2011). For African American students, the average SAT math score in 1986 was 411, and increased to 427 in 2011. In math, although both groups made improvement, for Black students the increase was not significant enough to close the 108-point differential gap.

School Culture

The culture of the school is essential in ensuring learning opportunities for all students (McNamara, 2000; Al Yalaylah, Al-Shehhi, Al Khateri, Al Naqbi, & Al Oraimi, 2016). The core of school's culture includes a group's shared beliefs, customs, and behaviors. Additionally, it incorporates daily activities including but not limited to schedules, educational curriculum, student demographics, policies and procedures, as

well as the social interactions among students and educators alike. To develop a culture that is inclusive of learning for all students, there must be a healthy environment within the school (Ray, 2002; Sagey, Kali, Tsaushu, & Tal, 2016). All stakeholders must participate in developing an environment that is conducive to learning. Ray (2002) suggests that a healthy school culture is parallel with high student achievement scores. Motivation, teacher productivity, and satisfactory working conditions contribute to a healthy school culture and positive learning environment (Brown & Smith, 2013).

To establish a healthy environment that ensures learning for all students, it is of high importance to have a healthy culture, which ultimately affects educational milieu (McNamara, 2000; Al Yalaylah, et.al, 2016). Additionally, the teachers should have an understanding of the various levels elements that affect student learning (McNamara, 2000; Al Yalaylah, et. al, 2016). Leadership is also an important element of ensuring the school's culture is important (McNamara, 2000). A mediocre leader is described as telling others what to do. However, a good leader explains how to do a task. A superior leader demonstrates how to complete the task. Lastly, a great leader inspires others to want to do something. It is believed that if this belief system is grounded within the school's learning environment, the educators will be instrumental in developing a system that will be equally inclusive for all. Deal and Peterson (1999) asserted the transformation of a school culture is ensuring and promoting a shared vision, morals and values, common beliefs, employment of qualified and appropriate staff, and addressing the tough issues presented (Paul, 2015). When a cohesive working relationship exists, the transformation of a school culture occurs. The principal, teachers, and students working

cohesively and demonstrating desired values and beliefs that are essential to the core of the school environment. When the school's leadership exhibits these traits, teachers and students are more likely to imitate it, ultimately demonstrating those cultural values on a consistent basis (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Paul, 2015; Kimonen & Nevalainen, 2017).

Deal and Peterson (1999) argued the school culture is the core foundation and is the thread that connects and motivates all stakeholders within the school (Kimonen & Nevalainen, 2017). This distinctive view ultimately affects the faculty, staff, students, parents, and community alike. Additionally, the school must possess a strong and professional culture, which fosters learning. Schools should implement an education curriculum that is designed to have inclusion for all students in the learning activities. The school's culture and learning environment will build or destroy the ability for quality improvement. The responsibility for the development and sustainability of a healthy culture and student learning is a shared responsibility. A positive culture that provides supports, professional development, and student learning creates an environment where every child can freely learn (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Kimonen & Nevalainen, 2017). Moreover, the responsibility of creating a positive teaching environment for educators is the sole responsibility of the school leaders.

An organization's culture takes on the personality of the organization, ultimately reflecting the culture of that school. Osland, Kolb, Rubin, & Turner (2007) believe that if leaders empower their employees they will create an environment geared towards empowering others. Principals empowering the teachers, and teachers empowering the students will create the atmosphere conducive to equal learning for all. Leaders who

promote successful school culture consider the ability to change the basics of school culture into services that ultimately strengthens the school's purpose (Villa, Thousand, Myers, & Nevin, 1996; Lindqvist & Niholm, 2013).

Having effective leadership is considered the most critical and essential establishment to achieving a positive school culture, which will eventually lead to the school's performance improvement (Kolb, Osland, Turner, & Rubin, 2007; Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2013). Deal and Peterson (1999) contended that shared vision should be the goal of leaders that is grounded in the history, values, and beliefs of the school (Kimonen & Nevalainen, 2017). Other objectives include hiring competent staff, addressing conflict directly, and utilizing examples to demonstrate the shared values of the school. The successful transformation of a school's culture is achieved when all stakeholders demonstrate the core values and beliefs that are core to the foundation of the institution. The behaviors that are modeled by the leaders are within the school is observed, interpreted, and duplicated by others as the example of what is most important (Harris, Day, Hopkins, Hadfield, Hargreaves, & Chapman, 2013). When the school administrators handle the grievances and concerns with dignity, care, and expeditiously, there is a higher chance of creating a culture that will reflect the same values. Additionally, given the demanding work schedule of school administrators by displaying these actions, it confirms the desired culture of the school.

When engaging in conflict resolution, the culture of the organization is vital (Avruch, 1998; Avruch, 2015). Avruch further contended the mediator should be experienced in resolving conflicts and have knowledge regarding the conflict. If a

mediator understands the background of the problem, it will assist with understanding both party's views and how they perceive the situation as a result of their cultural rearing.

Ford and Helms (2012) described the racial groups that frequently utilize the disparity in test scores to discriminate against Black students. Ford and Helms (2012) believed that both educators and non-educators do not view standardized tests as an inappropriate benchmark for students. Ford and Helms (2012) concluded that Black students do not generally fare well on standardized academic testing, due to not being exposed to the same academic activities and education vocational programs as their White counterparts.

Ford and Helms (2012) believed that the urban schools are mostly over populated with Black students. Comparatively, suburban schools are mostly filled with White students. African American males who enter college from different socioeconomic backgrounds are at a higher risk for internalized beliefs, personal behaviors, and attitudes. As a result, these males may not be motivated to complete college, which will ultimately contribute to not completing college (Wyatt, 2009; Powell, 2016). the issues that are faced by African American students are daily challenges related to college barriers.

Polite and Davis (1999), Sandeen and Barr (2014) stated positive and nurturing social environments have a direct impact on the educational experience of college students. Prior research is consistent in research on the challenges and barriers to education for African Americans in higher education. Regardless, Black students within this nation are in crisis within the educational system. Casserly (2010) concluded that Black students do not have the same opportunities as their counterparts throughout the

United States. A significant number of African American males live in single-parent homes with women as the sole provider, assist with taking care of family members, especially younger siblings coupled with continuing school. They are elevated to the role of man of the house, given the role of provider, and protector, are pressured to be a positive role model for others. Research has concluded that a child who was raised in a negative environment will more than likely have negative outcomes (Gabel, 1995; Eddy, Cearley, Bergen, & Stern-Carusone, 2014). This phenomenon of parental imprisonment is another barrier that affects the welfare of students in attending college (Gabel, 1995; Eddy et al., 2014).

Black Male Retention Strategies

Some researchers have hypothesized that students who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to remain at a university as opposed to those who are not engaged in such activities (Carter, Locks, & Winkle-Wagner, 2013; Furr & Elling, 2002). Tinto (1993) contended that persistence in college can only be achieved through the concepts of social and academic integration. As stated before, social integration is associated with a student's peer-to-peer interactions, extracurricular activity participation and day-to-day interactions. However, academic integration can be defined as the full range of the individual student's experiences that occur in the traditional and non-traditional domains of the academic systems of the university. Involvement in academic-related activities has been shown to be more important for the academic and personal development of Black students as oppose to White students (MacKay & Kuh, 1994; Bentley- Edwards & Chapman-Hilliard, 2015).

Swail (2003) further expounded on the importance of student engagement with his geometric model of student persistence and achievement. The student is at the center of the geometric model and he/she is often influenced by three factors (cognitive, social and institutional) for successful retention and persistence. First, cognitive factors, which are usually associated with the academic rigor, quality of learning, content knowledge and extracurricular activities offered at a certain institution. Secondly, social factors which are linked to the student's finances, maturity, peer influence, and social lifestyle. Lastly, the institutional factors, which are associated with student services, academic services, financial aid, recruitment, and admissions. When one considers these various theories presented by Swail (2003) and Tinto (1993) on retention and persistence it is evident that a wide range of factors can impact the final decision of a college student decision remain at an institution or leave.

According to Robinson (2014) the troubled status of African American males in higher education has garnered tremendous attention at national conferences, in the media and scholarly journals over the past 20 years. Because of the complex issues that this population faces educators, administrators, and policy makers alike have grappled with the question of what must be done to improve Black male student success (Robinson, 2014)., The federal government has provided funding to several institutions of higher learning to help them establish student centered programs and services to help positively influence the retention and persistence Black male students (Hinton, 2014). These services include college orientation programs, counseling and retention centers, emergency loans and merit-based scholarships, corporate and private donations, and

academic support services (Hinton, 2014). Additionally, these schools also provide students with the opportunity to participate in fraternities, student organizations, mentoring programs, athletics and more.

Social Integration

The most common strategy that has been implemented by most HBCU institutions is student involvement/ engagement (Hinton, 2014). Townsend (2007) contends that Black students who spend more time participating in various social activities have a greater chance of being retained at an institution because they feel more connected to the campus social culture. These social or extracurricular activities can be a wide range of things that all impact the persistence and retention of a student. For example, Hinton (2014) believed that any activity that can help students scale up their relationship with staff such as seeking advice and socializing with them outside of normal class time could positively affect the retention of Black males. This concept even extends to peer-to-peer relationships as well. When students build relationships with their peers from diverse backgrounds and characteristics it allows them an opportunity to connect with the culture of an institution.

Swail (2003) categorized such activities as social factors that affect the successful matriculation of first year students at post-secondary institutions. In his geometric model for student retention and achievement, the student is at the center and must overcome various forces that impede upon their success at an institution. Considering this, numerous HBCU's have made it a common practice to develop programing that can help students ingrain themselves within the culture of the institution. Furthermore, Swail

(2003) contended that social factors for retention also include a student's background and his/her family influence. It is not only important that students develop a good relationship with staff and peers at their institution, but they should also have family support as well.

First-Year Programs

New student seminars have been part of the academic curriculum at American colleges and universities for over 100 years. First year programs/initiatives are essential components to the success of institutions of higher learning. Many of the issues that first-time freshmen encounter within the first year require a hands-on approach from faculty, staff and administrators at any given institution of higher learning. In many instances programs like these increase the chances of a first-time freshman remaining at the school and having success in a new environment. Furthermore, approximately one half of all students transfer at least once in their college career (Higgins, 2010). In an effort to help students through these transitions many schools provide extensive first year programming that include summer orientations, camps, week-long welcome festivities, living learning communities, academic bridge programs and other opportunities to build relationships with peers, student leaders, and various university officials outside of a traditional classroom setting.

In 1972, the University of South Carolina (USC) created their First-Year Experience (FYE)/ University 101 course that eventually set the foundation for years of research on the first year and its impact on student retention (University of South Carolina, 2002). The original focus of this course in the first year was to develop open lines of communication between students, faculty, staff and administrators in response to

tension on campus in reaction to the Vietnam War. Furthermore, this course was designed to help students have a positive view toward the institution, increase retention (Freshmen to Sophomore year) and persistence to graduation and help students understand the purpose of higher education and to improve teaching across the campus with a parallel faculty development component.

Since the start of the University 101 course at USC, researchers have observed that students in these courses tend to do better academically, have higher grade point averages, and report higher levels of satisfaction with the institution. However, students who did not participate in the courses tended to have issues with successful completion of the first year or persistence into the sophomore year. Various HBCU'S understand the importance of such programs and they have made it an intricate part of their university culture and curriculum. For example, at Fayetteville State University students are required to enroll in both first and second freshmen seminars. Continuous research and assessment on the programs indicated that the participants had increased the institutions retention rates and student satisfaction level just as it did at one large research-focused university in the southern United States.

Learning Communities

Bielaczyc and Collins (1999) illuminated the increased emphasis on learning communities as an approach to education in America. The key concept is that of educational community and the capacity of institutions to establish educational communities that actively involve students with other members of the institution. Students are more likely to persist and graduate in settings that hold high and clear

expectations for student achievement (Tinto, 1999). Bielaczyc and Collins (1999) identified the quality of a true learning community as one in which there is a culture of learning, in which everyone is involved in a collective effort of understanding. This culture must have the following: (1) diversity of expertise among its participants, who are valued for their contributions and given support to develop, (2) a shared objective of continually advancing the collective knowledge and skills, (3) an emphasis on learning how to learn, and (4) mechanisms for sharing what is learned. This approach to education is different from traditional views that emphasize the acquisition of knowledge as an individual as opposed to collectively, in a group environment. Most people have taken an interest in learning communities because they offer a more holistic, integrated learning experience for students (Cross, 1998; Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013). Many learning communities do more than co-register students around a topic. They change the manner in which students experience the curriculum and the way they are taught (Tinto, 1999)

According to Tinto (1999), a student is more likely to persist when they are in an environment that is committed to their success, hold high standards for learning, provide the necessary academic and social support, and consistent feedback about student, faculty and staff performance, and actively involve them with other students and faculty in learning. Without learning communities, university retention rates have been low. In 2001, 68.6% of first-year African-American male students returned to OSU for their second year; seven years later, more than 91% of Black male freshmen returned for their

sophomore year. During the second consecutive year, that figure exceeded the sophomore retention rate for Black women during the previous year (Nealy, 2009).

According to research on the subject, students that participate in learning communities are more likely to be retained and persist on to graduation. In 2009, Engstrom & Tinto conducted a study on the impact of learning communities on the success of academically under-prepared college students. The research included 19 institutions with learning community programs that were tailored to assist under-prepared college students. At the conclusion of the study it was discovered that learning community participants had high levels of academic and social engagement, greater rates of course completion, and higher rates of persistence (Engstrom & Tinto, 2009).

Although a common theme and two or more linked courses make-up a learning community, they are designed to do more than co-register students and put them together based on specific topic (Cross, 1998). These communities of learners are very structured and usually have an expected learning outcome that transcend the idea of retention, but more importantly foster healthy learning habits for underprepared and first-generation students. Tinto (1999) asserts that learning communities help change the manner in which students experience the curriculum and the way they are taught. When one considers this aspect of the learning community approach it is evident that such initiatives have an impact on retention and the overall success of institutions of higher learning in the American society.

Many schools understand the implications of a successful retention rate and graduation rate, but more specifically, HBCUs really understand the importance of the

numbers. Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia decided to implement learning communities in 2012 for their first-time freshmen. The overall purpose of the change was to enhance freshmen retention rates, instill a culture of critical inquiry amongst its students, and increase graduation rates (Kirsten, Walker, Laws, Fitzgerald & Burwell, 2015). Lincoln University had an 89% retention rate increase after implementing learning communities.

Challenges Facing Institutions of Higher Education

Black males are faced with various challenges within their secondary and post-secondary academic experience, numerous educators and policymakers have tried to accommodate this population through various retention initiatives. Bonner and Baily (2006) contend that many Black males encounter an educational system that is at best chilly and at worst hostile to them. According to the U.S Department of Education, in 2012 White males enrolled into college at a rate 7.2% higher than their Black male counterparts.

In recent years, there has been a demand for universities to become more customer sensitive, to cater to the needs of non-traditional students, to seek out new sources of funding, and to respond to new competition (Tierany, 2004; Holmes, 2015). The constant reform occurring within higher education has challenged colleges to make adjustments to their current practices and create a learning environment that can produce quality students who can succeed in a competitive job market. According to Tierny (2004) and Holmes (2015) the higher educational sector is experiencing a rapid period of globalization which means colleges have a greater responsibility to make good strategic

plans that can accommodate students and preserve the institution well into the future. When one considers the external factors that can affect an institution, it is clear that change is necessary and needed to increase retention as well as attrition for certain schools across the nation.

