The Impact of Engagement on the Academic Success of Black Males at a Predominantly White Institution

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THE IMPACT OF ENGAGEMENT ON THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF BLACK MALES AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION

By

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ABSTRACT

A number of studies, including a 2010 study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), have documented persistence gaps between the educational attainment of White males and that of Black males and Hispanic males among other racial/ethnic groups. There is also evidence of a growing gender gap within racial/ethnic groups, as females are participating, achieving academically, and persisting at much higher rates than their male counterparts (Aud et al., 2010). This growing gender gap within racial/ethnic groups presents a unique problem for Blacks and for Black males in particular. Research shows that Black males, unlike their counterparts, are entering college at a much higher rate than they are graduating from college yet the research further shows that when formalized and well-conceived support systems and programs are put into place to engage them and to promote their achievement, Black males persist at a higher level (Bush et al., 2010). Previous research has indicated a number of factors, such as financial aid, socioeconomic status, lack of preparation, and lack of engagement contribute to the attrition of students in general, however, a gap remains in the current literature regarding how much of an impact these factors have on Black male students at predominantly White institutions. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of student engagement on the academic success of first-year, Black males at a predominantly White institution using the institution’s data from the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) from 2005, 2008 and 2011 as a combined dataset. Findings from this research may help to identify specific factors and their impact on the academic success of Black males at predominantly White institutions.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

According to the College Board (2012), 78.2% of full-time freshmen at public four-year colleges returned for their sophomore year, however, in the same year, only 57.7% of full-time bachelor’s degree-seeking students at four-year colleges graduated in six years or less. When these numbers are further broken down into specific ethnic/racial groups, the persistence rates for students of color are much lower as compared to their counterparts. Completion rates for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students have traditionally lagged behind White and Asian students, as have those for low-income students and students with disabilities. Although postsecondary enrollment rates for students of color are at levels similar to White and Asian students, students of color simply have not earned degrees at the same rates as other students (Aud, Fox & KewalRamani, 2010).

The National Center for Educational Statistics (2012) reported that Black college students have a graduation rate of 34% compared to 59% for their White counterparts. Of even greater concern is the fact that Black males have a graduation rate of 31% compared to 41% for Black females. Over the past two decades, racial differentials in both enrollment and completion rates between Black and White college students have increased (Campbell & Fleming 2000; Feagin, Hernan, & Imani, 1996; Robertson, Mitra, & Van Delinder, 2005). Furthermore, at the end of the 20th century the largest proportion of Blacks in college were women attending predominantly White colleges and universities (Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999).

Research has shown that the United States has historically been less responsive to and supportive of the needs of Blacks in many social institutions, particularly education (Harvey & Harvey, 2005; Levin, Belfield, Muenning, & Rouse, 2007; Moore & Owens, 2008). While the
U.S. has been unsupportive of other underrepresented ethnic minorities in the context of education, the focus of this research will be on Black males. This decision was prompted by the researcher’s personal and professional interests as well as the assertions of recent research, (e.g., Levin, Belfield, Muenning, & Rouse, 2007; Jackson & Moore, 2006, 2008; Tale, 2008) that Black males experience the poorest educational outcomes compared to other major demographic groups in the U.S.

Previous studies have shown that most students, regardless of race, respond to several variables that could affect their academic achievement and persistence in higher education, including college tuition prices and financial aid. However, a study by Kaltenbaugh, St. John, & Starkey (1999) further shows that minority students are more sensitive to tuition costs and less willing to use educational loans. Previous research on student persistence focused primarily on comparing minority male and female students to White and Asian students (Wilson-Sadberry, Winfield & Royster, 1991). This correlational study was also one of few studies partially focusing on the persistence of Black males and showed that several factors, such as a lack of family support, low socioeconomic status, and lack of engagement, negatively affected their persistence.

Researchers tend to agree that other factors such as institutional fit and campus integration can also negatively affect student persistence. An important issue for retaining college students through to degree completion is a positive campus climate which can play a major role in undergraduates’ academic and social success in college (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). The normal challenges associated with maneuvering through the college system are stressful to most students; however, Black male students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) encounter additional stresses that come from being a minority. Smedley, Myers, and
Harrell (1993) found that minority students at PWIs experienced stress on five separate factors: social climate, interracial stresses, racism and discrimination, within-group stresses, and achievement stresses. Some of the major issues identified were: (1) “not enough professors of my race”; (2) “few students of my race”; (3) “racist institutional policies and practices”; (4) “people close to me thinking I’m acting “White”; (5) and “doubts about my ability to succeed in college” (Smedley et. al, 1993). Minority students who are inadequately prepared for such non-academic challenges can experience culture shock. This finding supports Vincent Tinto’s view in his 1987 book Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition in which he states that retention is a function of the degree to which a student becomes academically and socially integrated into campus life.

As previously stated, although research has indicated that factors such as financial aid, socioeconomic status, lack of academic preparation and student engagement can contribute to the attrition of students in higher education, there remains an important gap in the current literature regarding how much of an impact these factors have on the persistence of specific populations. A 2010 study by Aud, Fox and KewelRamani documented persistent gaps between the educational attainment of White males and that of Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander males and it provides evidence of growing gaps within these racial ethnic groups. Bok (2006) stated that stagnant college completion rates and unacceptable racial-ethnic gaps in college rates coupled with external pressures for institutional accountability for student learning have intensified the need to better understand the factors that influence student success in college.

As noted above, Black male’s enrollment and persistence rates in higher education are dismal compared not only to Whites, but also notably to their female counterparts (Cross &
Slater, 2000; Jackson & Moore, 2006, 2008). Harvey (2008) noted that, out of the 73.7% of Black males who graduated from high school in 2000 compared to 79.7% for Black females, only 33.8% of Black males enrolled in college compared to 43.9% of their female counterparts. Data from the National Center for Statistics (2012) reiterated this gender disparity by noting that in the 2005-2006 academic year, Black females earned 94,341 bachelor's degrees as compared to 48,079 awarded to Black males.

These startling national statistics indicate the scope and direction of the Black male crisis in higher education. The enrollment rates for Black males in general remain low. Research shows that when they do enroll, they tend to be concentrated at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU’s), 2-year community colleges, and less-selective 4-year colleges (Baum & Payea, 2004), especially those Black men who hail from low-income families (Walpole, 2003). Although the majority of Black males enrolled in college are enrolled at HBCU’s and 2-year community colleges, more and more Black males are enrolling in predominantly White institutions.

Additional research on Black males at PWI’s continues to show that PWI’s simply have not been as effective as HBCU’s in retaining and graduating Black male college students. Once enrolled at these institutions, Black males face additional challenges, such as feelings of isolation and exposure to a racist campus climate, which continue to negatively impact their engagement and ultimately their persistence. These additional challenges often make it less likely that they will become academically and socially integrated into college life, which in turn increases the chances of them dropping out (Tinto, 1993). Predominantly White institutions need to work more towards creating an environment of inclusiveness for all Black students and Black males in particular.
One of the factors that serve as a primary focus of this research is student engagement. It is well established in higher education literature and in decades of research by Astin (1993) that student engagement is an integral part of a quality education and that a correlation between student engagement and academic success does exist. Much of Astin’s research centered on the impact of student involvement on student outcomes in college. His essential assertion is that students must be actively engaged in their surroundings in order to learn and grow in college (Evans, Forney, & Guido-Dibrito, 1998). For Black males at predominantly White institutions, it is even more critical that they become engaged in an attempt to not only integrate into the college community but also in an effort to combat obstacles such as negative stereotypes and feelings of marginalization.

**Purpose of the Study**

Current student engagement literature highlighted key activities on campus that lead to desired student outcomes, such as increased test scores, self-reported student learning, improved grades, and higher persistence rates (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of student engagement on the academic success of first-year Black males at a predominantly White institution. It is important to focus greater attention on Black males because there is a growing gap in their persistence in higher education. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), the postsecondary degree attainment at the Bachelor’s level for Black men was 34.1% as compared to 65.9% for Black women. This finding means that the rate of persistence and degree attainment for Black males is lowest among both sexes and across all racial/ethnic groups in higher education.

The declining numbers nationally of Black males attending and graduating from college are distressing not only because of the immediate implications for the men themselves, but also
because of long-term economic, social, and political consequences for society which can be
linked to the premise of human capital theory. The idea behind this is that the more access
individuals have to education, the more likely they are to become productive, taxpaying citizens
in society. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between student
engagement and the academic success among Black males at a predominantly White institution.

**Research Question**

Research question guiding this proposed study:

Is there a significant relationship between student engagement and GPA among first-year
Black male college students at a predominantly White institution?

**Research Hypothesis**

Research hypothesis for this study:

There will be a significant relationship between student engagement and GPA among
first-year Black male college students.

Researchers such as Astin (1984) and Tinto (1993) posited a positive correlation between
student engagement and academic performance. Additionally a positive relationship between
student engagement and desirable learning outcomes, such as critical thinking and high grades,
was found by Kuh (2001). found a positive relationship between student engagement and
desirable learning outcomes such as critical thinking and high grades. The literature shows that
there are certain pre-college preparations and student background characteristics that can
influence student academic performance. This study attempts to expand on the limited research
regarding how student engagement impacts the academic performance of first-year Black male
college students at a predominantly White institution.

A number of studies demonstrated a relationship between background
characteristics and student engagement (Astin & Oseguera, 2005; American College Testing,
Inc., 2005). These same studies have shown a relationship between student background characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, financial aid status, high school GPA, SAT scores, and parent’s educational level) and college academic achievement or GPA.

**Conceptual Framework**

![Conceptual Framework Diagram]

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

The model above is a visual representation of the relationships among the variables of student background characteristics, student engagement and Spring semester GPA. The framework infers that college students’ GPA is impacted by levels of student engagement and also student background characteristics.

**Definition of Terms**

*Academic Success*: For purposes of this study, academic success refers to academic performance (GPA).

*Academic performance*: Grade point average (GPA) is the standard measure for students’ academic performance.
Gender: Self-reported data was provided to the university during the admissions process that allowed students to choose from two categories: male and female. The reference group for this study is male.

Race/ethnicity: There is a focus on two categories as part of this study: Black and White as identified from self-reporting upon admission to the university, however, Hispanic is also used.

High School GPA: This GPA was derived from admissions student records provided to the Institutional Research office.

