



1-1-2005

# Staffing practices, professional preparation trends, and demographics among student affairs administrators at HBCUs: Implications from a national study

Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D.  
*University of Pennsylvania*, sharper1@upenn.edu

Walter M. Kimbrough, Ph.D.  
*Philander Smith College*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://repository.upenn.edu/gse\\_pubs](http://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs)

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation (OVERRIDE)

Harper, S. R., & Kimbrough, W. M. (2005). Staffing practices, professional preparation trends, and demographics among student affairs administrators at HBCUs: Implications from a national study. *NASAP Journal*, 8(1), 8-25.

## Suggested Citation:

Harper, S. R., & Kimbrough, W. M. (2005). Staffing practices, professional preparation trends, and demographics among student affairs administrators at HBCUs: Implications from a national study. *NASPA Journal*, 8(1), 8-25.

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. [http://repository.upenn.edu/gse\\_pubs/204](http://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/204)  
For more information, please contact [repository@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:repository@pobox.upenn.edu).

---

# Staffing practices, professional preparation trends, and demographics among student affairs administrators at HBCUs: Implications from a national study

## **Abstract**

Results from a national demographic study of student affairs administrators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are presented in this article. Specifically, staffing practices in student affairs divisions and the educational backgrounds and aspirations of directors, senior student affairs administrators, and chief student affairs officers (n=270) were examined. Data from 52 four-year institutions show that HBCU student affairs administrators, especially those at the director level, hold advanced degrees in fields other than student affairs and higher education administration. More than 70% of those without doctoral degrees aspired to pursue them someday. Other findings reveal gender disparities between women and men at the highest levels of administration; racial homogeneity across all levels; and a nearly exclusive reliance on local recruitment methods to fill administrative positions. Implications for student affairs divisions at HBCUs, as well as graduate preparation programs and national student affairs professional associations, are offered at the end of the article.

## **Disciplines**

Education

## **Comments**

Suggested Citation:

Harper, S. R., & Kimbrough, W. M. (2005). Staffing practices, professional preparation trends, and demographics among student affairs administrators at HBCUs: Implications from a national study. *NASPA Journal*, 8(1), 8-25.

# Staffing Practices, Professional Preparation Trends, and Demographics among Student Affairs Administrators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Implications from a National Study

Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D., Walter M. Kimbrough, Ph.D.

## Abstract

*Results from a national demographic study of student affairs administrators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are presented in this article. Specifically, staffing practices in student affairs divisions and the educational backgrounds and aspirations of directors, senior student affairs officers, and chief student affairs officers (n = 270) were examined. Data from 52 four-year institutions show that most HBCU student affairs administrators, especially those at the director level, hold advanced degrees in disciplines other than student affairs and higher education administration. More than 70% of those without doctoral degrees aspired to pursue them someday. Other findings reveal gender disparities between women and men at the highest levels of administration, racial homogeneity across all levels, and a nearly exclusive reliance on local recruitment methods to fill administrative positions. Implications for student affairs divisions at HBCUs, as well as graduate preparation programs and national student affairs professional associations, are offered at the end of the article.*

Existing research on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is replete with studies on undergraduate students. Scholars have mostly compared African American students at HBCUs to their same-race counterparts at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (i.e. Allen, 1992; Berger & Milem, 2000; Bohr, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1995; DeSousa & Kuh, 1996;

---

Dr. Shaun R. Harper is Assistant Professor and Research Associate in the Center for the Study of Higher Education at The Pennsylvania State University.

Dr. Walter M. Kimbrough is President of Philander Smith College.

Spring 2005

Fleming, 1984; Flowers, 2002; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Nettles, 1987; Watson & Kuh, 1996). Results from these comparative studies overwhelmingly suggest that HBCUs have more positive, profound, and enduring effects on African American student outcomes and satisfaction than do PWIs. Harper, Carini, Bridges, and Hayek (2004) contend, "HBCU/PWI comparative studies have added much-needed credibility and legitimacy to historically Black institutions during an era of forced desegregation and skepticism regarding their continued existence. However, inquiry involving the study of HBCUs throughout the past two decades has mostly occurred at the expense of comparing those institutions to their predominantly White counterparts" (p. 271). Thus, little is known about specific trends, demographics, and issues that are exclusive to HBCUs, especially among staff and administrators.