In many instances the issue that this population is facing starts prior to them ever enrolling into an institution of higher learning. It has been documented by various researchers that the critical problems that hinder the completion of high school for Black males students consequently effects their enrollment and participation in post-secondary educational opportunities (Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013). Many of the issues that the Black males face within their secondary educational experience are issues such as limited representation in gifted programs, higher enrollment in special education courses, lack of minority male teachers and a lack of resources.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of learning community participants and discover what faculty and staff perceive to be a major influence on the retention of this population. Personal perceptions and thoughts were gathered from current faculty/staff and learning community participants in relation to retention at the selected institution. The primary focus of this qualitative case study was to gather a deeper understanding of the impact of retention on learning community participants that remained at the institution after their first year of college. Additional information was obtained from gathering personal perceptions from faculty/staff that

were connected to the community through teaching and advising students within the learning community.

One possible project that may result from the findings of this study would be a professional development/training. This training would be for three days and provide participants with information on best practices for retaining minority male students. Participants will receive tangible resources that can be utilized to increase the retention of male students on the campus. Information obtained from the literature review would provide a foundation for additional data gathered from the project study. Another possible project is a detailed white paper that informs stakeholders of the issues and provide them with recommendations for change. A white paper, as defined by Stelzner (2007) and Willerton (2013) is a hybrid of an article and a marketing brochure, proposing a solution and intending to persuade its audience. As student retention remains a major focus of post-secondary institutions, such projects will remain necessary to increase retention.

Summary

This study examined perspectives of students, faculty and staff at one HBCU and was warranted based on the number of Black male students who have not graduated/are not retained. There was a need to examine the factors that influenced the retention and persistence of Black male learning community participants at this private Historically Black University. In my review of the literature, I found that Black male students do not persist on towards graduation at the same rates of White males and Black females. Although enrollment rates have been projected to increase over the next decade it is

unclear what the fate of Black male students will be in successfully completing their college degree. Ezeala-Harrison (2014) found that more than half of the Black males who start college do not finish. In consideration of the data and research on this particular population a study such as this was warranted.

In Section 1, I outlined the problem of Black male retention at the selected institution. The rationale for choosing this problem was distinct, based upon the number of Black male students who encounter various challenges in higher education that ultimately affect their retention. Key terms were defined, and a detailed review of the literature was conducted to justify the study on a local and global scale. Additionally, this section outlined implications of the study and the guiding research questions. In Section Two, I provided the methodology and outline the procedures for conducting this qualitative case study on Black male retention and persistence at the selected institution. In the third section, I discussed the actual project that was developed based on the results of this study. Section 4 contains project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, reflections and directions for future research.

Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the lived experiences of Black male student learning community participants and discover what faculty/staff perceive to be major influences on the retention of this population. The data focused on how these students confronted challenges within the learning community, their personal lives, and their social lives. I examined what students perceived to be the primary factors that allowed them to remain at the institution. According to Lodico, Spaulding, and Vogtle (2010), a qualitative case study is conducted to discover meaning, to investigate processes, and to gain insight into an individual, group, or situation. In this study, I used multiple data sources to examine all parts of the learning community.

The case study approach was the best method for this research based on the problem, purpose, and research questions (see Merriam, 2009). The case study method allowed me to gain detailed knowledge of the participants in the sample and to interact with them in a social setting (see Hancock & Algozzine, 2015; Lodico et al., 2010). After receiving permission from Walden University, Institutional Review Board (IRB # 0411187) and the selected institution to conduct the study. I acted as participant-observer to fully understand participants in their natural setting. All aspects of the study aligned with the stipulations outlined by Walden's IRB.

Research Design and Approach

A qualitative case study is a detailed examination of a particular bounded unit over a period of time. Merriam (2009) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the

boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined” (p. 40). A case study is typically used to examine a current issue in a real-life situation that involves an individual, group, entity, or institution within a certain contextual setting (Glesne, 2011). This qualitative case study addressed the factors related to the retention and persistence of Black male learning community participants at a private HBCU.

When researchers use the case study approach, they are typically trying to answer the how and why questions regarding a phenomenon. The case study method allows the researcher to examine complex situations that include multiple perspectives that can be considered through data collected from various sources (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2013). The case study approach can be used only when there is a bounded system or a single entity around which there are boundaries (Merriam, 2009).

To test the boundaries of the phenomenon and to decide whether a case study approach is recommended, the researcher must determine whether there is a limit to the individuals who can participate (Hancock, & Algozzine, 2015; Lodico et al., 2010). In this current study, I chose the case study method to understand what learning community participants believed to be factors associated with their retention and persistence at the selected institution. Through analysis of their experiences, I obtained a more in-depth understanding of the issue of retention. The case study was the most appropriate approach to examine the perceptions of individual learning community participants in one-on-one interviews.

In this study, the phenomenon of interest was factors influencing the retention and persistence of Black male learning community participants. This study focused on the

experiences of faculty, staff, and minority male students who participated in a learning community at an HBCU in the southern region of the United States. I looked at the how and why of the student's ability to be retained and persist toward graduation. Other qualitative research designs were considered for this study, such as the grounded theory. However, this design was not suitable for this project study because my purpose was not to formulate a theory. A narrative research design was considered but rejected because of its focus on a group of students as oppose to the individual lived experiences of learning community participants (see Creswell, 2012). The case study design was appropriate for examining a bounded system that limited my focus to a specific institution and group. The knowledge gained from this case study added to the literature on this topic and to the body of knowledge needed to improve retention rates in higher education for this population.

Research Participants

The participants in a qualitative study are selected based on their characteristics and knowledge of the phenomenon addressed in the study (Lodico et al., 2010). The population for this case study was a group of current and former faculty, staff, and students who participated in a learning community. I used purposeful sampling to recruit the participants with knowledge about the topic being investigated (see Lodico et al., 2010). White-McNeil (2016) asserted that purposeful sampling technique has several advantages such as cost efficiency, less time required to complete the study, higher participation rates and enhanced credibility of the study.. The disadvantages of this sampling technique include generalization difficulties with the research results, less

representation of the population, and increased dependence on the sample (McMillan, 2012; White-Neil, 2016). The intent of this case study was not to generalize to all institutions, but to inform the selected institution of possible retention strategies to fit the needs of its Black male students.

Selection of Participants

I sent a general request to administrators at the selected institution to encourage the participation of current and former faculty, staff, and student learning community participants. There were six student participants selected for this case study, all of them were Black male students admitted into the selected institution and enrolled in two or three linked courses within the all-male learning community. These individuals were college ready based on their high school standardized test scores and grade point averages. Additionally, two faculty and two staff participants were selected based on their connection to the learning community as either a professor in one or more of the shared courses or an advisor for the students beyond the classroom setting. Overall, the sample for this case study included 10 participants (six students, two faculty, and two staff) who met the selection criteria outlined. To be eligible for this study as a student, the participants had to be a Black male former or current full-time student (12 to 18 credit hours), a former or current learning community participant, and over 18 years of age. Faculty, staff, and administrators were eligible if they were a former or current faculty/staff/administrator, work or worked directly with first-year students, and work or worked directly with learning community participants. By using the purposeful sampling

method, I ensured the selection of participants who would provide the data needed for the study.

To maintain the ethical standards required by the Walden IRB and the selected institution, the subjects selected for interviews were asked to sign and complete a participation form as well as an informed consent form. The informed consent was based on the scientific realism framework in which researchers know before a study begins what measures will be used and what treatments will be given to participants (see Lodico et al., 2010). To uphold the ethical requirements of the qualitative research design, I informed all participants of what would take place during the study and reassured that they would not be harmed at any point during the process. I maintained the confidentiality of each subject before, during, and after the study. After receiving the appropriate forms from the participants by e-mail or mail, I scheduled a 30-minute interview that would be conducted at a designated setting or over the phone.

Interviews were used as the primary source of data. An interview protocol (Appendix B) was established to guide the data collection and maintain accurate documentation of the subject. The protocol was developed to maintain consistency in the data collection process and provide a script for me to follow. According to Lodico et al. (2010), there are three types of interview structures that can be used for a qualitative study. In a structured interview, the researcher does not deviate from a specific set of questions. The semi-structured interview allows some deviation, and a non-structured interview allows for more conversation and flexibility. In this study, I conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant to focus on the phenomenon of interest.

Data Collection Procedure

There are five interrelated steps in the process of qualitative data collection (Creswell, 2012). These steps helped to guide me in collecting the data for this case study. The first step required me to identify the participants, the study site, and the sampling strategy that would be most useful for answering the research questions. The study site was a private HBCU located in the southern region of the United States. To gain access to the needed data, I used a purposeful sampling strategy. All interview questions were designed to discover the factors that influenced the retention and persistence of Black male learning community members. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed me to gain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and provided a flexible way to collect data on the case being studied (see Hancock & Algozzine, 2015; Lodico et al, 2010). I also collected data from documents such as class rosters and schedules to triangulate sources.

The next step in the data collection process is to gain access to the individuals selected for the study and obtain the appropriate permission from the subjects and the research site (Creswell, 2012). In compliance with the IRB, I followed the ethical procedures in place to protect the participants. The subjects who met the sampling criteria received an official invitation letter to participate in the study. Additionally, all subjects were required to read and sign an informed consent form (Appendix B) prior to participating in the study. The consent form briefly outlined a description of the study; disclosed potential risk and strategies to protect the participant's privacy. Furthermore, this consent form affirmed that participation in the study was not mandatory and all

subjects could discontinue their participation at any point in which they felt unethical. The informed consent form was delivered either by hand, mail or electronically to all eligible participants. Once the appropriate documentation was received in compliance with the study site IRB committee and the Walden IRB, then the subjects were contacted to participate in a face-to-face or telephone interview. According to Musoba, Jacob, & Robinson (2014) IRB approval is essential to the researcher because it confirms that the study complies with the ethical standards of the university, the government and international standards.

The third and fourth step in the qualitative data collection process required the researcher to design questions and set a protocol (Appendix B) that will allow the best feedback for the phenomenon being studied. Each of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted in this study were recorded using a digital recorder. Furthermore, notes were written down by the researcher during the interview session to acquire as much data on the subject as possible. An interview protocol was established with a brief script to explain the purpose of the research to the interviewee, along with preliminary research questions and a place for the date and background of the interviewee to be recorded (Lodico et al., 2010). The interview process included open ended questions to get a more in-depth description of the participants experience with the phenomenon being studied. Although all interviews were preferred to be face-to-face the researcher gave special consideration to individuals who were unable to meet in the designated interview setting and utilize the telephone interview option.

The fifth and final step in the data collection process is to administer the collection procedure and be mindful of all ethical issues that may arise (Creswell, 2012). Just like other qualitative research designs, there will always be ethical issues that need to be considered and resolved prior to the data collection process. After the data was collected the interview notes and recordings were transcribed and compiled in a narrative format to reveal the findings and results of the research questions. This process was used to examine the factors that influence the retention and persistence of minority male learning community participants.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In analyzing the data Creswell (2012), highlights six interrelated steps needed to effectively examine data collected during a qualitative study. The following steps were employed: 1) organization of data, 2) initial exploration through coding, 3) developing description and themes, 4) representation using narratives and visuals, 5) interpretation through personal reflection and literature, and 6) validation of accuracy (Creswell, 2012). By utilizing this formula for data analysis, the researcher can accurately assess various texts and images to answer a specific research question that correlates with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, qualitative study research is analyzed through reading and review of data (observation notes, interview transcripts) to detect themes and patterns that may emerge (Lodico et. al., 2010).

The information gathered in the data collection process through spoken and written words was transformed into a document that could be analyzed by hand or digitally (Creswell, 2012). According to Holcomb and Davidson (2006), as cited by

McNeil (2016), transcription is reproducing the spoken word into text. After the one-on-one interviews were completed (ten subjects) and the data was collected, the researcher transcribed the information and coded it for the final results. All subjects remained anonymous and coded in a way that only the researcher could identify the subjects.

Effective coding techniques while analyzing the data were employed (Creswell, 2012). There are numerous ways to code data collected during the interview process. It is imperative when a coding process is established, the researcher determines what data should be used or discarded to provide evidence for the developing themes (Creswell, 2012). Upon the initial review of the data collected from the ten subjects selected for the study, the information was examined to identify themes that may have emerged. The groups were categorized by minority male participants in a learning community or faculty and staff participants. Overall, there were four faculty and staff participants and six minority male participants who were eligible to participate in the study based upon the participation criteria outlined in this section.

Besides organizing data and coding the data, a report and interpretation of the findings will be presented in this chapter. The data that was analyzed and coded will be summarized in a narrative format, to better explain the themes and patterns that have emerged from the study. Furthermore, this interpretation of the data will show possible correlations with other studies on similar subjects. In many instances, qualitative researchers share their findings with other professionals through journals, reports, web sites, and formal and informal meetings (Lodico, 2010). The intent of this data analysis is to add credible resources to current and past research studies on minority male retention.

Results

The primary focus of this project study was to explore the lived experiences of minority male learning community participants at a Private Historically Black University.

Therefore, the research questions guiding this study were:

1. What do faculty and staff perceive to be a major influence on the retention of minority male learning community participants?
2. What do Black male learning community participants perceive to be a major influence on their decision to remain at the selected institution after their first year?

Five themes emerged based upon the responses of student, faculty and staff research participants during separate interview sessions. After reviewing the interview transcripts, four student themes were discovered and one faculty/staff theme. There were six student participants selected for this case study, all of them were minority Black-male students admitted into the selected institution and enrolled in two or three linked courses within the all-male learning community. These individuals were college ready based upon their high school standardized test scores and grade point averages (G.P. A). Additionally, four faculty and staff participants were selected for the study based upon their connection to the learning community as a professor in one or more of the shared courses or an advisor for the students beyond the classroom setting. Overall, the population for this case study contained ten participants (six students, two faculty/administrator and two staff) that met the basic criteria outlined in this section. As indicated previously, the names of the participants changed for this report. In the

following section, I briefly describe the themes that emerged from the data analysis process and provide a narrative summarization of each student theme and faculty/staff theme.

Themes

Creswell (2009) parallels the analysis of data to that of peeling of onion layers, in that the process requires repeated steps of analysis and data collection. After reviewing and coding the transcripts, five themes emerged based upon interviews and constant data analysis. Four themes were discovered from student participants and one theme developed from faculty/staff participants. The student and faculty/staff themes that emerged were (a) Factors that influence college selection, (b) The participant's perception of college life, (c) Fostering a community of brothers, and (d) Participant perceptions of male retention. The Faculty/Staff theme was Black male mentorship. Quotations supporting these themes from participants will occur later in this section. The following is a brief overview of the four student themes and the one faculty/staff theme that evolved after the data analysis was completed.

Table 1.