ACT/SAT scores: The SAT score is a standardized test score used as an indicator of academic readiness for college. ACT scores were converted during data analysis to SAT scores for consistency by using the College Board SAT-ACT Concordance Table.

Parent’s educational level: Self-reported data to the NSSE question, “What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) completed?” is used for this variable.

Students’ financial aid status: Students who receive any financial assistance in the form of any type of scholarship, student loans and federal work-study are considered a financial aid recipient as compared to students who receive no financial assistance and use personal means to finance their education.

Engagement: Refers to the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contributes directly to desired outcomes. In this study, a summative scale of 19 NSSE items measuring student interaction with faculty, their experiences with diverse others, and their involvement in opportunities for active and collaborative learning is used to determine engagement.

Spring GPA: refers to students cumulative GPA in the Spring semester of their first year.
Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

This study involved several assumptions about the respondents and the survey responses. The National Survey on Student Engagement is primarily a self-report survey, therefore, the assumption is that students answered honestly and were trustworthy in their responses. Further, because a portion of the data vital to the survey (e.g., GPA, parent educational level) was provided by the Institutional Research Office, it is an assumption of the study that the records provided were accurate and complete.

The study also has limitations which are researcher imposed from the onset. This study is limited to first-time, full-time, first-year students who enrolled in the fall semester of 2004, 2007 and 2010 at a large, public, predominantly White research institution in the Southeast. Another limitation to take into account is that the results are from NSSE administrations across three different years and does not measure all the relevant aspects of engagement since this study uses selected items from the survey. The study also has delimitations in that it includes only first-time, full-time, first-year undergraduate students at one particular institution.

Significance of Study

This study has important implications for policy and practice in that the findings may illuminate key factors negatively impacting not only Black students in general, but specifically Black male student academic success. Important implications for policy might include formal mentoring programs, as well as advising for Black males at predominantly White institutions and more opportunities for other faculty-student interactions in formal settings. Implications for practice might include more support for Black male student organizations, assuming institutional responsibility for Black male student engagement and addressing toxic campus racial climates.
Furthermore, this study may provide support for the implementation of formalized programs for Black male students attending PWI’s. Such programs may increase persistence and graduation rates of Black students, specifically Black males, attending PWI’s. There are a number of programs that have been in existence over the past four decades that seek to expand college enrollment for low-income, minority students. Programs such as Upward Bound and the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) have supported thousands of students but, because of their mandates, they cannot target any specific racial group. Although there are mixed reviews in the research about the effectiveness of programs like these on persistence and completion, Gandara (2001) concluded that programs targeting a specific population were most effective. Therefore, a formal program dedicated to helping Black males succeed at PWI’s could be a step in the right direction.

Summary

Black students do not persist at comparable rates to their White counterparts. When further broken down into specific groups, Black males have even lower persistence rates as compared to their counterparts, e.g. Black women. Smedley, Myers, and Harrell (1993) found that Black males at predominantly White institutions experience additional stresses outside of the normal challenges associated with new students maneuvering through the college system. These stresses come directly from being a minority student on a majority campus. A number of other factors such as financial aid, socioeconomic status, lack of academic preparation and student engagement also contribute to the attrition of students in higher education institutions.

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Chapter one outlines an introduction to the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions and research hypotheses, the significance of the study and also the assumptions and limitations inherent in the study. Chapter
two is a literature review focusing on theoretical models, the concepts of student engagement, and academic performance of college students in general and also Black males in their first year of college. Chapter three outlines the methodology used to conduct this study, including definitions of terms and statistical procedures used to gather and analyze the data. Chapter four provides a listing of the results and findings based on the statistical analyses and chapter five will be a summary of the study, implications of the findings and recommendations for institutions and policymakers.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study seeks to address an existing gap in the research regarding the relationship between student engagement and student academic performance. The focus of the study is on Black male first-year college students at a predominantly White public four-year institution in the Southeast.

This chapter provides an overview of literature on student engagement, student academic performance, and first-year college students. Furthermore, this chapter includes a review of theoretical models of student engagement as well as studies focusing on the impact of student engagement on student academic performance. A review of research on gender differences as well as race/ethnicity differences as it pertains to student engagement is also included.

Theoretical Models

A number of theories and models over decades of research have been used to study the impact of engagement on the persistence and academic performance of first-year college students and college students in general. The following section provides an overview of the theories and models of student engagement that guide and informs this study.

Alexander Astin’s I-E-O Model and Theory of Involvement

Alexander Astin’s 1984 theory emerged over the last several decades to explain the relationship between student retention and engagement. Astin studied the impact of student involvement on student outcomes in college, and believed that students must actively engage with their surroundings in order to learn and grow in college (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Astin (1984) defined involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 297).
Astin’s theory also found that students learn more effectively when they are involved in both the social and academic aspects of college life rather than just the academic aspects. An involved student can be defined as a student who devotes considerable energy to academics, spends time on campus outside of their scheduled classes, participates in student clubs and organizations, and also has interaction often with faculty (Astin, 1984). Astin’s (1984) theory posited that the student plays an integral role in determining his or her own degree of involvement in college classes, extracurricular activities and social activities. This theory is grounded in five basic ideas:

1. Involvement is the investment of both physical and psychological energy in a variety of objects.
2. Involvement occurs on a continuum.
3. Involvement has qualitative and quantitative features.
4. The amount of personal development and learning is proportional to the quantity and quality of student development.
5. Academic performance is correlated with student involvement.

![Astin's I-E-O Model](image)

*Figure 2: Alexander Astin’s I-E-O Model (Astin, 1993)*
Alexander Astin’s I-E-O model includes information on student inputs (I), the educational environment (E), and also the student output or student outcomes (O) (Astin, 1993). This I-E-O model was developed as a guiding framework for assessment in higher education and as a more accurate assessment of environmental impact on student outcomes, controlling for input differences (Astin, 1993).

According to Astin (1993), student input "refers to those personal qualities the student brings initially to the education program (including the student's initial level of developed talent at the time of entry)" (p. 18). Examples of student inputs include demographic characteristics, political orientation, behavior pattern, financial status, educational background and reason for attending college (Astin, 1993). Inclusion of input data when using the I-E-O model is imperative because inputs directly influence both the environment and outputs, thus having a “double” influence on outputs—one that is direct and one that indirectly influences through environment. Input data such as gender, age, ethnic background, ability, and socioeconomic level also can be used to examine influences that student inputs have on the environment.

Input data such as gender, age, ethnic background, ability, and socioeconomic level also can be used to examine influences that student input has on the environment. Environment, according to Astin (1993) "refers to the student's actual experiences during the educational program" (p. 18). Environment includes educational experiences, practices, programs, or interventions that can have an impact on the student, and therefore the outcomes measured. Additionally, some environmental factors may be antecedents (e.g., exposure to institution policies may occur before joining a college organization) and may include the program, personnel, curricula, instructor, institutional climate, courses, teaching style, extra-curricular activities and organizational affiliation (Astin, 1993). For Black male students at predominately
White institutions in particular, the environmental aspect can be very impactful because it could ultimately determine their success or failure.

Student output "refer to the student’s characteristics after exposure to the environment" (Aston, 1993, p. 7). Outputs are outcome variables that may include posttests, consequences, or end results. Outcome measures also include indicators such as GPA, course performance, exam scores, degree completion, and overall course satisfaction.

Astin further states that it is both the quality and quantity of the student's involvement that will influence the amount of student learning and development (Astin, 1984, p.297). The most important institutional resource, therefore, is student time: the extent to which students can be involved in the educational development is tempered by how involved they are with family friends, jobs, and other outside activities (p.301).

Several practical applications can result from this theory, but Astin stated that the most important to teaching is that instructors are encouraged to take the focus off the course content and their own technique and put it on their students. Astin stated that the intended end of institutional and pedagogical practices is to achieve maximum student involvement and learning; to do that instructors cannot focus solely on technique but must also be aware of how motivated students are and how much time and energy they are devoting to the learning process (p.305).

According to Astin, his theory of involvement has an advantage over traditional pedagogical approaches because it focuses on the motivation and behavior of the student. Therefore all institutional policies and practices can be judged by the degree of involvement they foster in students. Also, all faculty; from instructors to counselors, can work with the same goal in mind, unifying their energies into making the students more involved in the college environment and therefore better learners (p.307). As it pertains to Black males, this means that
institutions need to review their policies and practices to ensure that they are not negatively impacting Black males. The policies and practices need to not only support Black males, but also encourage their involvement within the institution.

**Tinto’s Integration Theory**

Tinto’s (1993) integration theory suggested that there are two types of integration that are essential to student persistence: academic and social. He further maintained that students who are integrated and involved, who feel satisfied with the academic and social systems and congruent with the mainstream of campus life are more likely to persist. He defined integration as the extent to which the 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 in subgroups of it (p. 118). *Social integration*, according to Tinto, can include peer interactions, participation in extra-curricular activities and also everyday interactions. On the other hand, *academic integration* is “the full range of individual experiences which occur in the formal and informal domains of…the academic systems of the university” (p.118). Examples of academic integration for students include required academic activities such as class attendance and non-required academic activities such as joining a club or student organization or attending a lecture series.

Tinto (1993) argued that students only achieve true integration into the college community through social and intellectual interactions with other students. As student integration increases, students’ commitments to both their personal goals and to the institution are strengthened. On the other hand, negative interactions and experiences tend to impede integration and distance the individual from the academic and social communities of the institution. As a result, students may reduce their commitments to both goals and the institution
which promotes the individual’s marginality and ultimate withdrawal (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 56.)

Tinto’s theory further explains the withdrawal decision by using an adaptation of Durkheim’s (1951) theory of suicide to show the similarities between the reasons behind suicide and the process of departure. Durkheim’s theory infers that suicides are most likely to occur when individuals are unsuccessful in integrating into their communities. Tinto (1987) later applied this theory to student attrition and theorized that “some type of social or intellectual membership in at least one college community is a minimum condition for continued persistence” (p.158). This can be especially true for Black males at a predominantly White institution who may be feeling marginalized and isolated which can come from being a minority on a majority campus and not feeling like they have a community that they belong to.