Examples of Responses per Student and Faculty Theme

Student Theme:	Selected examples of responses
Factors that influence College selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My parents attended the university • Small classroom environment • University alumni encouraged me to attend • I have family that live in the same city • The location was perfect. • My mom wanted me to attend an HBCU • I have a family member who works here • The one-on-one aspect with my professors

Participants Perceptions of College life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rowdy because it's an HBCU• A family atmosphere because it's small• It will prepare you for life after college• No different than a PWI• Just like the movies• A diverse environment• Party and no class• Did not think I would fit in• It was my getaway
Fostering a community of Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helped me to blossom into a student leader• Opportunities to interact with other black males• A small community• We could encourage each other• Less distractions with no girls in the class• My classmates were accountable and made sure I studied• We were like real brothers• Teachers went beyond to make sure we were successful• My advisors and professors were always there to assist me and support me
Participants perception of male retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It was a big support group• We shared similar stories, we were all connected• Greek organizations help retain students• Increased engagement in the classroom• Love them and show them you care• Make student organizations more accessible to students• Maintain learning communities and male empowerment organizations• Allow new students to network and connect with their support system• Strong motivation and a drive to finish
Faculty Theme: Black male mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The university must polarize who keeps their attention• Showcase black male excellence on the campus

- Increase engagement with male faculty members
 - Lack of male mentorship campus-wide
 - Mandatory attendance in black male initiatives
 - Increase courses for all males with black male professors
 - Engagement is very important
-

Student Participant Themes

Theme one—factors that influence college selection. Literature on the subject asserts that consistent family support and early educational goal setting are strong predictors of academic success (Tierney & Auerbach, 2004). This theme highlighted the impact of family on the college selection process for minority male students based upon interview questions one and two. All six male participants mentioned their family as having a significant influence on their choice to attend the selected university.

Furthermore, this theme illustrated how the institutions emphasis on academics weighs on a student's choice to attend the university. Morse (2013) conducted a survey that discovered over 192, 912 first year students decided to attend their selected institution based upon its academic reputation. Additionally, the location of the institution was a significant indicator of the student's final choice to attend the University.

During the interview, I asked student participants to explain why they chose to attend the selected institution. Additionally, in the second interview question I asked student participants to identify some of the major factors that influenced their final choice to attend the university. Family, location and academics weighed heavily on the final choice for the participants in this study.

Family. All six of the participants referenced family as having a significant role in their final decision to attend the selected institution. Research suggests that African American families have a perpetual love for each other and they desire educational achievement for their children.... (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Milner IV, 2013; Cody, 2014). Two student participants said one or more of their parents attended the university and their communities had a strong alumni presence that helped influence their choice. Ricky stated, “My mom wanted me to attend an HBCU.” Additionally, Mike revealed, “My parents were graduates, my grandma graduated, my aunties, my uncles graduated from here, so it’s basically a legacy”. Furthermore, Joshua stated “Going to church, I noticed a lot of people went to this university.....many of them asked if I knew about an HBCU and would I consider theirs.....being around people that look just like me made a difference”. In summary, the support of the family was a major factor in the college selection process of the student participants.

Location. The location of the institution was important as well. Valarie Strauss (2016) asserts that most high school seniors tend to select a university that is closer to home. While making a final choice for college the location was significant for Gregg who stated, “The location was not too far from home or too close, it was just in the right place”. Additionally, Joshua stated, “I have family that live here in this city and my hometown is less than an hour away”. Although some students selected the institution based upon its proximity to their hometown, there were others who selected the location because it was further away from their homes and it allowed them to “getaway” as Mike stated. Prince explained that the university was located “...by the beach...” which was important

considering his hometown is in Indiana. Besides family, alumni influence, and location Prince stated, “It was my destiny, my university chose me.”

Academics. While discussing the major factors influencing the participant’s final choice to attend the university academics seemed to be an important factor for them. Many of the student participants referenced the small class size and family environment as key factors for choosing the selected institution. Ricky stated “.... academics is big to me...”, and “.... the professors here really push you and really care about how you get it done in the classroom”. Tinto (2000) asserts that a student is more likely to persist when they are in an environment that is committed to their success, additionally; Ricky mentioned, “ I appreciated the small class environment at the institution and it really influenced my final decision to attend the university”. Furthermore, Othello stated, “academics was a major factor in my choice”, He asserts, “that is the reason why I am here, I am not spending all of this money to sit around and waste time.... I am here for my academics”.

Overall, the student participants selected this private HBCU based upon the influence of their families who attended the university or just wanted their child to be enrolled at an HBCU. Additionally, the university was selected based on its location and proximity to the participant’s hometown. Furthermore, the academic structure of the university and the small class setting was very significant in the final decision for most of our student participants.

Theme two—participants perceptions of college life. This theme emerged based upon the participant’s response to interview questions three and four. The

interview questions were designed to gain a greater knowledge on the participant's expectation of college life prior to enrolling in the selected institution. The student participants responded with various answers that ranged from partying, no studying, an emphasis on academics and it prepares you for your future career. Overall, this theme revealed that the participants had an initial perception of college life that changed after enrolling and attending the university.

This theme references the student participant's perception of college life and the HBCU experience prior to them enrolling into the university. During the student participants, separate interview sessions they were asked two questions:

- Upon arrival to the university, what were your perceptions of college life (socially, academically, etc.)?
- What were your perceptions of college life at an HBCU?

The responses to both questions varied amongst the student participants and encompassed the concepts of college life portrayed in movies, prepares you for life after college, and its diverse environment.

A great majority of the participants (four out of six) came up with their pre-perception of college based upon various movies that illustrated college life having an emphasis on social settings and not so much of an emphasis on academics. Mike stated his perception of college was “.....Party, party, party, and no class...”. Ricky echoed that statement and stated, “I really thought college was going to be like the movies say a lot of parties and people not going to class” and Prince admitted “I had the wrong perception of college”. Although some participants expected college life to be like the

movies, there were some who felt that they would not be able to adapt to the new environment. Othello expressed how he called home daily crying after starting class at the selected institution. He further asserts that “.... I did not feel like I was going to fit in with anybody I felt like I was different”. Additionally, Joshua felt that college was a “getaway” and his mindset was simply “.... After high school I must get out of here, I have to get out of Miami, I have to go to college....”. However, Gregg asserted that “College is a place that you can earn a degree and gain the necessary tools for future success both professionally and financially”.

When participants were asked about their perceptions of college life at an HBCU their response varied again. Mike felt it would be a “diverse environment” and Othello felt it would be “like the movies”. Two participants expressed their feeling that an HBCU is no different than a PWI. In fact, Joshua stated “I didn't think it was going to be any different than a regular college a PWI, I just knew it would be more people that look like me...”. However, Mike felt that the HBCU experience was a “systematic life lesson” and the institution taught students how to survive beyond the university. Furthermore, one participant stated he perceived that the institution would have “Pride, a family type environment where everybody knows everybody and everyone is going to support one another”.

Although the participants had various perceptions of college many of them discovered that the reality of a typical college experience in general and at an HBCU was different from their initial concept. Instead of a high emphasis on social activities and continuous fun the university focused on academics Prince stated that they “teach you the

right lessons from professionalism, to networking, to the proper dress code, and it's like if you use it you will prosper, but if you don't you may fall by the wayside". Additionally, the respondents felt that the institution took pride in discussing the Black culture and on many levels changing their entire perspective on college life. Overall, each participant had varied responses to the interview questions, but each of them seemed to show a great appreciation for their college experience

Theme three—fostering a community of brothers. Kadiko & Mawer (2013) asserts that being a part of a community and having a sense of belonging are essential to the success of students in higher education. This theme highlighted the experiences of male learning community participants at the selected institution. Their response to interview questions in relation to their learning community experience revealed a dynamic bond they had with each other and the power of brotherhood. This theme highlighted their experiences and interactions with faculty, staff and fellow students at the university. The small classroom, peer accountability, and the relevant curriculum were attributes that participants mentioned during their interview to illustrate their experience. The increased engagement among the males in this community allowed them an opportunity to engage in activities beyond the learning community and increase the probability that they would remain at the university. Support from faculty/ staff at the university was essential as well, which was noted in the narrative for this theme.

In question five of the interview session, student participants were asked to describe their learning community experience at the selected institution. This theme encompassed the impact of the learning community on the student participant's academic

environment and social integration. Some of the sub themes that emerged from this theme included brotherhood, small community, academic engagement, and faculty/staff support. All the participants seem to have a great appreciation for their experience and value the relationships of “brotherhood” they developed while engaging in the learning community. Joshua stated “Honestly, if it wasn’t for this learning community I have no idea where I would be”. This sentiment is echoed by many of the participants as they recalled their individual experiences within the community. All of them spoke highly of their experience and how it made a significant impact on their lives.

The small community made of all males was more impactful than some of the participants initially thought. Joshua stated, “Initially, getting into it, I was like what? We are going to have all male classes”. However, the participants all agreed that a classroom setting with the absence of girls helped them to focus and have academic success. Prince stated, “No girls were allowed it was all boys” which seemed to help create a sense of pride amongst the participants and a true brotherhood. This sentiment is echoed by Mike who stated, “... there were no females in our classes, whereas we could encourage each other and there were no distractions”. One participant expressed that “It was like we were real brothers” and yet another explained that he appreciated the small community because everyone had a “sense of accountability”.

Academically, the student participants seemed to be engaged and excited about the lessons they learned while being a member of the learning community. Prince stated “... a lot of the lessons we learned all went together everything we learned coexisted and it was like in one class we were learning about our rights, and how the world is treating

Black men, the next class how Black men should treat women, why Black men are perceived the way they are. Everything seemed to go along, and it made me think...we were learning life lessons along with book lessons”. Additionally, the student participants felt that the faculty members who were Black males really supported them and helped to develop them as student leaders on the campus. Greg asserted that the “learning community helped me to blossom and become more social especially with group projects, I wanted to drop the course just avoid group projects”. These experiences seemed to force some of our participants to transform in ways they could never imagine.

The faculty that were engaged in the community were also “intrusive” as Joshua recalled. These professors did not mind going to your dorm to get you out of bed and make sure you went to class. Furthermore, these professors seem to have a deep concern for the well- being of their students beyond the classroom setting. Ricky asserted firmly “if you want to succeed, then there are people here to help you succeed”. This theme of faculty/staff support was a continuous statement amongst the student participants. As Mike states “the teachers are willing to help and go beyond to make sure you are successful”. As a result of this faculty/staff support system, when students were asked if they contemplated leaving the institution in question seven, of the six participants four said they never thought about leaving the institution and two said they did. Although two participants said they contemplated leaving, they remained at the institution after their first year. Additionally, the four students that asserted they did not contemplate leaving the university were active and engage in additional student activities beyond the learning

community. However, as stated by Greg “I had individuals that cared” and this seemed to make a major difference.

This small community of all male learners created an atmosphere that encouraged engagement and “an opportunity for Black males to interact with each other” as Greg stated. Overall, the participants seem to value their learning community experience and its impact on their college life.

Theme four—participant perceptions of male retention. The student participants had an opportunity during their separate interviews to consider what they perceive to be factors that affect the retention of their peers at the university. Their response to interview questions nine and ten revealed a wide range of challenges that this population may face. These challenges include engagement within the university community based upon student organization requirements, a lack of financial resources and poor academic performance. When considering these factors participants mentioned the importance of having a learning community and the necessity for faculty/staff to support this population of students.

This theme emerged based upon the response of student participants to interview question nine and ten. The questions were (a) what do you feel can be done to increase Black male retention at your institution? (b) What do you perceive to be a major factor in a Black male student’s choice to stay or leave the institution? Tinto (1993) contended that persistence in college could only be achieved through the concepts of social and academic integration. As stated before, social integration is associated with a student’s peer-to- peer interactions, extracurricular activity participation and day-to-day

interactions. However, academic integration can be defined as the full range of the individual student's experiences that occur in the traditional and non-traditional domains of the academic systems of the university. The six-student participant's response to question nine and ten varied between student involvement, faculty/ staff support, and empowerment workshops for Black males and financial resources.

The most common retention strategy that has been implemented by most HBCU institutions is student involvement/ engagement (Hinton, 2014). Townsend (2007) contends that Black students who spend more time participating in various social activities have a greater chance of being retained at an institution because they feel more connected to the campus social culture. During the interview some students felt that the university offered various organizations for students to engage in, but they were limited and excluded potential members based on G.P.A, classification, gender, etc. Mike stated, "It's important that students get involved, and the university makes access to certain organizations easier". Furthermore, Prince asserted "when I was not active beyond the learning community I was bored". However, there were also some student participants that felt the organizations needed to maintain their standards to help increase retention. Othello said "many of the students look up to Greeks and when they have to maintain a certain G.P.A in order to get involved with the organization it can be a motivator for them to do well". The majority of the participants mentioned the importance of student involvement and many of them were active beyond the learning community. Some of the participants were involved in student government, residential life, sports, the royal court and a notional honor society.

The student participants really highlighted and expressed the need for the institution to maintain the learning community and male empowerment organizations that are gender specific to Black males. Joshua asserted that “If we plan to retain Black males, we have to keep those all male classes, those all male teachers, the male summit, male empowerment, keep bringing back those male speakers, that’s what keeps them here..... That will help our retention rates go up”. These sentiments were echoed by other student participants as well such as Othello who stated, “Keep the learning community and similar programs....” Most people have taken an interest in learning communities because they offer a more holistic, integrated learning experience for students (Cross, 1998; Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013). Many learning communities do more than co-register students around a topic. They change the manner in which students experience the curriculum and the way they are taught (Tinto, 2000). All of the student participants seem to credit their success in college with their engagement in the Black male learning community.

Beyond the concept of student involvement for Black male retention, the interviewees mentioned the importance of faculty, staff and administrative support for Black males. *To establish a healthy environment that ensures learning for all students, it is of high importance to have a healthy culture, which ultimately affects educational milieu (McNamara, 2000; Al Yalaylah, et.al, 2016).* Additionally, the teachers should have an understanding of the various levels elements that affect student learning (McNamara, 2000; Al Yalaylah, et. al, 2016). Comments such as I know a few administrators that really care”, “they ensure students belong”, and “make more time for

them...” were expressed by Othello, Mike, and Prince respectfully. This concept of a “caring community” was supported by Gregg who stated, “when new students connect with their support system they have success... Different professors, my advisor and so much more”. The added support from faculty, staff and administrators made a difference based upon the interviewees responses to question number 9 and what they feel effect the retention of Black males at their institution.

In response to interview question 10, the student participant’s responses varied and included such topics as financial resources, academic performance and self-motivation. The major factor that impacted a student’s choice to remain at the institution or leave was financial. Four out of the six participants mentioned limited financial resources as a deciding factor. Gregg stated “Personally, I know some students that have come and left the institution, some of them had to wait a couple of semesters to return and yet many of them don’t return simply because the money is a huge factor”. Ricky stated, “the biggest factor is financial, like myself, personally I was at a point where I didn’t know if I would be able to come back”. This statement was further supported by Othello, who stated, “It all comes down to the money”. Othello even took a moment to reflect on a time when his parents were having financial difficulty which could have caused him to leave the institution, however his engagement with campus organizations as he states, “saved me and I was able to return”.

Besides the money having an impact on student retention their academic performance and self – motivation at the university was a significant factor as well. Students must be passionate about what they do and have some type of “drive” to

motivate them as Joshua stated during the interview. Joshua further asserts, “you must be goal oriented, you have to want to be somebody in life... find that thing that makes you breath, if it’s your son, if it’s a child, if it’s your mom... you must be willing to do it and find some type of motivation that will keep you coming”. Furthermore, academics were perceived to be a major factor in a student’s choice to stay or leave the institution. Mike asserted that “how well they do in their courses” has an impact on their choice to remain at the institution. Essentially, “there is no choice when your G.P.A. falls below a 2.0” according to Mike.

Faculty Participant Theme: Black Male Mentorship

This theme emerged after interviewing four faculty/staff members at the selected university. The faculty/staff members all discussed the need for an increased male presence on the campus. Additionally, there is a need for Black male excellence to be highlighted and displayed more often for male students at the institution. Furthermore, the selected institution is private and therefore financial resources for some student’s seem to be a factor for retention. Overall, the four faculty/staff participants emphasized the need for male mentorship in some form.

Upon asking faculty participants what they felt were some of the challenges that Black males encountered at their institution? And what they felt could be done to increase Black male retention at their institution? Two of the four faculty participants mentioned finances as a major challenge for their students at the university. Mr. Jeremiah stated, “Funding is an issue for some of our males because they fail to communicate with others to get the resources they need to be successful”. Additionally, they may not have the

“financial support from family based upon where they come from” stated Mr. Jeremiah. Furthermore, Mr. Only also referenced the financial issue during his interview. “These students have financial hardships and many of them can’t afford to attend this institution as a result many of them don’t finish”, stated Mr. Only.

Although finances were mentioned as a challenge for the Black male students at the institution, it was clear from interviews that intentional male mentorship was an issue as well. One participant (Ms. Lance) stated the “lack of mentorship or guidance from other professional males on campus is a challenge for our males” and “a lack of motivation perhaps because they are not being inspired by other males on the campus”. According to Ms. Lance this lack of professional male engagement on the campus makes it difficult for Black male students to “separate their former lifestyle with what we are trying to teach them here at the university”. Ms. Bright asserts that the students just cannot seem to find a “balance”. During the interview Ms. Bright defined the balance as the students trying to find common ground between real life beyond the campus and their college life at the university”.

In response to what can be done to increase Black male retention at your institution, all faculty participants mentioned some form of mentorship or consistent male engagement. Each faculty member seemed to have a deep concern for this population both male and female participants. Ms. Bright asserts that the university “needs to polarize who keeps their attention”. With various distractions on and off the campus “our male students can potential get engaged with activities that do not promote retention or graduation” stated Ms. Bright. Additionally, “We need to highlight and showcase Black

male excellence across the campus to motivate and inspire our male students,” stated Ms. Bright. Furthermore, Mr. Jeremiah stated “We need supportive faculty/staff ... we are in this together”. Student support is a shared responsibility by the university, the faculty and student relationship is a predictor of degree completion (Pearson, 2012; Edmonds, 2016).

During the interview, Ms. Lance stated, “mandatory attendance should be required for males to attend Black Male Initiative programming”. This participant felt that this would be good to increase the retention of this population and help develop “faculty and peer engagement opportunities”. Ms. Bright felt the university should provide scholarships to all the males that participate in the learning community to help assist with retention efforts. Additionally, Mr. Only stated, “Black Fraternities engagement must increase to enhance peer relationships and provide relevant mentoring programs”. Additionally, Mr. Only felt that faculty and staff could do a better job with “engaging Black males on campus to help with the retention efforts”. Overall, the faculty participants felt, mentoring, financial resources and faculty/staff support all effect Black male retention at the selected institution.

Conclusion

The case study design was the best approach to identifying the possible factors associated with the retention and persistence of minority male learning community participants. Subjects selected for this case were selected through purposeful sampling and a criterion that aligned with the unique qualifications of the selected university. This approach included collecting data from ten participants (faculty, staff and students) of the minority male learning community. One-on-one interviews were conducted upon the

receipt of the IRB approval letter. Two research questions set the framework for this qualitative case study:

RQ1: What do Black male learning community participants perceive to be a major influence on their decision to remain at the selected institution after their first year?

RQ 2: What do faculty and staff perceive to be a major influence on the retention of minority male learning community participants?

Interviews conducted with students, faculty and staff at the institution helped to address the two research questions presented in this case. In response to the first research question, faculty/staff participants asserted that male faculty/staff engagement through mentorship, overall faculty/staff support, and financial resources have an impact on male retention. In response to the second research question, the student participants felt that a small class environment, faculty/staff support, and a brotherhood bond made between them and their peers was essential to Black male retention. In essence, both the students and faculty/staff believe that an increase in student engagement with faculty/staff members at the university can influence retention. This engagement can be amongst each other and with faculty/staff. As Tinto (1993) asserts, when students are engaged with the culture of the institution their chances of being retained will increase. Furthermore, this concept of retention starts in the classroom, the one place where the institution has the closest connection to the student (Tinto, 2000).

The following section, the project will outline a proposed professional development training program designed to help increase the retention of Black males on the campus through increased faculty/staff support and mentorship. This project may

bring a new perspective on the idea of minority male retention and provide university officials with qualitative data that can be utilized to increase retention.

Section 3: The Project

Student retention continues to be a focus of institutional strategies in the 21st century (White-McNeil, 2016). The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of learning community participants and discover what faculty and staff perceived to be a major influence on the retention of this population. The results of the project study revealed that most learning community participants returned to the institution based on faculty/staff support and a brotherhood bond with their peers. Faculty and staff reported that the institution could retain more minority male students if faculty/staff engagement and male mentorship beyond the learning community were increased. The project resulting from this study was a 3-day professional development workshop on effective minority male mentoring strategies for faculty/staff at the selected institution. This project may provide a new perspective on minority male student retention and may provide university officials with strategies that can be used to increase retention. In Section 3, I describe the project, the goals of the project, a rationale for the project, a literature review, and the implementation plan for the project.

Description and Goals

The results from analysis of the student and faculty/staff interviews yielded five themes: college selection, college perception, learning community experience, Black male retention, and Black male mentorship. Findings indicated that male faculty at the university would benefit from a 3-day professional development training. This session would inform male faculty/staff members how to effectively retain and mentor Black male students. The strategies presented in this project may help the faculty and staff

members at the university understand the importance of identifying the needs and challenges of Black male students and what can be done to increase their retention.

Furthermore, the results revealed a need for faculty to increase engagement with this population across the campus and not just within the learning community. The professional development-training program is titled *Increasing Black Male Retention: Effective Mentoring Strategies*. The primary goal of this training is to inspire male faculty members beyond the learning community to engage with male students and motivate them to complete college. This presentation includes a PowerPoint to illustrate best practices for retaining and mentoring Black male students.

Professional development is designed to enhance educators' knowledge and equip them with the skills, strategies, and tools needed to motivate and engage with students (Edmonds, 2016; Kennedy, 2010). The 3-day professional training for faculty at the selected institution will include strategies for retaining and mentoring Black male students at the university. This professional training may help raise campus-wide awareness of the need for male faculty and staff to engage with the Black male student population. The first day of the training will focus on the challenges that Black male students face in higher education and how those issues manifest at the selected institution. Day 2 of the training will consist of defining retention and its importance and explaining how faculty and staff can improve Black male student retention at the institution. Faculty and staff will be introduced to current learning community faculty to share their stories and what they have done to make a difference in the lives of their learning community participants. Day 3 will address mentoring strategies, student and faculty engagement,

professional practice techniques such as active learning, and motivation for using the tools presented throughout the 3-days conference.

The professional development training will inform and educate the participants regarding methods that can be used to create change at the institution. This project may help raise awareness of the importance of retaining and mentoring Black male students at the university. The goals of this training are to increase faculty/staff knowledge of Black male retention issues, encourage faculty/staff and student engagement, and emphasize the importance of mentorship and motivating students to finish college. The learning outcomes for the 3-day professional development training include the following:

- Participants will be informed of the challenges that Black male students encounter in higher education.
- Participants will define retention and articulate its importance within higher education and at the selected institution.
- Participants will use the information learned in the professional training and implement it in their practice.
- Participants will acquire an increased knowledge of mentorship strategies.
- Participants will learn how to encourage and motivate students to have success at the institution.
- Participants will learn how to connect students with additional resources on campus that foster retention.
- Participants will learn how to increase student and faculty engagement.

- Participants will learn to development meaningful mentee and mentor relationships.

With faculty and staff participants successfully achieving these outcomes, the retention of Black male students at the university may increase along with graduation rates. The training may also promote an increase in student engagement and the expansion of intentional Black male initiatives on campus.

Rationale

Well-designed professional development is an essential component of a comprehensive system of teaching and learning that supports students to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to thrive in the 21st century (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). The professional development training in the current study was designed to address challenges with Black male student retention at the university and increase mentoring opportunities for Black male students. This professional development training is designed to benefit the faculty and the students whom they have been charged to educate.

Effective professional development involves teachers as learners and as teachers and allows them to struggle with the uncertainties that accompany their roles (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Torff, 2017). I chose to design a professional development training to increase retention and mentorship at the selected institution to provide professors with an opportunity to learn as well as implement their strategies in a short period of time (see Davis, 2015). The research problem will be addressed through

the professional development training by offering recommendations on increasing student retention and faculty/staff mentorship practices.

This project may provide a solution to the problem because it requires faculty to engage with the presenter and use the resources presented during the training for implementation. Davis (2015) asserted that an effective professional development training session must have a long-term focus and fit within the vision of the institution. This professional training session is a step toward ensuring increased retention and increased male faculty-student engagement well into the future.

Review of the Literature

The literature review was conducted to identify ways in which faculty-student engagement and mentorship can be enhanced to improve retention rates at the selected institution. The database searches included ERIC, ProQuest, and EBSCOhost. I also used the Google Scholar search engine. The search terms used were *professional development*, *Black male mentoring*, *Black male retention*, *faculty/staff support* and *student engagement*, *faculty retention efforts*, *retention*, and *mentoring*. After reviewing scholarly journals, articles, books, and data reports that supported the literature review and findings from the research, I identified three themes: male empowerment and support, benefits of mentoring, and the impact of faculty on retention. Literature on faculty professional development was limited, and most articles emphasized The themes highlighted in this literature review related to findings from this case study. The professional development training is designed to provide participants with the necessary tools needed to ensure students are retained at the university and graduate. The primary objective was to explore

ways in which the university could increase the retention of Black male students through faculty/staff support and mentorship.

Male Empowerment and Support

The process of transitioning from high school to college can be a challenge for first generation students because of personal, family, academic, and social adjustment issues (Edmonds, 2016; Turner & Thompson, 2014). Institutions that primarily serve first generation students such as HBCUs have a responsibility to identify the needs of their student population and provide resources that can help students succeed. Because of limited financial resources, institutions sometimes struggle to meet the needs of their students. Over the years, HBCUs have been plagued with financial issues that in some instances have stemmed from their commitment to serving disadvantaged students and a history of underfunding and discrimination (Gasman, 2009). Gasman (2009) asserted that tightening budgets and low enrollments have forced some HBCU leaders to take drastic steps to keep their institutions vibrant or in some cases afloat. Despite the struggles these institutions have encountered in recent years, they still play a significant role in the education of Black male students.

A key element to Black male student success at these institutions of higher learning is the faculty's ability to identify the needs of their students and increase engagement. Research on the subject suggested that social support is a necessity for first-generation college students, peer support is essential for college success, family support effects college attendance and success, and mentoring is vital to college success as well (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014; Edmonds, 2016). Woelk and Weeks (2010) also agreed that

student engagement can significantly influence student learning and growth through various resources offered at the institution. Counseling services, mentoring, learning communities, career services and spiritual communities are all resources that can help increase student engagement with the overall campus community. With an increase in engagement and social support retention and graduation rates can potentially improve.

The needs of Black male students can easily be identified when faculty, staff and other university officials intentionally engage in conversation and develop meaningful relationships with them. For example, Hinton (2014) believed that any activity that can help students scale up their relationship with faculty/staff such as seeking advice and socializing with them outside of normal class time can positively affect the retention of Black males. This concept even extends to peer-to-peer relationships as well. When students build relationships with their peers from diverse backgrounds and characteristics it allows them an opportunity to connect with the culture of an institution. Furthermore, these non-academic factors help enhance opportunities for the student and faculty/staff build a rapport based on trust and respect that can yield an increase in student success outcomes (Hughey, 2011; Edmonds 2016).

Institutions of higher learning in America are constantly evolving and transforming to align with federal reporting guidelines. With these changes, it has become increasingly important that universities do all they can to engage, retain and graduate their students. According to Farmer and Hope (2015), retention and graduation rates are major factors contributing to an institution's reliability and financial stability. All colleges and universities across the nation have been mandated by both the federal

and local/state governments to produce graduation data that confirms the academic success of its students (Farmer & Hope, 2015). In many instances, this data can either make or break the reputation of a university and can cause the institution to lose much needed funding. Therefore, Black male student engagement and support remains essential to the sustainability of post-secondary institutions.

Benefits of Mentoring

Many schools understand the implications of a successful retention rate and graduation rate, but more specifically, HBCUs understand the importance of the numbers. According to Robinson (2014) the troubled status of Black male students in higher education has garnered tremendous attention at national conferences, in the media and scholarly journals over the past 20 years. As a result, researchers revealed the complex issues that this population faces. Educators, administrators, and policy makers have grappled with the question of what must be done to improve Black male student success (Robinson, 2014). Faculty and staff interviewed for this doctoral study all mentioned the importance of mentoring Black male college students.

The university selected for this study started a Black male student initiative program to aid with increasing retention at the university. However, it does not have a component that assigns faculty to mentor and encourage student persistence and academic achievement. When institutions provide mentoring programs, they create an ongoing collaboration with faculty, staff, and students, which incorporates teaching and learning (Corso & Devine, 2013). Mentoring programs help students with career choices, makes them confident in their capabilities, and provides role models that can give

mentees a perspective of what the future holds (Poor & Brown, 2013; Edmonds, 2016). The potential for retention and graduation rates continue to improve and provide long-lasting positive impacts on the institution.

Evans and Forbes (2012), defined mentoring as the process by which the mentor transfers their experiences and knowledge to the mentee and it facilitates development and empowerment. The benefits of a mentoring program for faculty to students can assist with helping students engage with the university culture and connect with the institution. Research suggests that mentoring increases student persistence, enhances a commitment with the university, and has an impact on degree completion (Hu & Ma, 2010; Edmonds, 2016). Mentors provide many levels of support, such as academic advising, life coaching, counseling, personal resources, and friendship to assist to improve their mentees personal and social development. Mentors also tend to focus on making life better and more productive for mentees. Gibson (2014) confirmed that African American males who received mentoring remained on campus, gained improvement in self-esteem, and stood a greater chance of facing the challenges of college life.

Faculty Impact on Student Retention

In recent years, there has been a demand for universities to become more customer sensitive, to cater to the needs of non-traditional students, to seek out new sources of funding, and to respond to new competition (Tierany, 2004; Holmes, 2015). Furthermore, the value of an undergraduate education in the past decade received and continues to receive scrutiny by various stakeholders within the higher education community (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Vogt, 2016). The demands to show that a

university is successful based upon reported retention numbers and graduation rates means colleges have a greater responsibility to make good strategic plans that can accommodate students and preserve the institution well into the future (Tierany, 2004; Holmes, 2015).