**Schlossberg’s Theory**

Related to the notion of individuals’ inability to integrate into their communities is Nancy Schlossberg’s (1989) theory of mattering versus marginality. She defined marginality as “a sense of not fitting in” and mattering as "beliefs people have, whether right or wrong, that they matter to someone else, that they are the object of someone else's attention, and that others care about them and appreciate them" (p. 9). Schlossberg investigated four aspects of mattering, and then added a fifth one on her own:

1. Attention: the feeling that one is noticed
2. Importance: the belief that one is cared about
3. Ego extension: the feeling that someone else will be proud of what one does or will sympathize with one's failures
4. Dependence: the feeling of being needed
5. Appreciation: feeling that one's efforts are appreciated by others
Her theory emphasizes that students who feel like they matter to someone; faculty, staff, or peer, the more invested they become in the community. Schlossberg further stressed that institutions of higher education need to help individuals feel like they matter. She saw this goal as a precursor to students becoming involved in activities and academic programs that would facilitate development and learning. The reason that this is significant for Black males is because many Black males at predominately White institutions have expressed feeling marginalized as a minority on campus. As a new student on any campus, students can feel marginalized, but the absence of a large group that they can identify with can make it more difficult for Black students to integrate into the university community on a predominantly White campus.

The creation of environments that clearly indicate to all students that they matter will urge them to be more involved. Such involvement should lead to the accomplishment of the goals with which Astin (1984) challenged higher education. Institutions that focus on mattering and greater student involvement will be more successful in creating campuses where students are motivated to learn, where their retention is high, and ultimately, where their institutional loyalty for the short- and long-term future is ensured (Schlossberg, 1989).

**Chickering & Gamson’s Seven Principles**

The "seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education," originally framed by Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson in 1986, is a concise summary of decades of educational research findings about the kinds of teaching/learning activities most likely to improve learning outcomes. Based on these principles, the most important factor in student involvement is student-faculty interaction because this interaction can help enhance students’ institutional
commitment. Peer interactions; on the other hand, can enhance student learning outcomes through collaboration which is a form of active learning.

These principles are part of a sound body of literature that has established robust correlations between student involvement in a subset of ‘educationally purposive activities’, and positive outcomes of student success and development, including satisfaction, persistence, academic achievement, and social engagement (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

The Seven Principles of Good Practice include:

1. Faculty-student interaction is encouraged. Chickering and Gamson regard this principle as the most important factor in student involvement and motivation. Student-faculty interaction enhances a student’s intellectual commitment and “encourages them to think about their own values and future plans” (p.5).

2. Encourages cooperation among students. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one’s own ideas and responding to others’ reactions improves thinking and deepens understanding.

3. Encourages active learning. Active learning refers to taking what you hear during instruction and being able to talk about it, write about it and apply it to daily life.

4. Encourages giving prompt feedback. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to assess their competence and existing knowledge.

5. Emphasizes time on task. Learning to use one’s time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management.

6. Communicates high expectations. Establishing and communicating high expectations provides students with goals to strive for.
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning. It is important to recognize that students bring different talents and styles of learning to college.

The seven principles are “intended as guidelines for faculty members, students, and administrators – with support from state agencies and trustees – to improve teaching and learning” (p. 3). While each principle can stand alone on its own, when all are present, they employ six powerful forces of education: activity, cooperation, diversity, expectations, interaction, and responsibility.

This theory is significant to this study because it holds student-faculty interaction as the most important factor in student involvement because this type of interaction can enhance students’ institutional commitment and also help them manage difficult situations. In a study of Black students attending PWIs, Allen (1992) found perceived levels of faculty encouragement had a greater influence on achievement than the racial composition of the institution.

**Student Engagement**

Student engagement can be characterized as participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the classroom, which leads to a range of measurable outcomes. More specifically, according to Hu and Kuh (2002), student engagement is defined as “the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contributes directly to desired outcomes” (p. 555). In their operational definition, Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges and Hayek (2007) also noted:

Student engagement represents two critical features. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities…The second component of student engagement is how the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum, other learning opportunities, and support services to induce
students to participate in activities that lead to the experiences and desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, learning and graduation (p. 44).

**Student-Faculty Interaction**

The literature cites several academic outcomes positively associated with frequency of mostly informal faculty contact, including college persistence (Tinto, 1993), freshman-to-sophomore persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), intellectual development: deeper learning, critical thinking skills development, and development of human/civic values (Tinto, 1993), and educational aspirations (Pascarella, 1985).

As stated previously, Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) seven principles hold student-faculty interaction as one of the most important, if not the most important, indicator of student engagement in college. They further state that student-faculty interaction is the most important factor in student involvement and motivation. Pascarella and Terenzini (1981) found that students with frequent interactions with faculty members often exhibited better academic performance than their pre-enrollment characteristics, like high schools GPA and SAT scored, predicted. Other research findings by Pascarella and Terenzini (1981) supports previous findings on the impact of faculty-student interaction and academic performance in that it shows the positive influence faculty members can have on first-year students.

Several other researchers have shown that interaction between faculty and students influence several student outcomes such as academic skill development, academic and social integration, retention and student satisfaction (Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). Sax, Bryant, and Harper (2005) found that student-faculty interactions are related to a wide range of college outcomes such as GPA and satisfaction but that men and women report different results.
Frequent faculty interactions have empirically proven to benefit all students; however, faculty expectations (as perceived by the student) have a specifically strong positive influence on the academic outcomes of Black students. In a comparative study of Black students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities and PWIs, Allen (1992) found perceived levels of faculty encouragement had a greater influence on achievement than the racial composition of the institution. Thus, the quality and type of faculty relationships, which are generally rated better by students attending HBCUs (Allen, 1992), may have been an underlying reason for Black males reporting higher institutional support at the historically Black colleges involved in the Allen study.

Providing more evidence for this line of inquiry, Black students who attended PWIs in the study reported lower college grades and less favorable relations with faculty despite entering with higher high school rankings. These two results provide support for the literature that found positive relationships with faculty tend to facilitate healthy social and personal development among Black college students. According to Cuyjet (1997), this positive social adjustment is one of the best determinants of good academic performance.

The low quality of faculty-student interactions for Black undergraduate students may be rooted in the low expectations by faculty toward these students. According to Jones (2001), “Low expectations by White faculty based on presumptions of lack of preparation, lack of ability, and prior disadvantage can block communication with students of color” (p. 14). Tinto (1993) agreed that the level of formal and informal intellectual engagement between student and faculty may be inhibited by the perceived level of academic preparedness of the student, regardless of the individual’s true level of preparation.
Increased student-faculty interaction has been shown to have a broader impact on students’ general ways of thinking, methods of problem solving, and interest in various life goals (Pascarella, 1980). Increasing interaction is also one way in which institutions, in an era of shrinking resources and declining student demand, might increase student satisfaction with specific programs, thereby helping to attract and retain highly qualified and motivated individuals. Although many institutions may be making concerted efforts to increase student-faculty contact, much of this is being done without specific knowledge of the relationships between the nature and frequency of interaction and various student outcomes.

**Interpersonal Interactions**

While student-faculty interactions can have an impact on college student outcomes, student relationships can also have a major impact on college student outcomes. Students’ choice in friends and who they spend time with is important to what they do in college and how they feel about their experiences (Kuh 1993). "A large part of the impact of college is determined by the extent and content of one’s interactions with major agents of socialization on campus, namely, faculty members and student peers" (Pascarella & Terenzini 1991, p. 620). In fact, according to Astin (1993), peers are "the single most potent source of influence," affecting virtually every aspect of development—cognitive, affective, psychological, and behavioral (p. 398). Indeed, the differences in the experiences of students who commute to college and live in campus residences are likely to be indirect (as contrasted with direct) influences through the interactions that students have with faculty, staff, and peers.

Student interaction with peers can positively influence overall academic development, knowledge acquisition, analytical and problem-solving skills, and self-esteem (Kuh, 1995).
Peer interactions are also of particular importance with regard to social integration because students are more likely to stay in school when they feel comfortable and connected to other students with similar interests and aspirations (social integration) (Bean 1980; Spady 1970; Tinto 1975, 1987). For Black males at a predominantly White institution, these peer interactions with other students is critical to their success, but even more critical is for them to have interaction with other Black males who have similar interests and aspirations.

**Active and Collaborative Learning**

According to Chickering and Gamson (1987), active learning is when students can articulate what they are learning to others, relate it to past experiences, and also apply what they have learned to their daily lives. It serves as one of the five benchmarks for the NSSE and also as another important component of student engagement. Students who frequently encounter active learning in their courses perceive themselves gaining new knowledge and understanding from their course work that they can integrate with existing knowledge. As a consequence, such students may be more likely to view their collegiate experiences as rewarding on a personal level. As a result of this new view, students may invest the psychological energy needed to become more involved in social communities in campus and university life (Milem & Berger, 1997). Active learning may directly influence social integration and indirectly affect subsequent institutional commitment and student departure decisions (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000).

According to Kuh (2003), active learning in higher education emphasizes different methods of collaboration, such as group projects and peer-to-peer tutoring, as key elements of intellectual development. On the other hand, collaborative learning is a key type of active learning in college because it places an emphasis on students interacting and working together in small groups toward a common goal. The five components of collaborative learning as defined
by Johnson et. al (1998) are: positive interdependence; face-to-face promotive interaction; individual and group accountability, a critical concept and practice for learning teams to be successful; and, appropriate use and teaching of social skills and group processing. Johnson et. al (1998) also suggested that students who participate in collaborative learning achieve at higher levels of thought and retain information longer than students who work quietly as individuals.

**Academic Performance**

There is substantial evidence that the most powerful predictor of persistence into the sophomore year is the first-year students’ prior academic achievement, including high school grades (Allen, 1999; Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) and SAT scores (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Grade Point Average (GPA) has been the most commonly used measure of academic achievement and success. Consistent findings across many studies, such as the one conducted by Cejda & Rewey (1998) show significant correlations between academic persistence and GPA. For both minority and non-minority students in the study, first-year college GPA, a measure of initial academic success has been found to be a statistically significant predictor of retention. Murtaugh et al., (1999) found that for both groups, this factor exerted the largest direct effect on student retention.

Numerous factors such as academic preparedness and student background characteristics can have an impact on a student’s academic achievement. Other studies have also proposed that factors such as student’s socioeconomic background, financial aid status, and family background can influence their academic achievement (Kuh & Huh, 2001). For Black males, these factors can have even more of an impact on their academic achievement because these factors are often in addition to some of the other stressors and obstacles that they are already facing by being a minority on a predominantly White campus.
Student Persistence

For purposes of this study, persistence is defined by the re-enrollment of a student in the Spring following their freshman year Fall semester. Persistence during the first year is important to scholars and practitioners, since approximately three-fourths of all dropouts leave some time during the first year (Tinto, 1987). A study by Braxton (2000) focusing on student departure from college reveal a number of factors that impact why students leave, including family problems, lack of financial assistance, feelings of isolation, separation issues, change in career plans and poor grades.

Many researchers who have studied student departure have noted that the reasons that cause students to depart in the first year of college are qualitatively different from those reasons that cause them to leave in the latter years of college. Research by Kuh, Kinzie, and Buckley (2006) found that students, regardless of their race and gender, struggle academically if they enter college with a number of at-risk background characteristics. The characteristics include first-generation status, under-preparedness, and ethnic minorities attending predominantly White institutions. Students who leave in the latter years generally leave because of financial issues or personal problems.

Tinto’s 1975 research verifies the significant importance of the students’ first year of college in terms of retention and longer term persistence. This is why student success during the first year is of great importance to university officials. Based on previous research by Levitz and Noel (1989), about one-third of students entering college on a full-time basis will not be attending that institution one year later. Tinto (1985) further stated that nearly half of the students entering college leave before graduating, with incoming, first-year students being the most likely to drop out. Furthermore, Berkner et al. (2002) found that only 51% of students who
enrolled at four year institutions in the 1995-96 school years completed bachelor's degrees within six years at the institutions at which they started. According to College Board (2012), in 2008, this number had only increased to 57.7%.

Tinto’s (1975, 1993) model of student departure, an interactionalist approach, is probably the most known in the field of higher education, however, his approach has garnered praise and criticism over the years. Although Tinto’s (1975) model admittedly does not take into account other theoretical perspectives, it is still the bar by which other models are measured. In discussing his longitudinal model, Tinto (1993) indicated:

Broadly understood, it argues that individual departure from institutions can be viewed as arising out of a longitudinal process of interactions between an individual with given attributes, skills, financial resources, prior educational experiences, and dispositions (intentions and commitments) and other members of the academic and social systems of the institution. The individual’s experience in those systems, as indicated by his/her intellectual (academic) and social (personal) integration, continually modifies his or her intentions and commitments. Positive experiences - that is, integrative ones - reinforce persistence through their impact upon heightened intentions and commitments both to the goal of college completion and to the institution in which the person finds him/herself (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, and Hengstler (1992). Negative or malintegrative experiences serve to weaken intentions and commitments, especially commitment to the institution, and thereby enhance the likelihood of leaving (p. 118).

While students’ integration in their institutions academic systems contributes to student persistence, academic performance continues to be highly correlated to student retention by various studies. Despite the limitations and problems in using academic performance or grades
more specifically, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that college grades are probably the best predictor of student persistence, degree completion, and graduate school enrollment. Good grades in the first year are especially important to subsequent academic success and degree completion, as strong academic achievement seems to reduce the chances of a student’s stopping out and increases the probability of timely degree completion. For example, Adelman (1999) found that both first-year grades and trends in subsequent grades predicted bachelor’s degree completion beyond the effects of other variables, including students’ precollege characteristics, institutional selectivity, financial aid, hours worked, and selected college experience variables.

Another major indicator of student persistence is student enrollment status. In general, research supports that notion that first-year students enrolled full-time are more likely to persist than part-time students. This stands true for persistence from year to year as well as persisting to graduation.

**Student Characteristics**

Several research studies have utilized student background characteristics, such as gender and race/ethnicity as variables to predict college student performance (Astin, 1993; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper, 2000). As with the Astin (1985), Tinto (1975) and Pascarella (1985) models upon which it was based, Terenzini and Reason’s model (2005) begins with an understanding that students enter postsecondary institutions with an array of precollege background characteristics; academic preparation and experiences; and social and personal dispositions and experiences. Students vary in their sociodemographic traits (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, age, parents’ education, family income), their academic preparation and performance (e.g., the nature and quality of their secondary school curriculum, and their academic achievements in the secondary school setting), their personal and social experiences (e.g., involvement in co-curricular and out-of-class...
activities), and their dispositions (e.g., personal, academic, and occupational goals; achievement motivation, and readiness to change). These differences affect the likelihood a student will persist through college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and have been a part of our understanding of student retention for several decades (Tinto, 1975). Tinto’s model (1975) also asserted that students come to college with a range of background characteristics and goal commitments which influence how they will perform in college and how they will interact with it, and subsequently become integrated. These characteristics include socioeconomic status, parent’s educational level, gender and ethnicity of the student (Pascarella, Smart, & Stoecker, 1989).

This is congruent with Astin’s (1993) I-E-O model that posits that input data is imperative because inputs directly influence both the environment and outputs, thus having a “double” influence on outputs—one that is direct and one that indirectly influences through environment.

**Socioeconomic Status**

There are a number of indicators that can be linked to student persistence and academic success. Socioeconomic status (SES) has been examined in many research studies that look at student background characteristics as variables to predict college students’ performance (Astin, 1993, Ting & Robinson, 1998). Students from low socioeconomic families have been part of American higher education since its earliest days and are still underrepresented in higher education, particularly in four-year institutions (Hearn, 1984). This group of students is widely acknowledged as educationally disadvantaged; however, they have received scant attention from researchers, in spite of calls for such research (Berger, 2000; Tinto, 1987, 1993). This lack of attention is due, in part, to a traditional higher education research focus on mainstream students (Paulsen & St. John, 2002). Although low SES students have received limited attention, research focusing on the experiences of students from different racial and ethnic groups, as well as those
of different genders, has contributed substantially to the higher education research literature. These groups have concerned scholars because such students have been historically underrepresented and because of persisting concerns regarding equitable access to and outcomes of postsecondary education.

Students from low SES backgrounds are similarly underrepresented and comparable equity issues exist for this group of students. Researchers have found that this particular group of students is less likely to attend college, is more likely to attend less selective institutions when they do enroll, and has unique college choice processes as a result of low SES status (Astin, 1975, 1993; Hearn, 1984; Tinto, 1987, 1993). Despite these findings and calls for research on social class differences, higher education scholars often control for social class differences rather than focusing on how those differences may shape students' experiences and outcomes. Understanding such differences will not only inform higher education research, as has other recent research on nontraditional students, but it will also inform higher education policy which could have a major impact on this group of students.

The focal point of public policy on students from low SES backgrounds can be traced back to the end of World War II and the beginning of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, known informally as the G.I. Bill. This bill served as an entitlement program for former soldiers and included financial assistance for higher education. Substantial public funding was directed toward low SES students in an effort to ensure access to and choice among educational institutions. Currently, however, threats to financial aid availability may be closing off access for and reducing the retention of low SES students. With the recent mandated federal increase in student loan rates, this may be truer now than it has been in the past. This concern is driving the need for policymakers to refocus their attention on this specific population. While it is believed
that SES can have a major impact on student academic success, SES is not a variable in this study. It is included to indicate one of the many factors that can negatively impact the academic success of Black males.

**Parents Educational Level**

Another student background characteristic that may have an impact on student persistence is parents’ educational level. There have been a number of studies that have examined the differences between students whose parents had earned college degrees and first-generation college students or those who parents did not earn a college degree. For example, Horn and Bobbitt (2000) found that students whose parents had attained no more than a high school diploma were least likely to aspire to a bachelor’s degree. According to Brooks-Terry (1988), many parents of first-generation college students don’t have a vast knowledge of the higher education system and how it operates and struggle to advise their students on some of the basic necessities such as the college admissions process. Parents’ educational level has also been shown to directly influence the type of institution students attend and to have a positive impact on college student persistence, irrespective of high academic achievement and ability (Karen, 2002).

Research by Warburton, Bugarin and Nunez (2001) found that first-generation college students were more likely than their peers, whose parents possessed a bachelor’s degree, to leave college and not persist to the following semester. Terenzini et al. (1996) also found that degree completion rates for first-generation students are lower than their counterparts whose parents graduated with at least a bachelor’s degree. Researchers such as these continue to show the importance and impact that parental level of education can have on the academic success of students.
Gender

Research is mixed regarding the influence of a student’s gender on retention in higher education. Astin (1975) and Tinto (1987) found that gender was significantly related to student retention. Similarly, Peltier (1999) and Astin (1993) have reported relatively consistent findings that gender is predictive of persistence, with women more likely to persist in college than men. These studies also show that women earn better grades than their male counterparts.

In a study conducted by St. John et al. (2001), which examined three progressive inclusive regression models, gender did not play an important role. St. John et al. (2001) also determined that gender was not significant in the model that included only variables related to gender, age, race, financial dependency on parents, family income, and SAT/Merit-Index. However, the study’s findings did illustrate that gender was significant in the second model, which added variables related to first semester college GPA, but failed to remain significant when institutional variables such as type of institution, degree program, and housing type were added.

The type of interaction found by St. John et al. (2001) is similar to the findings of other studies. For instance, Murtaugh, Burns, and Schuster (1999) and Leppel (2002) found relationships between student gender and race that influenced retention. In a national study of 5,384 undergraduate students, Leppel (2002) also explicated the differential effects of such variables as marital status and age on the persistence of male and female students. These findings support the assertion by Pascarella and Terenzini (1998) that the interaction effects of variables have increased in importance as diversity within higher education grows. This is of particular importance to this study because a goal is to determine if certain factors, like gender, impact persistence differently.
Ethnicity

According to LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs (2002), many Black male students enter college disadvantaged in three ways: socially, educationally, and economically. Addressing these disadvantages and integrating them into the social and academic culture of the institution can greatly increase their chances of academic success and persistence.

A number of factors such as involvement and student engagement can impact student success. To thoroughly probe the causes and consequences of student success in college, the interactions among these factors must be considered for different groups of students defined by gender, race and ethnicity, and other characteristics that may be linked to their performance (Allen, 1999; Gaither, 2005). The latter is especially important because the nature of the undergraduate experience of historically underserved students can differ markedly from that of the White majority in predominantly White institutions (Allen, 1999).

For example, some studies show that race is a significant predictor of persistence (Astin, 1997; Murtaugh et al., 1999). Allen (1999) found that different variables predicted persistence of students of color compared with White students. Student’s high school rank, first-year college GPA, and a self-reported measure of desire to complete college accounted for 68% of the variance in the retention of minority students from the first to second year of college. For non-minority students, however, high school rank, first-year college GPA, and parental education were significant, accounting for 38% of the variance in retention. Some research indicated that students of color perceive the campus environment to be less supportive than their White peers (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996) and are less likely to persist to graduation (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995).
More recent studies using multivariate analytical models suggested that the impact of race or ethnicity on persistence is less consistent (Murtaugh et al., 1999; St. John et al., 2001), especially when taking into account socioeconomic status and pre-college experiences (Peltier et al., 1999). Even so, Asian American and White students are more likely to persist in college, while other racial groups were less likely to persist (Astin, 1997; Murtaugh et al., 1999; Peltier et al., 1999).