The strategic plans may include retention strategies that include better and more frequent advising, an improved chance for academic success within the first year, more active experiential instruction, more informed career planning, and improved social acclimation (Raelin, 2014; Edmonds, 2016). Research showed that faculty have a role in retaining students primarily because of their interactions with them in the classroom. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) discovered positive student gains with faculty that frequently interacted with students related to courses, both first-year and senior students reported greater gains in personal/social development, general education knowledge, and practical competencies. Additionally, the college campuses where faculty employed active collaborative learning techniques had students who were more engaged (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Vogt, 2016). According to Tinto (1993) when students are engaged with the academic culture of the institution, they have an increased chance in being retained and persisting on towards graduation.

Some research points to faculty training and development as tools for ensuring students have success in college. The primary goal of professional development and training is to enhance the educators' knowledge and equip them with the skills, strategies and tools needed to respond to students in the aspect of motivation and engagement (Kennedy, 2010; Edmonds, 2016). Some studies suggest that students can sense when their

professors are not fulfilling the learning process in the classroom (Edmonds, 2016; Kennedy, 2010). When a student believes they are receiving a quality education from their university, the chances of them persisting increase. However, if a student does not believe they are getting a quality education, they may look to seek an educational opportunity at another institution, which in turn affects retention. Overall, faculty have an impact on student retention and graduation rates at their university, but it is a collective collaborative effort that should involve all campus partners to ensure success.

Project Implementation

The implementation of this professional development training session will require the cooperation of university officials and an allotted time for the training to convene on the campus. The proposed implementation will take place between August and October of 2018. The tentative implementation time was determined based upon the start of a new semester at the institution, which can provide additional time for participants to plan and prepare for any changes if a positive response is received. The selected university for this case study has an institutional review board that has reviewed and approved the proposal for this project study. At some point, this committee may have to review the project outlined in this chapter for the professional development training session to take place on the campus. The target audience for this training will primarily be for male faculty and staff on the campus; however, female faculty/staff may attend as well. The goal of this training session is to provide faculty/staff with useful resources that they can implement and better serve the male population of students at the university.

Potential Resources and Existing Support

The office of Black Male Initiatives, Faculty/staff and administrators will be the most important resources needed for this project study. This presentation will be delivered to all male faculty members at the university during the fall semester of 2018 if approved. A series of presentations will be scheduled throughout the fall semester to ensure that all male faculty have an opportunity to participate in a session if time permits. This training will require the following materials; a data projector, folders, paper, pen/pencil and nametags. Each participant will receive a copy of the PowerPoint presentation during the professional development training. The facilitator of this development training will present by using a PowerPoint presentation and engaging the participants with icebreakers to hopefully receive a positive response from faculty participants. The training session will be completely free, the facilitator will provide all materials and upon completion of the program, all participants will receive a certificate for their records. The facilitator will clearly explain the concepts of retention, Black males and mentorship during the presentation.

Potential Barriers

The primary barrier for implementing this project effectively would be a lack of support from university officials and no buy-in from male faculty members. However, the researcher plans to meet with university administrators and share my findings with the hopes that they will embrace the data presented and allow me to present to male faculty members at the selected institution. If the barriers are removed, then male faculty members will receive a professional development training notification in their email, by

phone and a letter delivered to their office. All the potential participants will be required to RSVP for the training to ensure that the proper accommodations are made, and resources are available for the session. Although the results presented in section two of this doctoral study show a need for training, some male faculty may not be willing to participate. I will seek approval from the university. I will request a meeting with the provost and university president to request the training be made mandatory for all male faculty members.

Proposal for Implementation Timetable

The professional development training session will be presented to male faculty members at the selected institution during the fall 2018 semester. The initial proposal for this doctoral study was approved by the university institutional review board. Based upon the response of faculty and university officials to the training, additional sessions will be offered in the spring of 2019 to accommodate additional participants. This professional development program is intended to primarily apply to male faculty members, however female faculty members are allowed to attend if they so choose. I would also like for faculty that participated in the fall session to collaborate and share their stories after implementing the strategies presented in the training with those who will potentially participate in the spring of 2019. In the summer of 2019, once all training sessions have been completed, the facilitator will meet with University officials and faculty to see if the professional development training had any effect on the retention of male students at the university.

Roles and Responsibilities

As a scholar-practitioner, it is my role to present the results of this doctoral study to university officials and equip faculty with the necessary resources needed to improve retention at the selected institution. The role of the faculty participants would be to attend the sessions, engage in the training exercises, and apply some of the resources to their daily interactions with their male students. Additionally, the faculty members should be able to demonstrate to his students what was learned during the professional development training in relation to increasing faculty/staff and student engagement through mentorship. The training resources and information will be available for future references for faculty even after the presentations are completed by contacting the facilitator for support by phone or email. My final role is to develop, implement and facilitate the professional development-training program for the selected institution to increase retention and male student engagement.

Project Evaluation Plan

The evaluation of professional development programs is essential to providing the researcher with evidence of whether the program added value to the overall retention goal of the university and confirm if the learning outcomes were achieved as well (Treat, 2009; Edmonds, 2016). Gusky (2017) asserts that the evaluation process is relatively simple, and it begins with answering three essential questions: 1. What do we want to accomplish? 2. How will we know it if we do? And 3. What else might happen, good or bad? When designing this program these three questions remained at the forefront of my planning and preparation for presenting to the faculty at the university. The goal of this

professional development plan is to provide faculty with knowledge on the importance of retention within higher education, provide mentorship strategies to increase faculty and male student engagement, explain the current challenges that Black male students encounter, and improve student retention at the institution. Furthermore, the goal of this project evaluation is to determine if the training session was valuable in helping faculty understand the needs of male students at the university and increase retention while keeping students engaged. Once the final training session is completed, the results of the professional development program will be presented to university officials to determine the impact of the outcomes that were established.

At the end of the professional development training session all participants will receive a post-test, to evaluate the skills and knowledge they acquired from the program. The post-test has 10 true or false questions that participants will respond too. Additionally, all participants will be asked to complete a summative evaluation at the end of the professional development session anonymously for the facilitator. All questions will be in a Likert-style format, closed ended and participants will have the option to complete a section on the survey for additional comments. The data acquired from these evaluations will allow the researcher to make any necessary revisions to the training program and integrate any additional resources for the overall improvement and effectiveness of the professional development program.

Project Implications

Local Community

Today there are approximately 4,200 colleges and universities in the United States, Black men represent just one-third of Black students nationally (Aud, Wilkinson-Flicker, Kristapvich, Rathbun, Wang, & Zang, 2013). Although recent research indicated an overall increase in college enrollment for Black male students, graduation rates are still significantly lower than those of Black females and White males and females (Hill & Boes, 2013). The research presented in this doctoral study conducted at small private HBCU in the southern region of the United States, revealed a need for an increase in faculty and student engagement through mentorship and a heightened awareness on the importance of retention in higher education. The project that resulted from the findings was a professional development training program that will be offered to male faculty at the institution. Social change can be improved through this project by increasing faculty knowledge on the subject and providing them with an opportunity implement these resources within their everyday interactions with students. Faculty members are central to the retention process, since the classroom is where success is created (Pattengale, 2010; O'Connor, 2017). The faculty development-training program has the potential to increase in the retention of Black male students at the university.

Broader Implications

As the institution continues to make a positive impact on the lives of its students through the professional development of faculty, then agents of change can be produced that make an impact on the local, state and national level. The project outlined in this

section was designed to help increase faculty knowledge on retention and encourage more faculty and student engagement through mentorship opportunities. When the students leave and share their stories with individuals in their communities, it can increase enrollment, retention and graduation rates at the institution. The social implications of an increase retention rate can be positive and shared amongst faculty, staff, students and administrators at the university. Essentially, the professional development training is about building relationships between faculty and male students to set a foundation for student retention and engagement at the university. The faculty development program will be useful to the participants at the institution by providing them with a variety of resources needed to improve the retention of male students.

Conclusion

In section 3 of this project study, I provided a description of a professional development-training program that was designed to set the foundation for increasing retention and student engagement through mentorship at the selected institution. Additionally, an extensive review of the literature was conducted, potential resources and support were described, implementation plans were outlined with roles and responsibilities, barriers were presented, and an evaluation plan introduced. I received approval for the proposed professional development training. I concluded this section with implications for social change. Although this study is designed for a university in the southern region of the United States, it can potentially be used at other universities seeking to improve their Black male retention rates. In section 4, I outline my final

reflections and explain my development of self during throughout the duration of this research process.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this project study was to examine the lived experiences of learning community participants at a private HBCU in the southern region of the United States. I interviewed six students, two faculty, and two staff members at the university to discover their perceptions of factors affecting retention at the selected institution. As a minority male working in higher education, I was inspired to find ways to enhance retention and graduation rates of this population. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What do Black male learning community participants perceive to be a major influence on their decision to remain at the selected institution after their first year?
2. What do faculty and staff perceive to be a major influence on the retention of minority male learning community participants?

The data obtained from face-to-face interviews and related documents helped me design a professional development-training program. The primary goals of the professional development training are to educate participants and provide them with resources that can be beneficial for increasing retention and graduate rates at the institution.

Project Strengths

The project that resulted from this qualitative case study was a professional development training program. The training is designed to enhance educators' knowledge and equip them with the skills, strategies, and tools needed to motivate and engage students (Edmonds, 2016; Kennedy, 2010). Research suggested that an increase in faculty/staff engagement at a university can increase retention (Edmonds, 2016). This

professional development training was designed based on the responses of faculty/staff and student participants during separate face-to-face interviews. Their perceptions on student retention were essential to developing the project to address the issue of retention at the selected institution. This project added to the literature on Black male student retention in institutions of higher learning. This study was intended to further the conversation on Black male student retention in higher education. This project may provide only a fraction of what is needed to increase Black male student retention, but this project is adaptable and cost efficient for universities looking to solve retention issues with their minority male student population. Universities may replicate, revise, and model the program based on the needs of their institution.

Project Limitations

The project had several strengths; however, limitations were present. One of the first limitations was the sample size and setting. The sample size was relatively small in comparison to the overall male population at the institution. I collected data from six students and four faculty/staff members in a gender-specific learning community. Generalizing results to the institution and other HBCUs may be difficult. This project was also limited to a private HBCU, and findings may not be generalizable to public HBCUs. Additional research at minority-serving institutions may mitigate these limitations and improve generalizability of the findings.

Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

I never thought I would have an opportunity as a minority man in the United States to complete a doctoral program. My concept of scholarship was based on academic achievement in a basic format that was centered on my ability to maintain a high-grade point average. Through my experience with conducting this qualitative research and enduring the journey of completing this degree, I have learned that scholarship transcends the concept of maintaining good grades. Scholarship is the ability to persevere through the many challenges that may present during the journey. Scholarship is the ability to stay focused on a goal and persist with resilience until the goal is achieved.

As an educator, I learned that everything I thought I knew about writing and research from my experiences in undergraduate and graduate school were no comparison to the difficulty of doctoral research and writing. Completing this study has made me more conscious of what I write and the evidence that I use to support my claims. Doctoral research and writing are essential to scholarship because they have the potential to create change and inspire success for a specific organization and for the researcher.

This journey has also taught me many other skills that will be useful for my future in higher educational leadership. I learned the importance of patience, time management, prioritizing, planning, goal setting, and most importantly discipline. As a father, professional, pastor, mentor, and community leader, I had to be intentional about writing and answering my research questions. When my IRB approval came, and I was able to answer my research questions through analysis of the qualitative data, I was elated. I

realized at that moment I was one step closer to making a positive impact on the lives of students, faculty, and staff at the selected institution.

Overall, this doctoral study has provided me with a variety of tools that I can use to create change in higher education. This journey for social change does not stop here; I plan to continue researching because of this scholarship experience.

Project Development

The process of developing an effective project study requires extensive research and time. In developing the project for this dissertation, I learned that the project must align with the study results and that goals and objectives must be clearly established. I chose to research retention for minority male students based upon my passion for Black male student success and working directly with Black male students in my community. Development for this project included interviews with faculty/staff at the university and former/current student learning community participants. The results of the interviews helped me to design a professional development program that will address challenges with retention at the university and aid with faculty recommendations to increase mentoring opportunities for Black male students.

As I developed this project, I considered literature on the subject and remained open to other project options that could possibly address the problem. However, the professional development training program seemed to be the best option for the selected institution based on the study results. Hopefully, the university will accept my proposal and use my professional development training to help with retention efforts. This

development training can be used at other institutions of higher learning and revised as needed for continuous learning.

This project study required a lot of time and effort from start to finish. To evaluate the program's success or failure, I included an evaluation at the end of the professional training for participant feedback. This evaluation was created to identify the knowledge that was acquired based on participation in the program and suggestions for changes or modifications for future professional development.

Leadership

The journey toward earning my doctorate in higher education leadership has transformed me in many ways. I have established confidence in my ability to identify organizational issues, design a program that can address the issues, and create positive change within higher education. This experience has allowed me to focus on career opportunities and possibilities within higher education that I had never imagined. During this process, I learned that great leaders learn from those who have experience and listen when recommendations are offered for support. I learned that my committee chair and members were here to support me and provide the flexibility to discover my hidden leadership abilities.

Professionally, this process has taught me to communicate more effectively and set career goals. My research, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills were enhanced, and I became more confident in my ability to create change within my organization. Because of my enhanced communication skills, my network with others in education has expanded. I have traveled to conferences and spoken with other

professionals in higher education leadership. Emerging leadership qualities have helped me transform as a leader and excel in my career.

As a descendant of former slaves in the United States, the son of a single parent, and a person whom statistics suggest should not have a degree, I want to inspire individuals like me to dream big and know that all things are possible if they believe. I want to motivate and encourage nontraditional students to know that with hard work and dedication their visions can become a reality. I learned through this process that leadership is about being a positive example for others, overcoming trials, and providing resources to those in need.

Reflective Analysis of Personal Growth

Analysis of Self as Scholar. As I consider my development as a scholar, I can truly say that I have learned various things that have significantly impacted all areas of my life. I have improved my critical thinking, problem solving, research and networking skills. This project study revealed to me the importance of thinking out of the box and being innovative when it comes to resolving issues that affect social change. As a scholar, I had to read, review, analyze and summarize resources to create an extensive literature review on the topic.

While on this journey, I also gained a greater appreciation for my profession and the work I do as an educator. I learned that you must be passionate about your study if you plan to be effective in your position and create positive change within society. By conducting a qualitative case study, I was able to gain an in-depth perspective on my topic, which expanded my love for research. As a scholar, I believe that I am better

equipped with the tools that are necessary to continuously provide success to those who desire it. Overall, I feel that this process was exactly what I needed to catapult me into my divine destiny as leader within higher education.