**Black Males**

While research has shown that Blacks in general have been the least supported in many social institutions, Black males have been among the most unsupported groups of underrepresented, ethnic minorities in the context of education. Researchers also assert that Black males experience the poorest educational outcomes compared to other major demographic groups in the United States (Levin et al. 2007; Jackson & Moore, 2008). Although the number of Black entering higher education increased substantially during the 1960’s, and again during the 1990’s, Black males continue to lag behind their female and White male counterparts with respect to college participation, retention, and degree completion (Noguera, 2003).

According to Harper (2006) and Strayhorn (2008), Black men account for 4.3% of the total enrollment at four-year higher education institutions in the U.S., the same rate as it was in 1976. Of the Black men enrolling in college, many encounter significant challenges attaining their degrees (Harper, 2006). These challenges include underpreparedness, feelings of isolation and exposure to a racist campus climate. Research has shown that —“more than two thirds (67.6%) of black men who start college do not persist to graduation within six years...” (Harper, 2006, p. vii). The issues of college enrollment and persistence to completion for Blacks have
caused major concern among stakeholders in higher education, particularly after the turn of the 21st century (Jackson & Moore, 2006; 2008).

**Black Male Programs**

Another factor that may impact student persistence and student academic success is mentoring. Whether it be peer-to-peer, faculty-student or with a professional staff member, this style of student engagement can be used as a strategy to help students more fully reach their potential. Relating back to Schlossberg’s theory, the individual attention, guidance, encouragement and support would likely make a students’ collegiate experience more meaningful which would make them more likely to persist and achieve academically.

While mentoring has been shown to have a positive impact on students regardless of race and gender, we know from the research that it can have an even greater impact on Black males in higher education. The literature suggests that it is often difficult to integrate Black men into campus life; therefore, actively involving them in activities such as a formal mentoring process or other activities targeted at the success of Black males is critical (O’Brien, 1988; Hughes, 1987). Research on mentoring in Black male college students in higher education is somewhat limited, but there have been some studies conducted exclusively on programs that target Black students.

For example, a study by Frierson, Hargrove, and Lewis (1994) examined the perceptions and attitudes of 18 undergraduate Black male and female students who participated in a nine week summer research mentoring program. The focus of the study was to address two questions specific to Black undergraduates who participated in the program. The two questions were:

1. What type of student-faculty relationships are expected for those students participating in formal programs?
2. What associated effect(s) does faculty race or gender have on the perceptions and attitudes of the Black students participating in “mentoring” programs?

The results of the interviews from the participants indicated that those with Black mentors and those with women mentors of any race had more positive perceptions and attitudes toward research and the research environment than those who had White male mentors.

There are numerous examples of viable and successful collegiate mentoring programs specifically for Black students and since the factors that affect Black males are different from those of Black females, a number of these programs tend to focus on mentoring Black males only. Many campuses don’t have the resources or funding to support mentoring programs that are exclusive to Black males, however, several such established programs are presented here.

**The Black Man’s Think Tank** is a program for Black males focused on mentoring that was established at the University of Cincinnati. It was developed in 1983 by Eric Abercrumbie, then the Director of the African Cultural and Research Center. It was established to provide Black male academicians an arena where they could discuss issues that confront Black male students in higher education. An outcome of these discussions was the development of a mentoring and leadership program which matched undergraduate Black male students with Black male professional staff.

**The Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB)** is another well-known program that was founded in 1990 by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe at Georgia Southwestern University. It was established to provide student development intervention and to support Black men enrolled at the college. One of the primary goals of SAAB is to assist Black men in developing a more complete understanding of their responsibilities as U.S. citizens and productive members of
society. Another initiative of this organization is to provide leadership development and training for the Black male participants.

The program offers educational and cultural activities to all student participants and they also offer services such as tutoring, career choice planning and counseling, professional development opportunities, community service and spiritual enrichment. All programs are designed to promote positive thinking and high self-esteem in Black men.

The Black Male Initiative program exist in name at a number of institutions, however, the original Black Male Initiative was created at Texas Southern University in 1990. It was created in an effort to encourage inner city Black youth to enter colleges and universities. The programs goals are to promote the values of education and provide workshops and other events that showcase successful role models for young Black males. This program incorporates community leaders and successful Black businessmen to inspire the students through their stories and successes and also to help them understand their capabilities and talents.

The Meyerhoff Program is a program based at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). It was created in 1988 by Freeman Hrabowski III, then the president of UMBC. The primary purpose of the program is to increase the number of Black male students who earn doctorates, which will ultimately improve the number of minority college faculty in the STEM areas. The program began admitting and offering services to Black women and other ethnic minority groups in the 1990’s, however, the primary focus remains on the issues and concerns of Black males.

The program includes a formal mentoring component, which is introduced to Black males as soon as they arrive on campus. The program aims to identify students early so that they can provide them with appropriate role models in a supportive environment and also provides an
arena where they can interact with other students who are like them. The success of this program is based on the fact that more than 90% of the Meyerhoff graduates go on to pursue advanced studies immediately, and on average, graduate with a GPA of 3.4 on a 4.0 scale (Hrabowski et al, 1998).

**The Black Male Institute** at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) is a cadre of scholars, practitioners, community members, and policy makers dedicated to improving the educational experiences and life chances of Black males. Educational settings are considered to be critical spaces for developing informed action to address Black male persistence in schooling. This program recognizes that the challenges that impact the academic success of Black males are manifold – be they economic, social, legal, or health related. As such, the BMI seeks to identify and promote practical interventions, reliable research, effective programs, best practices, and responsible policy innovations that are informed by interdisciplinary perspectives in order to improve the educational outcomes of Black males.

**The Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male** has a mission to examine and address critical issues in society that impact the quality of life for African American males throughout the lifespan. In 2002, national and local research studies were conducted about the performance of African American male students in college which led concerned administrators at The Ohio State University to implement an experimental effort to better understand and, if possible, to improve retention and graduation rates for this subpopulation of undergraduates. The resulting program, which came to be known as the **Black Male Initiative**, represented a joint effort by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (formerly the Office of Minority Affairs), the Office of Student Affairs, and interested individual members of the faculty and staff. Regular group meetings, frequent personal interaction with individual
undergraduates, invited guest speakers, and academic support services each played a role, along with information gleaned from the experience of other schools and researchers. Mr. Todd Bell gave leadership and participated actively at the individual level with this emerging program. Significant improvements in student satisfaction, performance, and retention to graduation were quantitative measures of the program’s success.

So that the campus as a whole might benefit from the lessons learned through the Black Male Initiative, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (formerly the Office of Minority Affairs), established on campus a centralized location to concentrate efforts to increase the retention and graduation rates of African American men. The establishment of this Center was approved in 2004. A critical campus location was identified and initial funding was earmarked for the operation. Upon news of his untimely passing, his colleagues determined to name the center in his honor, his widow was consulted and approved the memorial, and the Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male was opened in September 2005 in the historic Brown Hall at the center of Ohio State’s Columbus campus.

The Carolina Millennial Scholars Program is a comprehensive program at the University of North Carolina (UNC) that invites enrolled minority male students to join a cohort of scholars in a specially designed program to promote academic and professional success. In a community of brotherhood, Scholars are provided with academic and social support and are nurtured around their academic majors or interests (i.e., social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics, arts and humanities, business, communication, public health, journalism, etc.). CMSP focus on:

Success – Scholars will take part in a series of seminars and workshops aimed at providing resources and personal development during their first year at Carolina.
Networking – Scholars will meet and engage Carolina faculty, administrators, and alumni and other community leaders

Community – Scholars will meet other minority college males on campus and participate in outreach activities

The Scholar – The Carolina Millennial Scholars Program is designed to recruit, connect, and support minority college males in ways that lead to retention and graduation.

CMSP was initiated through a Department of Education grant from UNC General Administration (3MP Initiative) and is housed in UNC Diversity and Multicultural Affairs.

Summary

Existing theory and empirical evidence suggest that gender, race/ethnicity, and academic preparation play a substantial role in understanding the effects of student engagement on many important college outcomes, and researchers have encouraged increased analysis of gender and racial/ethnic-related conditional effects across many types of student-centered college outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Researchers have also demonstrated that background factors exert strong direct and indirect influences on educational outcomes (Hearn, 1991; Karen, 1991), and that individual characteristics can influence the interrelationship between inputs and related outcomes.

While the literature review points out that some student background characteristics can have an influence on academic success and persistence, there still exists limited research on the impact of student engagement on the academic success of first-year, Black male students at predominantly White institutions. This study attempts to fill the gap and expand the research on this topic.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the research methods used to address the research question. The relationship between student engagement, student academic performance, and several student characteristics including gender, ethnicity, financial aid status, parents’ educational level, high school GPA and SAT score will be examined. The chapter consists of five main sections: (1) Data Sources; (2) Data Collection; (3) Variables in the study; (4) Analytical Methods; and a (5) Summary.

Data Sources

Data for this proposed study will be provided primarily from two sources. The first source will be the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) administered in the Spring semesters of 2005, 2008 and 2011 conducted at a large, predominantly White, Research I, public institution located in the Southeastern United States. NSSE is an annual student survey that collects information about student participation in university-sponsored programs and activities. Although the NSSE is an annual survey, the institution represented in this study only conducts the administration of the survey every 3 years, with the inaugural year in 2005. The survey results provide an estimate of how undergraduate students spend their time and what they gain from attending the college-sponsored activities. The second source of data collection for this study includes student records obtained from the Institutional Research office of the same institution. Records from Institutional Research will provide information on student background characteristics that include ethnicity/race, gender, parent’s education level, high school GPA, SAT scores, and student GPA in the spring semesters of 2005, 2008 and 2011 which is the second semester of their first year.
National Survey of Student Engagement

*The College Student Report* was administered under the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) project in 1988 and was drafted by a group of scholars that included the researchers such as Alexander Astin, Arthur Chickering and George Kuh among others. The NSSE conducted a successful pilot in 1999 which included more than 75 selected colleges and universities and approximately 275 colleges and universities were represented in the inaugural launch in the spring of 2000.