Analysis of self as a practitioner. As a practitioner, I have learned that my effectiveness is predicated upon my ability to remain a lifelong learner and willingness to support others. True practitioners are anxious about sharing the knowledge they have acquired with those who can benefit from it while effectively creating change. This change is not limited to me individually, but to those who I am connected with in my organization and community. During this process, I had to research online, create a project proposal, produce scholarly writing to inform future research on the topic and receive constructive criticism. Prior to finishing this doctoral study, I was not confident in my skills or abilities as a leader in higher education. Through this journey, I have gained skills, knowledge and other resources that make me a qualified and capable leader within higher education.

Analysis of self as a project developer. Over the years, I have participated in various faculty development workshops, but it was not until I started this journey at Walden University that I was able to create a training session. As I reflect on this experience, I had no idea I could do it, but with the help of God and scholars I was encouraged to press forward and complete the project. After completing the development program, I was elated and anxious to do more. When you are passionate about something you can talk about it any moment and at any time. This was the case for me as I developed the format and implementation proposal for the development training.

I wanted to make sure that this project was engaging and practical for the participants to acquire useful knowledge and apply it for immediate results. It took some time to plan the overall project, but I learned the importance of planning, thoughtful analysis and creating evaluation methods for the project to determine its success or failure.

Reflection on Importance of the Work and Potential for Social Change

This project will impact social change at the selected institution and others across the country due to the importance of retention in higher education and the constant need for improvement. The increase in literature on the retention of minority male students warrants the necessity for projects such as this. Social change can be accomplished through this project by increasing faculty knowledge on the subject and providing them with an opportunity implement what they have learned in their everyday interactions with students.

While creating the professional development training, other universities were considered as well. This project can be revised and reformatted to accommodate other institutions that struggle with retention. The wealth of knowledge gained from the insight of interview participants and current literature on the subject helped to guide the framework for my project. Social change is possible if the university approves the model, participants utilize the resources presented and complete the professional development evaluations. Overall, the goal of this project is to create positive social change that impacts retention and increases faculty student engagement.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the lived experiences of learning community participants and discover what faculty/staff perceive to be a major influence on the retention of this population. After conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews with six student participants and four faculty/staff, participants the results yielded a need for more male faculty engagement through mentorship with students. The results from the study led to several possible implications, including the creation of a professional development-training program for male faculty. This program was designed to provide male faculty at the university with resources that could be useful for increased student engagement, mentorship and retention. Another possible implication would be the application of the project to other student populations besides Black males on the campus. If the project is successful upon implementation at the selected institution and the evaluations reveal a higher retention rate, the university could apply the design to other student populations on the campus.

The creation of other professional development training programs like this one could have a positive impact on the field of higher education. Additionally, this project could be beneficial with providing resources for other institutions seeking to improve retention rates and increase faculty and student engagement through mentorship. Furthermore, I strongly believe this solution can be replicated and used nationally to create social change within higher education. Although the research on this project is growing more studies can be conducted to strengthen the necessity and effectiveness of the model within higher education.

A follow-up study can be conducted after the completion and evaluation of the professional development training. This additional study may prove to be very insightful and helpful for university officials and others within the realm of higher education. In this follow-up study participants of the professional development training can be utilized, retention data can be compared from one year to the next, and feedback from students can generate data to reveal the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the training outcomes. Overall, the more research on the topic and the more feedback from key stakeholders will determine the true impact of this project.

Conclusion

In section 4 of this doctoral study, I outlined the strengths of this project, and analyzed my growth as a scholar, leader and developer. The chapter presented possible limitations to the study, recommendations and its potential to impact social change within higher education. Additionally, I shared the possible implications, applications and directions for future research on the topic.

The overall goal of this doctoral study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions that students, faculty and staff perceived to influence the retention of Black male students at a private HBCU in the southern region of the United States. My passion for minority male and non-traditional student success fueled my desire to find a possible solution to the issue at the selected institution. The project that was created based upon the results of face-to-face interviews was a professional development-training program designed to educate, inform and motivate participants to be intentional about faculty and student engagement to improve retention. This program will be valuable and add to the

various studies on the subject. Overall, this doctoral journey has been rewarding and beneficial to my personal and professional growth.

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Appendix A: The Project

Increasing Black Male Retention: Effective Mentoring Strategies
Professional Development Training Session
Day, I

Challenges Facing Black Males in Higher Education

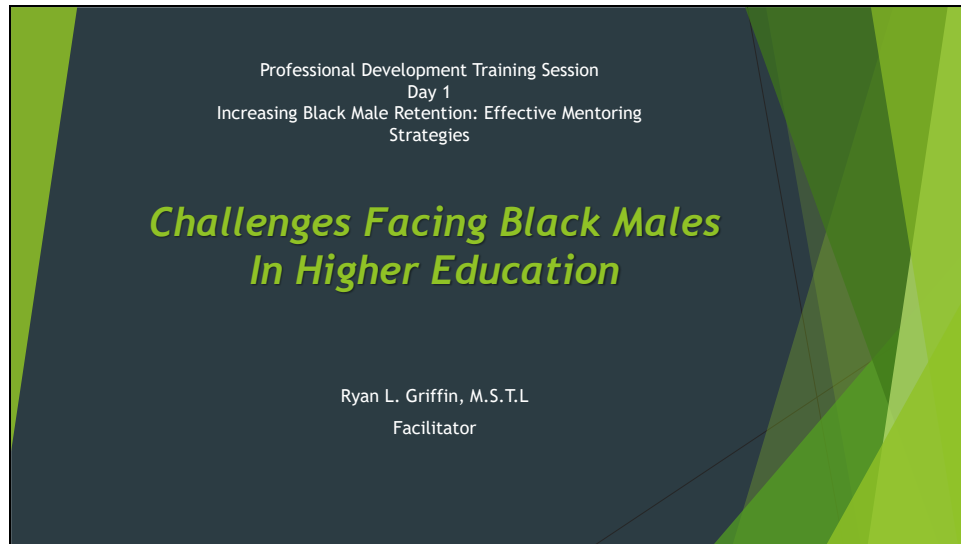
Time	Activity
8:30 am- 9:00 am	Continental Breakfast/ Meet and greet The training session will open with a small continental breakfast, as participants arrive they will sign-in, receive a name badge, and have an opportunity to network and connect with other participants.
9:00 am -10:30 am	Welcome! Overview of Day 1 Ted Talk: “Changing the Narrative for Black Men through Higher Education Carl Patterson” Collaborative Engagement: Participants will discuss in small groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What they perceive to be the issues black males encounter in higher education? • What challenges do they encounter at their institution? • What can be done to help this population of students? • What were your thoughts on the video? Do you agree or disagree with Carl Patterson? Representatives will present their small group discussion to all participants.
10:30 am-10:45 am	Break
10:45 am -11:45 am	Presentation: Overview of a Qualitative Case Study conducted at the institution on the perceptions of learning community participants.
11:45 am- 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm- 1:30 pm	Discussion: What resources do we currently offer to assist black male students at the institution? Do we feel the resources are helpful? Do we consider ourselves (faculty/staff) to be resources why or why not?
1:30 pm-2:00 pm	Questions and Answers, Review Day 2 Agenda

Materials:

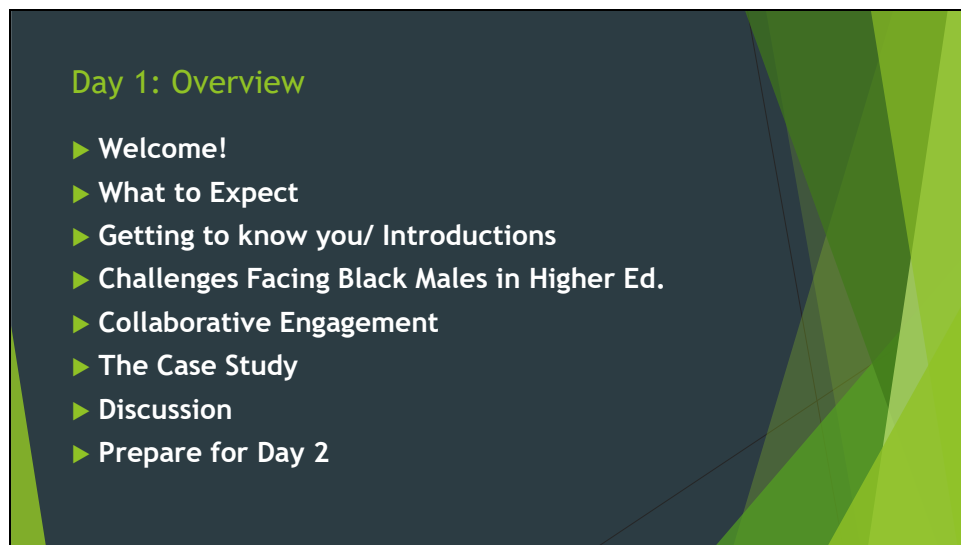
Large room with a max capacity of 50 individuals, Tables, Chairs, Internet access, LCD Projector, Screen, Name tags, Ink Pens/ Pencils, presentation handout and agenda, sound system, personal laptop connection ability, Poster boards and assorted markers.

Continental Breakfast: Orange Juice, Apple Juice, Coffee, water, pastries, doughnuts, and fruit

Slide 1



Slide 2



The Facilitator will officially open the session and provide a brief overview of the events that will take place during the first session of the PDT.

Slide 3

Learning Outcomes

- ▶ Participants will be informed of the challenges that black males encounter in higher education
- ▶ Participants will define retention and articulate its importance within higher education and at the selected institution.
- ▶ Participants will utilize the information learned in the professional training and implement it in best practice.
- ▶ Participants will have an increase knowledge of mentorship strategies
- ▶ Participants will learn how to encourage and motivate students to have success at the institution.
- ▶ Participants will help connect students with additional resources on campus that foster retention
- ▶ Participants will learn how to increase student and faculty engagement.
- ▶ Participants will learn to development meaningful mentee and mentor relationships.

Slide 4


Changing the Narrative for Black Men through Higher Education | Carl Patterson Video



▶ <https://youtu.be/D5ix7DOcUXo>

The facilitator will play the video “Changing the Narrative for Black Men through Higher Education” By Carl Patterson. After the participants finish watching the video they will be evenly divided into various small groups to discuss their perspective on the video and respond to the questions that will be displayed on the next slide.

Slide 5

Small Group Discussion

- What do you perceive to be the issues that black males encounter in higher education?
- What challenges/issues do they face at your institution?
- What do you believe can be done to help this population of Students (Black Males)?
- What were your thoughts on the video? Do you agree or disagree with Carl Patterson?



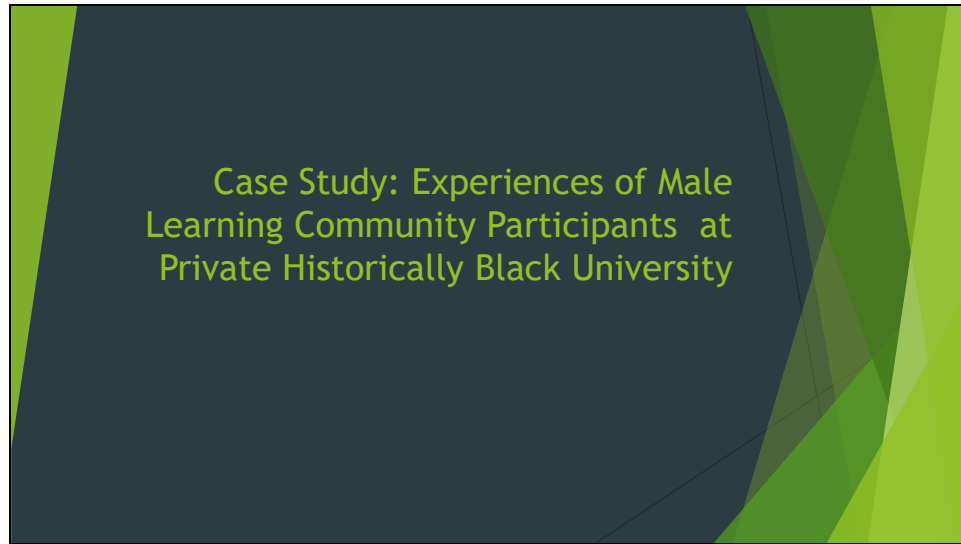
After participants are separated into their various groups, they will receive markers and large post-it board paper. Each group will have an opportunity to select a team leader, a scribe and a time keeper. Once these positions are assigned to individuals within the group, they will select a team name. Any time there is a groups activity they will resume their roles and remain with their team for the duration of the 3- Day PDT. While the participants are in their various groups they will write down responses to the questions and prepare to present to all the other teams what they discussed.

Slide 6



All Participants asked to take a 15 min Break!

Slide 7




The Facilitator will discuss and provide an overview of the case study conducted at the selected institution.

Slide 8

A presentation slide with a dark blue background and green geometric patterns. The title "Qualitative Case Study" is in light green. Below it, a green arrow-shaped box contains text explaining the case study method. To the right is a photograph of a group of men in a gymnasium. At the bottom left, there is a small, faint logo for "ROSSIGNOL".

Qualitative Case Study

Why the Case Study Method:
The case study method allows the researcher to gain detailed knowledge of the participants in the sample and an opportunity to interact with them in a social setting (Lodico et al, 2010, p. 270; Hancock, & Algozzine, 2015).



ROSSIGNOL

A qualitative case study is a detailed examination of a bounded unit over a period of time. More specifically, Merriam (2009) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined” (p. 40). Furthermore, a case study is typically used to examine a current issue in a real- life situation that involves an individual, a group, an entity or institution within a certain contextual setting (Gleisne, 2011). Therefore, this qualitative case study is detailed and intentional about the factors connected to the retention and persistence of minority male learning community participants at a private HBCU.

When a researcher utilizes the case study approach they are typically trying to answer the “how” and “why” questions of a given phenomenon. The case study method allows the researcher to get an answer to various complex situations that include multiple perspectives that can be considered through data collected from various sources (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2013). Furthermore, this study can only take place when there is a bounded system or a single entity around which there are boundaries (Merriam, 2009).

Slide 9

Qualitative Case Study

Purpose of the Study: This qualitative case study *examined* the *lived experiences* of learning community Participants at a private HBCU in the southern region of the United States..

The photograph shows three men in suits standing outdoors on a campus, engaged in conversation. One man is gesturing with his hands while speaking to the other two.

The facilitator will provide an overview of their study and

Slide 10

Qualitative Case Study

Purpose of the Study: discover what faculty and staff perceive to be a major influence on the *retention of black males* at the university

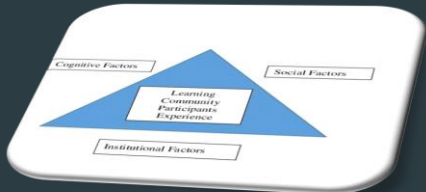


© Fairfax/Cambridge ACS

Slide 11

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based upon Vincent Tinto's theory of integration (1975; 1993) and Swail's (2003) Geometric Model of student persistence and achievement




- ▶ Tinto (1993) suggests that the integration and involvement of a student who feels satisfied with the academic systems, social systems and the mainstream of campus life are more likely to persist.
- ▶ The Geometric Model of student persistence and achievement highlights three forces that affect the student and their decision to stay or leave an institution: Cognitive, social and institutional factors.