The NSSE annually collects demographic information on students such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, living situation, educational status, and student major. NSSE also collects information regarding student participation in university-sponsored programs and activities. NSSE results can provide institutions with an estimate of not only how undergraduate students spend their time while on college campuses, but also what they are gaining from attending college.

The NSSE is comprised of five Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice. These benchmarks are based on 42 key questions from the survey that capture many vital aspects of the student experience. These five benchmarks are as follows:

1) Level of Academic Challenge

2) Student-Faculty Interaction

3) Supportive Campus Environment

4) Active and Collaborative Learning

5) Enriching Educational Experiences
Validity and Reliability

The use of self-reported data from students to assess the quality of undergraduate education has been a common practice for some time. Self-report data are a critical part of all social science and is equally important in Higher Education. Some of the outcomes of interest like those sought by educators and surveys like the NSSE, such as how students spend their time or their attitudes and behaviors, simply cannot be measured by achievement tests. Due to these limitations, self-reported data is often the only and most meaningful source of data.

Stephen Porter (2011), a critic of NSSE and college student surveys, states that NSSE questions are not only vague and hard for students to understand, but that it also uses vague quantifiers such as “very often” and “sometimes” which makes the NSSE unreliable. While self-report data is often questioned by critics like Porter and the public, the validity of self-report survey data is backed by extensive scientific research and statistical analysis. Kuh and Hu (2001) give five conditions that can provide for the validity of self-reported data: (1) Respondents know the information requested of them, (2) the questions are clear and easy to understand, (3) the questions are phrased so that respondents feel they merit serious and thoughtful responses, (4) the questions refer to recent events and activities, and (5) the questions do not threaten, embarrass, or violate the privacy of the respondents. Kuh (2004) further states that *The College Student Report* was designed with the intentions of satisfying each of these conditions.

The accuracy of self-reports can be affected by two general problems; the *inability* of respondents to provide accurate information and the second factor is respondents *unwillingness* to provide accurate information (Wentland & Smith, 1993). Students’ *inability* to provide accurate information might be the result of their unfamiliarity with the university to render
adequate judgment. Students’ unwillingness to provide accurate information, on the other hand, likely represents the possibility that students intentionally provide inaccurate information about their activities or backgrounds for fear of embarrassment. To alleviate some of these threats, NSSE intentionally administers the survey during the spring academic term. Students randomly selected to complete *The College Report* are first-year and senior students who were enrolled the previous term. Therefore, all students that receive the survey have had adequate experience with the institution to render an informed judgment.

Kuh (2004) stated that another threat to survey validity from self-reporting is time usage. The validity of self-reported time has been examined extensively and it was determined that respondents’ estimates of time usage tend to be less accurate than diary or journal entries. Another suggestion for diminishing this threat includes asking respondents about recent events and activities within a timeframe of six months or less, asking respondents for multiple time estimates and also providing respondents with timeframe guidelines (Converse & Presser, 1989). NSSE takes time usage into consideration in a few key ways. First, the questions included in the survey focus on student experiences within the recent past. Also, students’ memory recall with regard to time usage is enhanced by asking about the frequency of their participation in activities during the current school year, a reference period of six months or less.

As previously stated, the validity of self-reported survey data is supported by extensive research and statistical analysis. Furthermore, evidence has shown that students can be accurate and credible reporters of their activities and how much they have benefited from the different experiences they have had in college. If the relationships between self-reports and objective tests of student achievement are consistent across institutions, then self-reports can
serve as valid policy indicators (Ewell, Lovell, Dressler, & Jones, 1993). The NSSE survey has been shown to meet this standard.

**Student Records**

In this study, the NSSE survey was linked to student records with the assistance of the Institutional Research Office at the institution in which the survey was administered. The student records data include their four categories: (1) academic background, which include high school GPA and SAT scores; (2) family background, which includes parental educational level; (3) college academic history, which includes first-year GPA and also (4) demographic information such as gender and race/ethnicity.

Two university staff members from the Institutional Research Office helped combine the NSSE data and student records data. An Institutional Research office staff member also created participant identification numbers to ensure the anonymity of all participants in the study. Some students took the NSSE in their freshman and senior academic years, but since this study only includes first-year students, this was not an issue.

**Data Collection**

Participants in this research study are from a large, public, Research I, predominantly White institution in the Southeast with an enrollment of 31,943 undergraduate students as of Fall, 2012. The data used in this study is a combined dataset including the NSSE results from 2005, 2008 and 2011. The purpose of the combined dataset was to ensure a representative sample of Black males were included in the study. A review of the individual years showed that the descriptive statistics were consistent enough to warrant combining all three years into a single dataset. 2,920 students who were first time in college (FTIC) participated in the NSSE over those three years. The survey was distributed in February of each year and the results were
collected in May on the same respective year. In 2005 and 2008, NSSE selected a random sample, however, in 2011; a census sample was selected for the survey.

A random sampling is the study of a subset of individuals that are randomly selected from a population while a census sampling is making use of every unit, or person, in a population. The response rate of the combined dataset that included all first-year and senior student respondents was 25% and the overall response rate for first-year student respondents was 30% (2,920 students) out of all of the first-year students that were invited to participate in the survey. Senior students are excluded from this study because the focus of the present study is on first-year students.

Of the respondents, 911 (31%) were male and 2,009 (69%) respondents were female. The majority of the participants identified as White/Caucasian at 2,130 (73%) while African-Americans made up 273 (9.3%) of the total respondents. Blacks males, who serve as the reference group for this study, comprised 76 (2.6%) of the total respondents, while Black females were 197 (6.7%).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Students in the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>911</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2130</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2846</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Educational Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below College</td>
<td>1657</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College &amp; Beyond</td>
<td>1263</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother Educational Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below College</td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College and Beyond</td>
<td>1324</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College GPA</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 or less</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0-3.0</td>
<td>1582</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0-4.0</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT score</td>
<td>2920</td>
<td>1161</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the demographic data from the study participants and the entire first-year cohort at the institution was conducted to ensure that the sample from the study was actually representative of the first-year cohort at the institution of study. The institution in this study had a first-year class that was comprised of 68% White students and 7% Black students which is close to the percentages of student respondents which consisted of 73% White students and 9% Black students. Based on information from the Institutional Research office, females were overrepresented in this sample at 69% respondents as compared to 59.5% of the enrolled first-year students. Descriptive statistics for students in the sample are provided in Table 1.

### Variables in the Study

#### Independent Variables

**Engagement**

Student engagement is defined as “the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to desired outcomes” (Hu and Kuh, 2002). For this study, student engagement will be specifically represented by three separate measures from the NSSE survey: time spent studying, time spent in co-curricular activities, and a global measure of engagement in effective educational practices made up of responses to 19 other NSSE items (Appendix A). Each of the items on the global engagement measure...
contributes equally; all are positively related to desired outcomes of college in studies of student
development over the years (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Also, these questions represent
student behaviors and activities that institutions can influence to varying degrees through
teaching practices and creating other conditions that foster student engagement.

**Student Characteristic Variables**

We know from previous researchers such as Astin and Tinto that student characteristics
have an impact on students’ academic performance. In Astin’s theoretical model, the student
characteristic variables would be the “input”. The extent of this impact will be examined to
determine if a relationship exist between student engagement and student academic
performance.

The student characteristics used for this study include gender, race/ethnicity, high
schools GPA, SAT scores, parents’ educational level, financial aid status and engagement levels.
A list of definitions is listed below.

**Gender:** Based upon self-report upon admission to the university, students are
categorized into male and female. The reference group for this study is male.

**Race/ethnicity:** There is a focus on two categories as part of this study: Black and White
as identified from self-report upon admission to the university.

**High School GPA:** This GPA was derived from admissions student records provided to
the Institutional Research office.

**ACT/SAT scores:** The SAT score is a standardized test score used as an indicator of
academic readiness for college. ACT scores were converted during data analysis to SAT scores
for consistency by using the College Board SAT-ACT Concordance Table.
Parent’s educational level: The NSSE question, “What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) completed?” is used for this variable.

Students’ financial aid status: Students who receive any financial assistance in the form of need-based scholarships, merit-based scholarships, student loans and federal work-study are considered a financial aid recipient as compared to students who receive no financial assistance and use personal means to finance their education.

Engagement: Refers to the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contributes directly to desired outcomes. In this study, a summative scale of 19 NSSE items measuring student interaction with faculty, their experiences with diverse others, and their involvement in opportunities for active and collaborative learning is used to determine engagement.

Spring GPA: refers to students cumulative GPA in the Spring semester of their first year.

Dependent Variable

Academic performance is the dependent variable used for this study.

Academic performance: Grade point average (GPA) measures students’ academic performance.

Analytical Methods

Before any data were analyzed as part of this study, data screening was conducted to check frequency distributions and for any variables with missing or incomplete values that might negatively impact the final results. The decision was made to exclude missing and incomplete value from the final analysis for consistency purposes.
Table 2: Variables Coding Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coding Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Dummy Variable (Female = 1, Male = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>6 = Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>5 = Native American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4 = Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3 = White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2 = Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1 = Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School GPA</strong></td>
<td>GPA was derived from admissions student records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAT/ACT Scores</strong></td>
<td>ACT scores were converted to SAT scores using the College Board SAT- ACT Concordance Table: <a href="http://www.act.org/aap/concordance/pdf/references.pdf">www.act.org/aap/concordance/pdf/references.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent’s Educational Level</strong></td>
<td>1 = no record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No record</td>
<td>2 = below college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below College</td>
<td>3 = college and beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College and Beyond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Aid</strong></td>
<td>Students are divided into two categories – those receiving some form of financial aid and those receiving no financial aid Dummy Variable (Yes=1, No=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Academic Performance</strong></td>
<td>Students GPA at the end of the Spring semester was used as the dependent variable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student GPA for Spring semester of first year</td>
<td>1 = 2.00 or less C or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = 3.00 B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 = 4.00 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong></td>
<td>A summative scale of 19 NSSE items measuring student interactions with faculty, their experiences with diverse others and their involvement in opportunities for active and collaborative learning were combined to equal “engaged”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis used for this study was a regression analysis. Specifically, multiple regression is used in this study to take into account that there are multiple independent variables and a single dependent variable. This was deemed the best analysis to investigate the relationship between student engagement and academic performance. The dependent variable
in this study is *academic performance* and is measured using student GPA, which is a continuous variable.