The conceptual framework for this study is based upon Vincent Tinto's theory of integration (1975; 1993) and Swail's (2003) Geometric Model of student persistence and achievement. Tinto (1993) defines integration as the extent to which an individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution as well as abide by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in that community or subgroups of it. Furthermore, his research highlights two primary forms of integration that are essential for student persistence and retention. The first is social integration, and Academic integration

Comparatively, Swail's Geometric Model places a high emphasis on the student and places them in the center of the model. Tinto (2000) stated that a large majority of the models on student retention and attrition fail to discuss the connection between classroom and retention, the one place where the institution has the closest connection to the student. "The central purpose of this model is to provide a user- friendly method for discussion and to focus on the cognitive and social attributes that the student brings to the campus, and the institutions role in the student experience" (Swail, 2003, p. ix). The Geometric model highlights three forces that affect the student and their decision to stay or leave an institution:

Cognitive Factors, Social Factors, and Institutional Factors

Slide 12

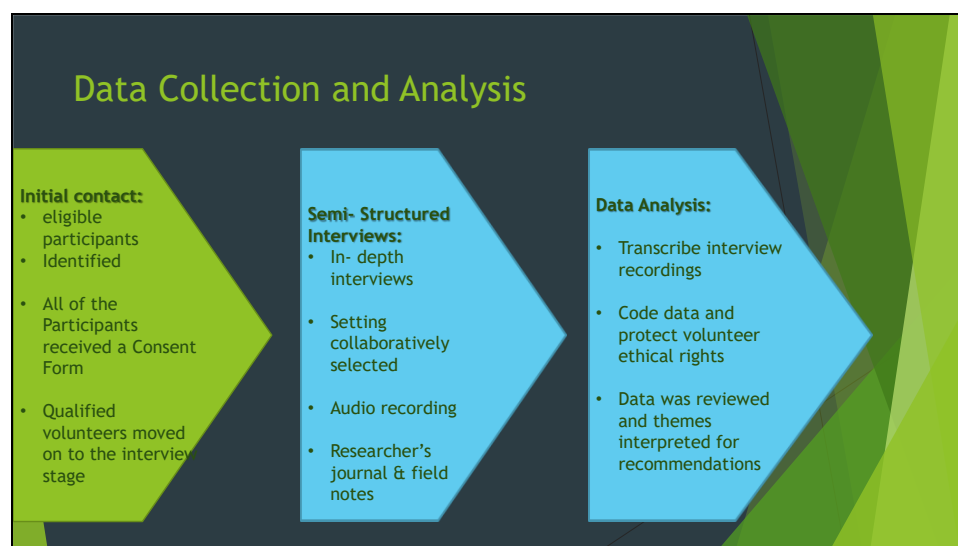
A presentation slide with a dark blue background and a green geometric pattern on the right side. The title "Research Questions" is in green. Two bullet points are listed in white text.

Research Questions

- ▶ RQ1: - What do faculty and staff perceive to be a major influence on the retention of minority male learning community participants?
- ▶ RQ2: - What do black male learning community participants perceive to be a major influence on their decision to remain at the selected institution after their first year?

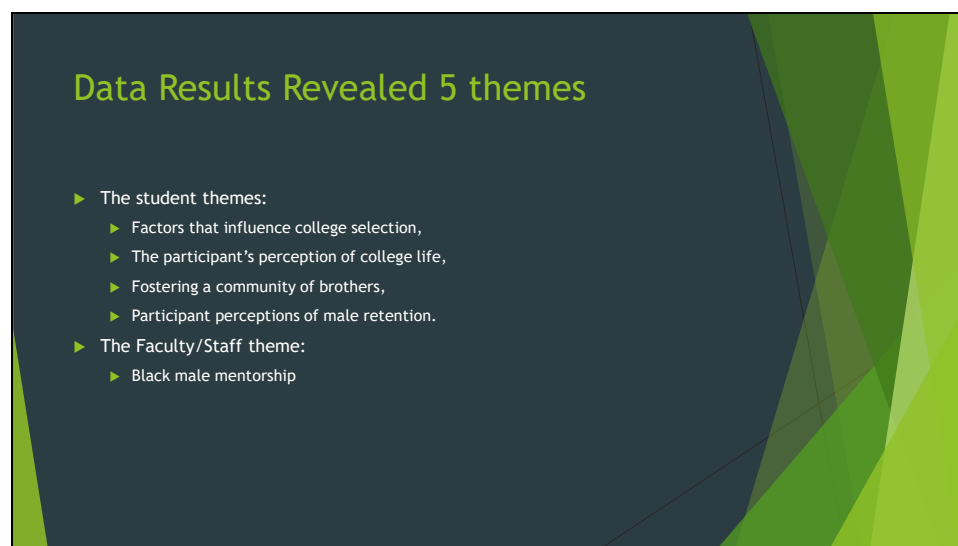
These two questions guided the study and interview questions.

Slide 13



Brief overview of the Data Collection Process.

Slide 14

**Student Themes:**

Factors that influence college selection: Literature on the subject asserts that consistent family support and early educational goal setting are strong predictors of academic success (Tierney &

Auerbach, 2004). This theme highlighted the impact of family on the college selection process for minority male students based upon interview questions one to three.

Participants Perceptions of college life: this theme revealed that the participants had an initial perception of college life that changed after enrolling and attending the university.

Fostering a community of brothers: Kadiko & Mawer (2013) asserts that being a part of a community and having a sense of belonging are essential to the success of students in higher education. This theme highlighted their experiences and interactions with faculty, staff and fellow students at the university. The small classroom, peer accountability, and the relevant curriculum were attributes that participants mentioned during their interview to illustrate their experience.

Participant perceptions of male retention: Their response to interview questions nine and ten revealed a wide range of challenges that this population may face. These challenges include engagement within the university community based upon student organization requirements, a lack of financial resources and poor academic performance.

Faculty/staff theme:

Black male mentorship: Overall, the four faculty/staff participants emphasized the need for male mentorship in some form.

The following section has the data summarized and written in a narrative format based upon the themes that emerged from the completed data analysis.

Slide 15



Slide 16

Questions to Consider!

- ▶ What resources do we currently offer to assist black male students at the institution?
- ▶ Do we feel the resources are helpful?
- ▶ Do we consider ourselves (faculty/staff) to be resources why or why not?

Open Discussion in response to the questions

Slide 17



Slide 18

References

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**Increasing Black Male Retention: Effective Mentoring Strategies
Professional Development Training Session**

Day, 2

Retention Matters

Time	Activity
8:30 am- 9:00 am	Continental Breakfast/ Meet and greet The training session will open with a small continental breakfast, participants will sign-in and prepare for Day 2.
9:00 am -10:30 am	Welcome! Answer any questions from day 1, and provide an overview of day 2 activities. Ted Talk: “American College Retention Crisis Marc Burton” Collaborative Engagement: Participants will discuss in small groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Retention? • Why is retention important? • Can faculty/staff help with retention? • What were your thoughts on the video? Do you agree or disagree with Marc Brown? One group member will write on poster board a representative will present their small group discussion to all participants.
10:30 am-10:45 am	Break
10:45 am -11:45 am	Presentation: Retention matters! Defining retention, why is it important to the overall success of the university? Overview retention strategies.
11:45 am- 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm- 1:30 pm	Discussion: What have you done to make sure your students are retained? Do you feel you can improve? As a faculty member, do you feel your university supports your efforts?
1:30 pm-2:00 pm	Questions and Answers, Review Day 3 Agenda

Materials:

Large room with a max capacity of 50 individuals, Tables, Chairs, Internet access, LCD Projector, Screen, Name tags, Ink Pens/ Pencils, presentation handout and agenda, sound system, personal laptop connection ability, Poster boards and assorted markers.

Continental Breakfast: Orange Juice, Apple Juice, Coffee, water, pastries, doughnuts, and fruit

Slide 1



Displayed on media devices as the participants enter the session.

Slide 2



The Facilitator will officially open the session and provide a brief overview of the events that will take place during the second day of the PDT.

After participants are separated into their various groups, they will receive markers and large post- it board paper and remain in their positions they selected during the first session. While the participants are in their various groups they will write down responses to the questions and prepare to present to all the other teams what they discussed.

Slide 5



All Participants asked to take a 15 min Break!

Slide 6



Briefly discuss cartoon and introduce participants to the topic of Retention.

Slide 7

What is Retention?

A measure of 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 bachelors (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall. (NCES, 2015b)

3012P)
ENROLLMENT IN HIS COLLEGE 1970' (NCES)

In 2015, nearly 300,000 students attended an HBCU

Total enrollment at historically black colleges or universities, in thousands

Year	Enrollment (thousands)
1980	234
1990	267
2000	276
2010	327
2015	293

10 largest HBCUs, by 2015 enrollment

St. Philip's College	11,200
North Carolina A&T State	10,900
Howard	10,000
Florida A&M	9,900
Jackson State	9,500
Tennessee State	9,200
Texas Southern	9,000
Prairie View A&M	8,300
North Carolina Central	8,000
Morgan State	7,700

Note: Congress defines historically black colleges and universities as degree-granting institutions established prior to 1964 with the principal mission of educating black Americans. Analysis includes both part- and full-time students enrolled at two- and four-year colleges. Total enrollment includes students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of fall enrollment data from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The publication of Vincent Tinto's (1975) landmark student integration model marks the start of the current, national dialogue on undergraduate retention (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

Since the 1960's student retention has been a focus of institutional strategies (White-McNeil, 2016), which has remained constant well into the 21st century. Additionally, the demographics of traditional college students continue to change, therefore presenting higher educational leaders with the challenge of increasing minority male retention rates

Briefly discuss the significance of the chart.

Slide 8



Have Participants take a few minutes to consider why they feel retention is important?

They can share thoughts in an open discussion amongst the PDT participants.

Retaining students in higher education is an ongoing crisis, particularly among Black men (Mitchell, 2015). Over the past several years the subject of black males and their post- secondary education has become a primary focus for administrators, faculty and staff at institutions across the country.

The primary reason for the enhanced focus in this population is connected to an institutions ability to recruit, retain and graduate its students while maintaining a competitive edge within the educational pipeline. Retention and graduation rates are

major factors contributing to an institution's reliability and financial stability (Farmer & Hope, 2015).

Slide 9

Why is Retention Important?

- ▶ CHANGING EDUCATIONAL MARKETPLACE
- ▶ GOVERNMENTAL FUNDING
- ▶ REDUCED COSTS




All colleges and universities across the nation have been mandated by both the federal and local/state governments to produce graduation data that confirms the academic success of its students (Farmer & Hope, 2015). Essentially, retention is significant due to the changes in higher education and the students we service, governmental funding is connected to it and other revenue.

Slide 10

CHANGING EDUCATIONAL MARKETPLACE

THEN	NOW
COST Average tuition: \$3,458/yr* Books: \$198/yr*	COST Average tuition: \$12,892/yr* Books: \$1,200/yr*
FORMAT Full time Physical Classroom Paper, pencils, Scanners	FORMAT Part time (55%)* 45% of students take at least one online course** 2 in 3 use smartphones for schoolwork



Since the 1960's student retention has been a focus of institutional strategies (White-McNeil, 2016), which has remained constant well into the 21st century. Additionally, the demographics of traditional college students continue to change, therefore presenting higher educational leaders with the challenge of increasing minority male retention rates.

Traditionally, college-bound students or first-generation students followed a common path towards degree attainment. Apply to the school of your choice, get accepted, enroll, select a major, follow the curriculum and within 4- 5 years' graduate.

The modern-day student has a more complicated background which includes work, family, and school. Which they must balance if they want to succeed.

Participants will be asked to consider these things as they view the chart.

With the new demographics of students, we must do all we can to make sure they are supported and offer programs that are relevant.

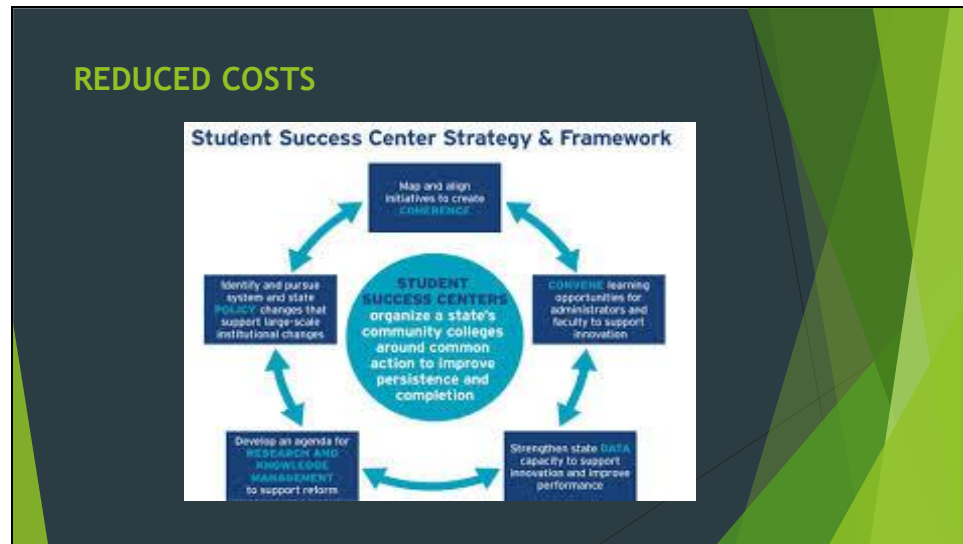
Slide 11



While high enrollment numbers were once considered sufficient metrics of success, government funding is performance-based and an institutions inability to produce good

retention numbers as well as graduation rates could cause them to lose out on federal funding.

Slide 12



institutions are accustomed to investing in student enrollment. However, improving student success and increasing student retention rates yields a higher financial benefit. It is more cost effective to keep students who are already enrolled than to invest in recruitment efforts to drive up enrollment numbers.

Student retention efforts improve the financial health of an institution, it allows more flexibility to reinvest in student success programming that yields a higher return on investment.

Slide 13

RETENTION STRATEGIES

- ▶ Social Integration:
 - ▶ The most common strategy that has been implemented by most HBCU institutions is student involvement/ engagement (Hinton, 2014). Townsend (2007) contends that black students who spend more time participating in various social activities have a greater chance of being retained at an institution because they feel more connected to the campus social culture.
- ▶ First Year Programs:
 - ▶ New student seminars have been part of the academic curriculum at American colleges and universities for over 100 years. First year programs/ initiatives are essential components to the success of an institution of higher learning.
- ▶ Learning Communities:
 - ▶ According to Tinto (1999), a student is more likely to persist when they are in an environment that is committed to their success, hold high standards for learning, provide the necessary academic and social support, and consistent feedback about student, faculty and staff performance, and actively involve them with other students and faculty in learning

Discuss these strategies and if they are effective for the students we serve?