**Summary**

An overview of the methodology that is used to examine the relationship between student engagement and academic performance is discussed in this chapter. The National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) was the primary source of data while student record data from the Institutional Research office was also used to capture information on student characteristics. As with all surveys, NSSE relies on self-reported data. While self-report data is often questioned, its validity is backed by extensive scientific research and statistical analysis that has shown that students can be credible reporters of their activities and the impact these activities have on their college experience.

The primary statistical analysis used to investigate the relationship between student engagement and academic performance is a regression analysis. A reliability analysis was also run to determine Cronbach’s Alpha for the summative scale of the 19 questions used to measure student engagement. The results are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter reports the statistical results for the present study. The purpose of this study was to examine the level of engagement among first-year college students and its relationship with student academic performance in the first year of college. Specifically, the goal was to examine Black male college students at a Research I, four-year, public, predominantly White institution in the Southeast and compare them to Black females, White males and White females. This was done by using a summative scale of 19 items answered in the self-reported levels of engagement described on the National Survey of Student Engagement conducted in the spring semester of 2005, 2008 and 2011 combined into one dataset. This study also examined the relationship between student characteristics that influence the academic success of Black males and those that influence Black female, White male and White female first-year students.

Descriptive Analysis of Participants

Student Characteristics

Descriptive statistics for demographic and academic achievement characteristics are presented in Table 1. The majority of the respondents were White (n=2,130, 73%), female (n=2,009, 68.8%). The entire first-year class at the institution over the three (3) years of the survey averaged 71% White students and 8.8% Black students. The percentages of the first-year class are fairly representative to the respondents in the study which included 72.7% White and 9.3% Black students. Descriptive statistics show that a majority of students received financial aid (n=2,846, 97%), a majority of students had an average GPA of 3.3 and the average SAT score was 1161. Lastly, the results of the descriptive statistics shows that most students had a
parent or parents that had a college or beyond level educational status (n=1,263 father, n=1,324 mother).

**Results for General Student Academic Performance**

In the regression analysis below, student background characteristics were included to determine the impact they would have on students GPA in the spring semester of their first year. The results show that there is no significant relationship between engagement and student GPA in the Spring semester of their first year. The results showed that ethnicity (.001), gender (.000), high school GPA (.000) and SAT score (.000) were all statistically significant with the students Spring semester GPA when controlling for other background characteristics. This means that students with a higher SAT score had higher GPA’s entering into the Spring semester of their first year. It also shows that high school GPA is highly correlated with student GPA in their Spring term of their first year.

**Table 3: The Effects of Independent Variables on Student GPA as Dependent Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.265&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.604</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>68.434</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.554</td>
<td>23.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>907.980</td>
<td>2492</td>
<td>.364</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>976.413</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>.364</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Spring GPA
Table 3 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.737</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>9.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finaid</td>
<td>-.103</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>-1.257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fatherednew</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>1.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motherednew</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>1.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>3.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.158</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-5.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HS_GPA</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>4.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAT_OBI</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>9.766</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Spring GPA

Table 4: Parameter Estimates of Spring GPA as Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.979</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>14.454</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Hispanic]</td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>-2.38</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[White]</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>1.254</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>-.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Black]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Female]</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>-.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Male]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT Score</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>9.698</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[No Financial Aid]</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.924</td>
<td>.356</td>
<td>-.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Some Financial Aid]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Hispanic] * [Female]</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>2.144</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Hispanic] * [Male]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[White] * [Female]</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.970</td>
<td>.332</td>
<td>-.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[White] * [Male]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Black] * [Female]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Black] * [Male]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A review of the marginal means of Spring GPA and ethnicity reveal that overall, females maintain a higher GPA than their male counterparts, although White males have a slightly higher GPA than Black females.

![Estimated Marginal Means of Spring GPA](image)

**Figure 3: Average GPA by Ethnicity and Gender in Spring Semester**

**Results for Black Male Student Academic Performance**

A review of the regression analysis specific to Black male academic achievement in the Spring semester of the first year yielded no statistically significant results. Unique to these findings is the fact that in general, high school GPA and SAT score have been consistent indicators or student success in their first year, yet that is not what is revealed here for Black males. These results signify that there is no relationship between student engagement and academic performance for the Spring semester of their first year in college. These results could
support some of the literature that states that there are unique factors that impact the success of Black males at predominantly White institutions that don’t impact their counterparts the same way.

Table 5: The Effects of Independent Variables on Student GPA for Black Males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.387</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.696</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>4.785</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.798</td>
<td>1.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>27.151</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>.485</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31.937</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), SAT Score, finaid, Engage, HS_GPA, motherednew, fatherednew
b. Dependent Variable: Spring GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.463</td>
<td>1.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finaid</td>
<td>-.918</td>
<td>.528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fatherednew</td>
<td>-.067</td>
<td>.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motherednew</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS_GPA</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT_OBI</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Spring GPA
Results for Student Engagement

In this study, a summative scale of 19 NSSE items was used to measure student engagement. To determine the reliability of these 19 items, a reliability analysis was done and the results yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha of .845 which is considered to be a strong reliability. The results are in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Reliability Statistics for Scale of 19 NSSE Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability Statistics</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach's Alpha</td>
<td>.845</td>
<td>.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Items</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Statistics</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>clquest</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.863</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clpresen</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rewropap</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.058</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clunprep</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>.807</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classgrp</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>.862</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occgrp</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutor</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>.900</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commproj</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>.910</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>itacadem</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.990</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>email</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facgrade</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.899</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facplans</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>.958</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facideas</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.925</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facfeed</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workhard</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.867</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facother</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.920</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oocideas</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.880</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>divrstud</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diffstu2</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>.941</td>
<td>2501</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As was seen in the previous regression, there is no significant relationship between student engagement and student cumulative GPA in the spring semester of their first-year, however; in a separate analysis, there appears to be a statistically significant relationship between SAT score (.024) and the level of student engagement in the first year as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: The Impact of Student Characteristic Variables on Student Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>2009.635</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>133.976</td>
<td>1.742</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>60539.916</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60539.916</td>
<td>787.064</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>563.250</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>112.650</td>
<td>1.465</td>
<td>.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>8.465</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.465</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT_OBI</td>
<td>394.009</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>394.009</td>
<td>5.122</td>
<td>.024*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motherednew</td>
<td>182.196</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>91.098</td>
<td>1.184</td>
<td>.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finaid</td>
<td>39.263</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39.263</td>
<td>.510</td>
<td>.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnicity * Gender</td>
<td>209.683</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.937</td>
<td>.545</td>
<td>.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>212372.411</td>
<td>2761</td>
<td>76.919</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6283058.000</td>
<td>2777</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Engaged

A review of the marginal means of engagement for students in the Spring semester of their first year show that minority students at a predominantly White institution are actually more engaged than their majority counterparts. Specifically, Black females and Hispanic males are the most engaged, however, it should be noted that Black males are more engaged than their White male and female counterparts. It also shows that based on the respondents to the survey, White students are the least engaged among the three largest student groups enrolled at the institution. A visual representation of these results can be found in Figure 4 below.
Further analysis was conducted using a One-Way Anova and these results also yielded a statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and engagement (.015). To further determine which ethnicity was statistically significant, a Post Hoc test was run and this test was consistent with previous finding in that it revealed that Black students (.005) are more engaged than their White counterparts when no other student background characteristics are controlled for.

Table 8: Relationship between Ethnicity and Engagement by Ethnic Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) ethnicity</th>
<th>(J) ethnicity</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-.805</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td>-2.35</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.395</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td>.450</td>
<td>-.79</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-2.201*</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>.005*</td>
<td>-3.95</td>
<td>-.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2.201*</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>.005*</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Average Level of Engagement by Ethnicity and Gender in Spring Semester
Other Findings

The present study used a dataset that consisted of NSSE assessments from 2005, 2008 and 2011. The data was merged into a single large dataset to ensure a representative sample size from each ethnic group. Analysis was also conducted for each individual year to test its robustness. The results of the analysis did in fact show that when analyzed independently, the 2005 cohort was significant at the .05 level indicating that the 2005 cohort overall was more engaged than the 2008 and the 2011 cohort. However, based on the specific research question posed in this study, the robust test did not have a significant impact on the outcome when looking for a relationship between engagement and academic performance. These results can be found in Table 9.

Table 9: Comparison of Engagement Effect across each NSSE Assessment Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(l) year</th>
<th>(J) year</th>
<th>Mean Difference (l-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-3.56088</td>
<td>.60531</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>[-4.9803, -2.1414]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-4.41499</td>
<td>.54945</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>[-5.7035, -3.1265]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3.56088</td>
<td>.60531</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>[2.1414, 4.9803]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>-.85411</td>
<td>.43138</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>[-1.8657, .1575]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion of Findings

A majority of the findings from this study yielded some surprising results while some of the findings support decades of research that shows that student background characteristics do
have an impact on academic performance for students during their first year in college. The results of this study address the research question guiding this study which was:

Is there a significant relationship between student engagement and GPA among first-year Black male college students at a predominantly White institution?

The results of this study reveal that there is not a significant relationship between student engagement and student GPA among first-year Black male college students at a predominantly White institution. The results also show that none of the student background characteristics included in the study have a significant relationship with the engagement levels or the academic achievement of Black males in their first year.

These findings were contrary to what was expected to be revealed through this study. It was expected that findings on Black males would be consistent with years of past research that shows that student background characteristics such as high school GPA, SAT score and parental level of education have an impact on student GPA in their first year of college. It was also expected that the results would reveal that as the level of engagement increased for Black males, so would GPA, however, the regression model showed no significant relationship that would indicate any such impact.

Even more surprising than there being no relationship between student engagement and student GPA for Black males were the findings that show there is no significant relationship between level of student engagement and student GPA regardless of race/ethnicity. This is somewhat inconsistent with past researchers such as Astin and Tinto in that their many years of research have found there to be a direct correlation between student level of engagement and student academic outcomes and ultimately persistence.
It should be noted that this study only utilized data collected on first-year college students; therefore, it should not be interpreted to mean that these results can be generalized to students who are in their sophomore, junior and senior years of college. It can be argued that most students do not become involved and engaged until after their first year of college, because they have had time to determine areas of engagement that might be of interest to them.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the findings of the study and also provides answers to the research question. When analyzing the relationship between student engagement and student GPA among Black male college students in the Spring semester of their first year, the results yielded no significant relationship. Interestingly, the results also revealed that none of the other independent variables had any significant impact on the level of engagement or the academic success of Black males in their first year at a predominantly White college.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In previous chapters, the research questions were stated, pertinent literature was reviewed, and the procedure and methodology of the study were described. Chapter four presented results on the representativeness of the sample, provided comparative descriptive statistics, explored the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables, and outlined the results of the hypothesis testing.