Slide 14

Lunch

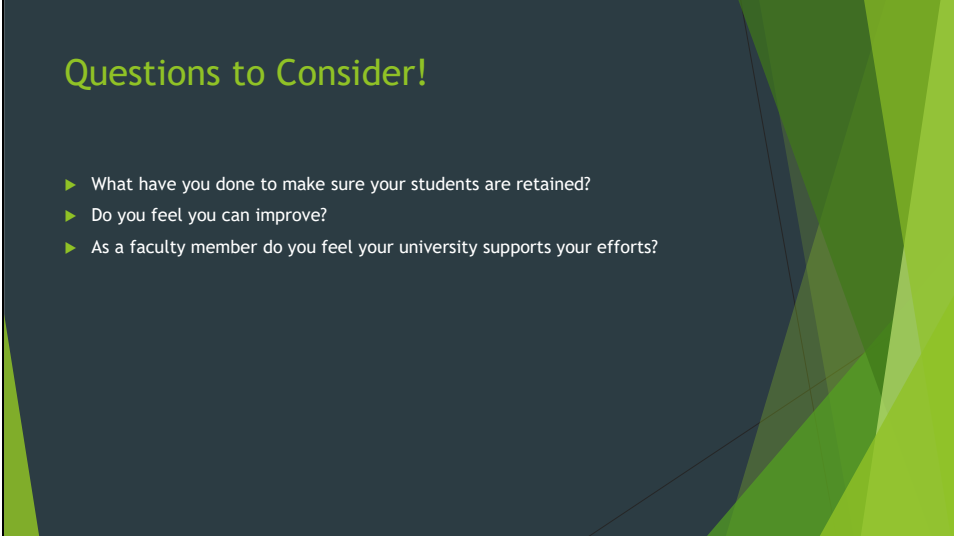


The image shows a clock face with the words "LUNCH TIME" in red, bold letters in the center. The clock hands are positioned at approximately 12:15. The background of the slide is dark blue with green geometric patterns.

Slide 15

Questions to Consider!

- ▶ What have you done to make sure your students are retained?
- ▶ Do you feel you can improve?
- ▶ As a faculty member do you feel your university supports your efforts?



Open Discussion in response to the questions

Slide 16



Slide 17

References

- ▶ Collins, D. E. (2015). Three Things HBCUs Could Do to Survive and Succeed. *Academe*, 101(5), 27.
- ▶ Hinton, S. L. (2014). *Factors that affect retention among freshman students at Historically Black colleges and universities* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest (3648512)
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- ▶ <http://higheredlive.com/3-reasons-student-retention-is-more-important-than-ever/>

Increasing Black Male Retention: Effective Mentoring Strategies
Professional Development Training Session
Day, 3

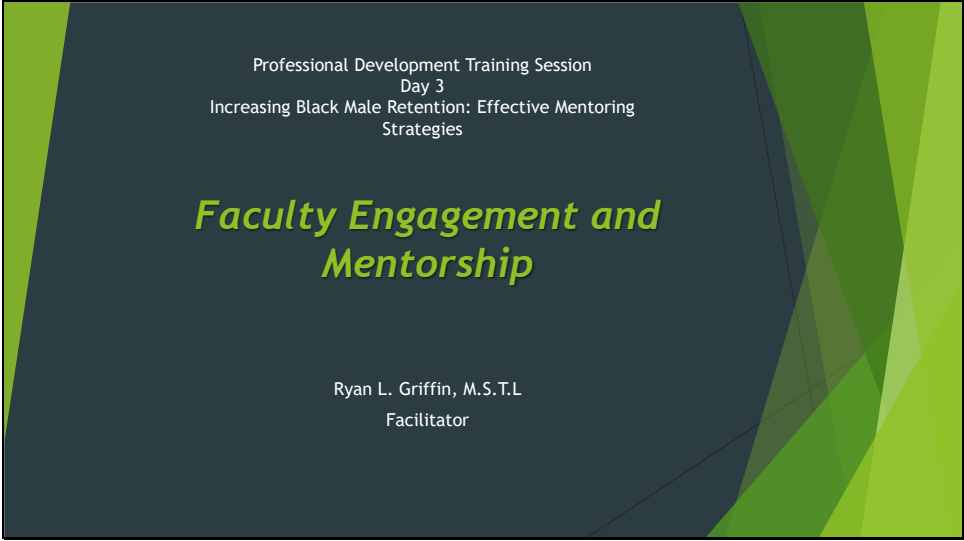
Faculty Engagement and Mentorship

Time	Activity
8:30 am- 9:00 am	Continental Breakfast/ Meet and greet The training session will open with a small continental breakfast, participants will sign-in and prepare for Day 3.
9:00 am -10:30 am	Welcome! Answer any questions from day 2, and provide an overview of day 3 activities. Ted Talk: “Success Strategies for Re-Engaging the African American Male Student” Wes Hall Collaborative Engagement: Participants will discuss in small groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is student engagement? • Why is student engagement important? • How can faculty/staff increase engagement? • What were your thoughts on the video? Do you agree or disagree with Wes Hall? One group member will write on poster board a representative will present their small group discussion to all participants.
10:30 am-10:45 am	Break
10:45 am -11:45 am	Presentation: Student engagement through mentorship! Benefits of mentorship, how does this engagement help the mentee? The impact of mentorship?
11:45 am- 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm- 1:30 pm	Faculty reflection: a current member of the faculty will provide a reflection on their experience with student engagement in a learning community.
1:30 pm-2:00 pm	Questions and Answers, complete evaluations, close session

Materials:

Large room with a max capacity of 50 individuals, Tables, Chairs, Internet access, LCD Projector, Screen, Name tags, Ink Pens/ Pencils, presentation handout and agenda, sound system, personal laptop connection ability, Poster boards and assorted markers.
Continental Breakfast: Orange Juice, Apple Juice, Coffee, water, pastries, doughnuts, and fruit

Slide 1



Professional Development Training Session
Day 3
Increasing Black Male Retention: Effective Mentoring
Strategies

***Faculty Engagement and
Mentorship***

Ryan L. Griffin, M.S.T.L.
Facilitator

Displayed on media devices as participants enter the session.

Slide 2



Day 3: Overview

Welcome!

What to Expect

Recap Day 2

Collaborative Engagement

Mentorship

Discussion

Faculty Reflection

Closing Remarks/ Complete Evaluations

The Facilitator will officially open the session and provide a brief overview of the events that will take place during the first session of the PDT.

Slide 3



The facilitator will play the video “Success Strategies for Re-Engaging the African American Male Student” By Wes Hall. After the participants finish watching the video they will return to the groups they established from the first session and discuss their perspective on the video and respond to the questions that will be displayed on the next slide.

Slide 4

Small Group Discussion


- ▶ What is student engagement?
- ▶ Why is student engagement important?
- ▶ How can faculty/staff increase engagement?
- ▶ What were your thoughts on the video? Do you agree or disagree with Wes Hall?

COLLABORATE
CREATE | CONNECT | INSPIRE



After participants are separated into their various groups, they will receive markers and large post-it board paper. And remain in their positions they selected during the first session. While the participants are in their various groups they will write down responses to the questions and prepare to present to all the other teams what they discussed.

Slide 5



15 minute Break

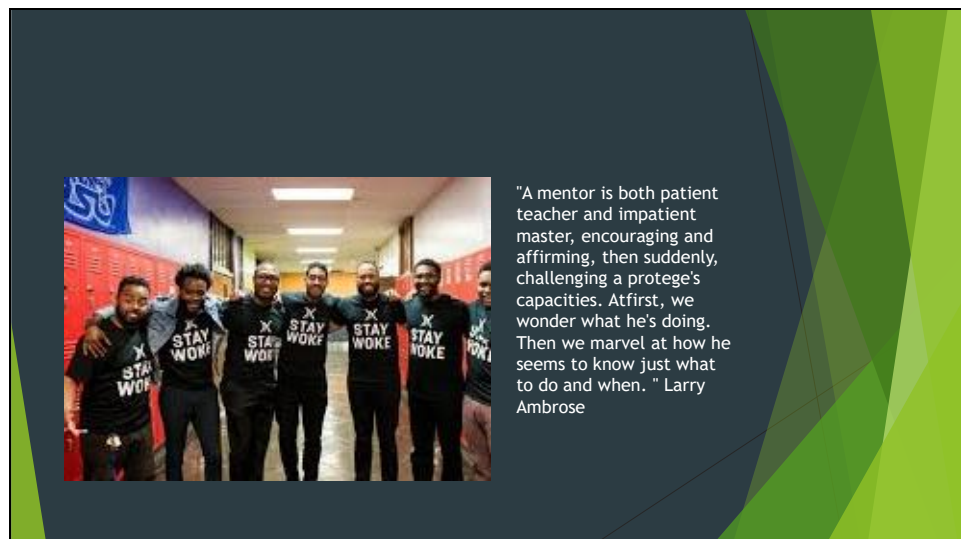
All Participants asked to take a 15 min Break!

Slide 6



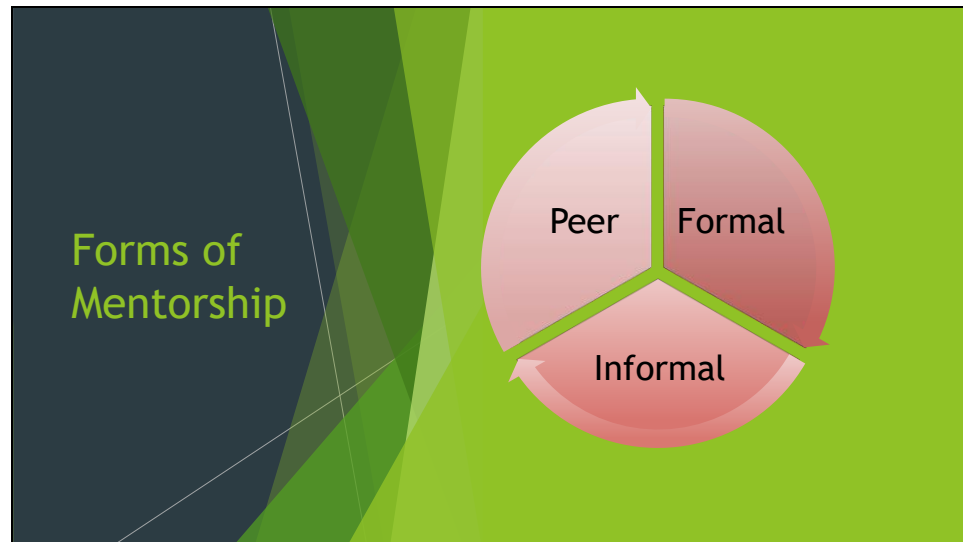
The Facilitator will introduce the topic of Black Male engagement.

Slide 7



The Facilitator will discuss the quote and its relevance to our topic.

Slide 8



Review Forms of mentorship.

Slide 9

Formal Mentorship

► "Formal mentoring is a reciprocal learning relationship characterized by trust, respect, and commitment, in which a mentor supports the professional and personal development of another by sharing his or her life experiences, influence, and expertise"

The slide features a dark blue background with a green geometric pattern on the right side. A photograph shows four men in business suits standing in a hallway, engaged in conversation.

Slide 10

Informal Mentorship



- ▶ "informal mentoring relationships are volunteer relationships, are initiated by the mentor or student, and take on various forms such as informal conversations over a meal, telephone calls, letters, emails, or office visits"
- ▶ Does not attach a specific guideline or agenda.

Slide 11

Peer Mentorship



- ▶ "Peer mentoring is a combination of informal and formal mentoring but different altogether. Kram (1985b) and Levinson et al (1978) described peer mentoring as offering alternatives to the traditional mentoring relationship between an authority figure and a protege', a relationship that is relatively unavailable to many individuals in organizations.

Ask participants which form of mentorship do they think is the most effective?

Slide 12

Benefits of black male mentorship



▶ Mentoring is the greatest alternative to motivate and encourage African American males to excel in college.

Slide 13

Benefits of mentoring black males

- Creates a Support System
- Improves Social Skills
- Increase Retention and Graduation Rates

Slide 14

Support System

- ▶ Mentoring programs provide support systems which enable African American male students to succeed. For example, African American males in mentoring programs tend to show higher self-esteem, higher levels of academic motivation, and performance. Also, their social skills improve because participants gain confidence and feel more comfortable communicating with faculty and university staff



Slide 15

Improves Social Skills

- ▶ Their social skills improve because participants gain confidence and feel more comfortable communicating with faculty and university staff




Slide 16

Increase Retention and Graduation Rates



- ▶ Improves academics, retention and graduation rates for black males.

Slide 17



Ready! Set! Go!


Encourage participants to consider all they have learned during this 3-day PDT and utilize it on the campus.

Slide 18



Slide 19

Faculty Reflection:



A cartoon illustration of a sign that says "STOP AND THINK". Two small figures are standing next to the sign, looking at it. The sign is on a post and has the words "STOP AND THINK" written on it in a simple, blocky font.

A current faculty member will provide a reflection on their experiences with student engagement in a learning community.

Faculty member will come and speak to all the participants concerning their experience with the learning community.

The Facilitator will formally introduce the speaker.

Slide 20



Conclude the session and have participants complete their evaluations of the PDT sessions.

Slide 21



Training Evaluation Form

Date: _____

Title and location of training: _____

Facilitator: _____

Instructions: Please complete this by indicating your level of agreement with the statements listed below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The facilitator was engaging throughout the duration of the training.				
2. Participation and interaction were encouraged.				
3. The content was organized and easy to follow.				
4. The training materials were helpful.				
5. The training experience will be useful in my work.				
6. The facilitator was knowledgeable about the topics presented.				
7. The allotted time for the session was sufficient.				
8. The facilities and training room was comfortable and sufficient.				
9. The training objectives were met.				
10. The facilitator was well prepared.				

11. What did you like most about this training?

12. What portion of the training can be improved?

13. How do you hope to improve your practice because of this training?

14. Please share any additional comments or recommendations below

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Experiences of Male Learning Community Participants at a Historically Black University

Welcome: Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in my project study research.

Purpose Statement: This is a semi- structured interview session/ discussion. The purpose of this interview is to hear your perspective on the research topic. Prior to this interview session you were asked to review and complete a consent form. Keep in mind that your information and responses will be kept confidential and used only for this project study. Additionally, this session will be audiotaped to improve my ability to properly analyze and transcribe your response to the questions. If at any time during this session you feel uncomfortable with a question posed, you can pass on a response, and if you experience discomfort at any time during this discussion you are free to leave.

Guidelines:

1. There are no right or wrong answers; I am interested in your learning community and college experience.
2. Be honest, and open to share both the good and the bad experience. This is a learning moment and opportunity to improve

Questions:

Student Participant:

1. Why did you choose to attend this institution?
2. Identify some of the major factors that influenced your choice? (Scholarship, personal, academic, etc.)
3. Upon arrival to the institution, what were your perceptions of college? (Socially, academically, etc.)
4. What were your perceptions of college life at an HBCU?
5. Describe your learning community experience?
6. What other organizations did you participate in during your first year at the institution?
7. At any time during your first year at the institution did you ever consider leaving? Why or why not?
8. How would you describe the role of your learning community in your choice to return to the institution after your first year?
9. What can be done to increase Black male retention at your institution?
10. What do you perceive to be a major factor in a black male student's choice to stay or leave the institution?

Administrator/Faculty/ Staff Participant:

1. What are some of the challenges Black males encounter at your institution?
2. Describe your connection/ relationship to this population of students?

3. What can be done to increase Black male retention at your institution?
4. What do you perceive to be a major factor in a Black male student's choice to stay or leave the selected institution?
5. What can be done to increase the retention of Black male students at your institution?