This final chapter begins with a review of the background and importance of this study followed by an examination of the findings and their implications in relation to existing research on student engagement and student persistence. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of implications for policy makers and recommendations for future research.

Overview

Existing studies on student engagement have examined the role of engagement, as measured by the NSSE, in promoting student persistence. These studies have mainly focused on impact of engagement on persistence and not on the impact of engagement on academic success. A study by Kuh et. al. (2006) did look at a relationship between engagement and graduation, which would include academic success; however, this study did not use the individual student as its unit of measurement. The general consensus of research to date is that higher levels of engagement will improve students’ success in important areas of the college experience and increase the likelihood of academic success and ultimately persistence.

The level of academic achievement that helps students persist to degree completion is important for a number of stakeholders. For students and potential students, a higher degree of educational attainment is linked to improvements in the quality of life available to them (Day &
Newburger, 2002). Also, integration into the academic and social environments of college life aid in personal and cognitive development, and improve the ability of students to operate effectively in an increasingly diverse world (Kuh et. al., 2006; Kuh et. al., 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991 & 2005; Tinto, 1993). A trickledown effect flows from these benefits leading to improvements for the families and communities which graduating students are part of. Studies focusing on the hardships faced by children of non-degree attaining parents demonstrate, by implication, the potential of some of this effect.

Examination of the Findings

There were a number of unique findings that resulted from this study. While some findings were anticipated and specifically addressed the research question, other findings were more general and applied to populations outside of the primary populations of study. The results of this study found that there is no significant relationship between level of student engagement and academic achievement (GPA) not only Black males, but for students regardless of race/ethnicity. These findings are contrary to decades of research that show strong correlations between student engagement and student academic success and persistence.

Other findings showed that the student background characteristics that impacted students in general did not have the same impact on Black males. These findings are consistent with previous research that has found that certain factors can have an impact on Black students but not on other students from different backgrounds. For example, Davis (1991) found that increased interaction with peers and faculty, along with increased involvement in organized activities, leads to an increase in the GPA and persistence rates of Black students on predominantly White campuses. In a related study, Taylor and Howard-Hamilton (1995) found that Black students on predominantly White campuses who were more involved with organizations, academic
experiences, faculty and staff interactions, and community service were more likely to develop a positive racial identity. Given the positive relationship between racial/ethnic identity development and student, this involvement could play a role in the retention of Black students on campuses where they are traditionally underrepresented.

There may be a number of reasons that these findings may differ from decades of research on engagement and academic achievement. The first reason is that this research study is based at a single predominantly White institution located in the Southeastern United States. If this study had incorporated different types of institutions or even institutions from a different region, it may have presented different results. The second reason might be because of the low number of Black males used in the study. Although representative of the overall institutional population for Black males, more Black males in the study might yield different results. The third reason might also be the result of this study being at a single institution. In other words, the institution used for the study may have a particular student profile or student “type” which might explain some of the results.

Implications for Policymakers

The results of this study have several implications for policymakers. Lawmakers want higher education to be as effective and efficient as possible. With overall fewer financial resources and skepticism of the benefits of higher education, higher education is under more scrutiny now than in any time in the recent past. For many years, institutions have stressed the importance of student engagement and the positive impact it can have on student GPA and student persistence. The fact that the results of this study show that the no relationship between student engagement and student academic achievement could concern lawmakers because policymakers and taxpayers alike would like to be assured that students are engaging, achieving
academically and ultimately persisting to graduation. This could lead to the implementation of more accountability measures for institutions of higher education to help ensure the public that they are still receiving a return on their investments in the form of taxpayer funding.

For institutional policy makers, the results could have major implications for the NSSE itself. The first, and likely the most notable, are the demographics of the students that responded to the survey. Female students were overrepresented in the study by a ratio of more than 2:1. 68.8% were female and 31.2% were males. The institutional gender distribution is 55% female and 45% male. Minority respondents were also very low. The institution should make a more strategic effort to target more male and minority respondents to provide a more accurate picture of what student engagement may look like at the institution.

Completely independent of the overrepresentation of female respondents is the overall low response rates to the survey. The average first-year response rate for the NSSE at the institution was just under 30%. With such low response rates, institutional administrators may start to undervalue the necessity of conducting the assessment and ultimately discontinue it. The low response rates could also force administrators to make tough financial decisions if the NSSE does not appear to pass the cost-benefit analysis test.

Also indicated by the results is the need to continue to support and enhance programs for first-generation students. Results showed a relationship between parental level of education and student GPA and persistence. Institutions are very much reliant upon student retention, especially with new accountability measures tied directly to enrollment, graduation rates, and institutional funding. Losing students prematurely can create fiscal problems and public perception issues for the institution.
Recommendations for Future Research

This study sought to determine the impact of engagement, gender, ethnicity, parental level of education, financial aid and SAT score on student engagement and student GPA. While the variables used in this study have been shown to have an impact on college student academic achievement, the list is by no means all-inclusive. There are a number of other variables that should be included in future studies to get a better sense of the impact of student engagement on student academic achievement in the first year for students in general and also specifically for Black male students attending predominantly White institutions. Other variables might include family income, types of financial aid, student motivation and student majors. Research by Pascarelli and Terenzini (2005) has shown that student major can be impactful on student academic achievement and persistence with students in more rigorous fields such as STEM more likely to graduate. A more comprehensive study that incorporates variables such as these might yield more statistically significant results. In return, these results could possibly better inform policy makers and institutional administrators.

Although the NSSE survey is administered to both first year and senior students, this study only includes the first-year freshman respondents. A more accurate view of engagement at the institution may come from senior respondents since they have had multiple years to determine their level of engagement and to become involved in more activities. Therefore, future research should include senior respondents to more comprehensively gauge the impact of engagement on persistence and academic success.

Another recommendation for future research would be to make a concerted effort to get a larger sample size. Institutions must find a way to increase the overall response rates to the NSSE. Whether it is incentives or a different approach to the actual assessment such as in-
person assessments in addition to online, the numbers need to be increased. Equally important to
the overall increase in respondents is the need to increase the number of minority respondents
and also male respondents.

The final recommendation for future research relates to the institution of study. This
study was done at a single, predominantly White institution and likely yielded results that cannot
be generalized to many other institutions. A future researcher should give strong consideration
to the study of the NSSE from not only multiple institutions, but also different types of
institutions to include minority-serving, small, large, public and private institutions.
APPENDIX A

SCALE OF EDUCATIONALLY PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES

A summative scale of 19 NSSE items measuring student interaction with faculty, their experiences with diverse others, and their involvement in opportunities for active and collaborative learning.

• Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
• Made a class presentation
• Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
• Come to class without completing readings or assignments
• Worked with other students on projects during class
• Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
• Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
• Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course
• Used an electronic medium (listserv, Internet, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment
• Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor
• Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
• Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
• Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
• Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)
• Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor’s standards or expectations
• Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)
• Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)
• Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own
• Had serious conversations with students who differ from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values

Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient for Internal Consistency: .845
APPENDIX B

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS RE-APPROVAL

The Florida State University
Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742

RE-APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 10/3/2013
To: Brandon Bowden
Dept.: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Re-approval of Use of Human subjects in Research
Factors Influencing the Persistence of African American Males at a Predominantly White Institution.

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 10/2/2014, you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the committee.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your renewal request, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this re-approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting of research subjects. You are reminded that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report in writing, any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols as often as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

Cc:
HSC No. 2013.11369
APPENDIX C

USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 3/15/2012
To: Brandon Bowden
Dept.: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Factors Influencing the Persistence of African American Males at a Predominantly White Institution.

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and one member of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 3/14/2013 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is FWA00000168/IRB number IRB00000446.
SAMPLE INVITATION EMAIL FOR NSSE SURVEY

Dear (student name),

I would like to share an opportunity with you to make Florida State University the most student-centered university in the nation. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a nationwide survey that Florida State University uses to evaluate our effectiveness. Your participation in this survey will help us to enhance our ability to provide you with the highest quality of student service both in and out of the classroom.

I hope you will take a few minutes to complete the survey located at https://www.nssesurvey.org/index.cfm?loginid={loginid}.

This will provide you the opportunity to describe your experiences and level of engagement with the university across several areas. Our faculty, staff, and administration will use the results to enhance the campus learning environment.

If you have questions about the survey or are interested in the results, please contact the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs at 644-5590.

If you require technical assistance, please email help@nssesurvey.org, or call 1-800-676-0390 for assistance.

For further information regarding the Nation Survey of Student Engagement, please visit http://nsse.iub.edu/ or call 812-856-5824.

Thank you for your participation and helping us improve the Florida State University experience.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Barron
President of The Florida State University
APPENDIX E

SAMPLE FOLLOW UP EMAIL FOR NSSE SURVEY

From: [nsse@nssesurvey.org]

Subject: Last chance to give FSU your feedback

Dear {student}:

Before the survey closes, I want to make a final request for your participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which asks questions about your college experience that will be used to improve The Florida State University.

The success of this important initiative depends on students like you, and I hope you will complete the survey as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please call 1-800-676-0390 or e-mail help@nssesurvey.org.

All who complete the survey will be entered in a drawing to win $50 in Flexbucks through Seminole Dining!

The survey is available online at: https://www.nssesurvey.org/index.cfm?loginid={loginid}

Finally, I want to personally thank you for helping us improve our efforts in becoming the most student-centered university in the nation.
Eric J. Barron
President

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If you have problems accessing the link posted above, please follow these instructions:
In your Web browser, type: nssesurvey.org
In the Login ID box, enter: [loginid]
If you do not wish to participate or receive further notices about this study, please use the instructions above to access the survey site. Select the button marked “I do not wish to participate.”
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Brandon Bowden was born in Shreveport, Louisiana and is the youngest son to Edgar and Shirley Bowden. He graduated from Minden High School in 1997 and chose to attend Florida State University to study exercise science, sports medicine. He received his B.S. in exercise science in 2002 and took a position working in student affairs immediately after graduation. In 2004, he decided to pursue his M.S. in higher education at Florida State University and completed his studies in 2006. In 2009, Bowden again entered into the higher education program at Florida State University to pursue a doctorate of education.