While recent scholarship has considered the college choice process of African American students at HBCUs (Freeman & Thomas, 2002), the experiences of high-achieving HBCU students (Fries-Britt, 2004), the effects of HBCU environments on African American student persistence (Brown, 1998), and gender differences in student engagement among HBCU undergraduates (Harper et al., 2004), insight into the characteristics and professional preparation of those who actually work with HBCU students is virtually non-existent. Case in point—Brown (2002) describes the dramatic increase in White and non-African American student enrollments at many public HBCUs over the past 30 years; yet, no one knows if the racial/ethnic makeup of student affairs staff and administrators has correspondingly shifted at these institutions. Furthermore, little is known about recruitment practices for professional positions in HBCU student affairs divisions, or the educational qualifications and aspirations of staff and administrators on those campuses. Indeed, Flowers' (2003) assertion is valid, and seems necessary in the study of contemporary HBCUs: "There is a continual need to better understand the demographic characteristics of individuals who make up the student affairs profession" (p. 35). To this end, the present study was conducted.

### **Literature Review**

A synthesis of relevant published research on graduate preparation programs, the demographic composition of the student affairs profession, and staffing practices in student affairs divisions on college and university campuses is presented and discussed in this section. As previously mentioned, prior studies on these topics did not include data from historically Black campuses. Therefore, most of the literature reviewed herein is not specific to HBCUs, but instead considers the field in its entirety.

### **Preparation Programs in Student Affairs and Higher Education**

Carpenter (2003) suggests the socialization and academic preparation of newcomers are among the characteristics of a profession. Graduate

programs that award master's and doctoral degrees in student affairs, college student personnel administration, and higher education are the primary sources through which history, values, norms, ethics, and effective practices are taught to those who aspire to work in student affairs divisions on college and university campuses. While conferences and professional development workshops offer regeneration and exposure to innovative trends in practice, most professional knowledge, particularly exposure to theoretical perspectives on college student development, is disseminated through graduate preparation programs. Regarding the understanding and application of theory, Upcraft (1993) posits:

Seventy-five references have been cited that in one way or another contribute to the theoretical basis of the student affairs profession... the most optimistic guess is that most student affairs professionals have a passing acquaintance with many of these theories, and a few have actually read them. A more cynical assessment is that many would recognize only a few, and too few would have firsthand knowledge of them. (p. 264)

This problem is intensified as full-time staff members are hired who have not been introduced to these theories vis-à-vis graduate preparation programs. That is, those who earn degrees from such programs are more likely to have some familiarity with theory and use it in their work with college students. In the wider student affairs professional community, there is little disagreement regarding the value and appropriateness of graduate education directly focused on college students and administrative practices (Winston, Creamer, & Miller, 2001).

Komives (1998) advocates the scholar-practitioner model, which requires the consistent linking of theory with practice, evaluating and documenting the effects of programs, policies, and interventions on student learning, development, and outcomes, contributing to the advancement of the field by sharing new discoveries and best practices, and maintaining a genuine commitment to lifelong learning and professional growth. These values, as well as the competencies that are requisite for enacting them, are usually taught in graduate preparation programs. These educational experiences are not reserved exclusively for newcomers, as Saunders and Cooper (1999) describe the nexus between doctoral preparation in student affairs and the competencies associated with effective mid-management. Accordingly, the 151 chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) in their study identified desired competencies for mid-managers that are often infused in doctoral curricula, such as knowing relevant laws and policies, systematically assessing student needs and outcomes, planning, budgeting, and demonstrating effective oral and written professional communication skills.

Beatty and Stamatakos (1990) also offer six competencies associated with doctoral-level preparation in student affairs administration: 1) Theoretical competence—understanding the historical, philosophical, and theoretical

foundations of student affairs administration, 2) scholarly competence-advancing scholarship through inquiry, analysis, research, evaluation, and writing, 3) functional competence-developing or sharpening the skills needed to effectively perform simple and complex administrative tasks, 4) transferal competence-establishing links between theory, philosophy, and practice in student affairs administration, 5) environmental competence-operating within and helping shape the political environment in which student affairs administration occurs, and 6) human relations competence-understanding, leading, and comfortably communicating with students, local colleagues, and external stakeholders in higher education. In light of these competencies, Komives and Taub (2000) contend that doctoral degrees are usually requisite for advancement and credibility in student affairs administration. On many campuses, some mid-management and most senior-level positions are reserved exclusively for those with doctorates.

Despite general consensus regarding their importance, Phelps Tobin (1998) claims that most graduate preparation programs have taken passive and haphazard approaches to recruiting graduate students, particularly racial/ethnic minorities. She reports that in 1994, White students comprised 78% of all graduate students in these programs. The racial/ethnic minority graduate students in Flowers and Howard-Hamilton's (2002) study reflected on the alienation, pressure, cultural incongruence, and social discomfort they felt in their overwhelmingly White master's and doctoral programs. Interestingly, the participants suggested "outreach and contact with historically Black colleges and universities should be initiated to identify more potential students of color who are interested in pursuing a career in student affairs" (p. 121). Obviously, the under-representation of African Americans and other racial/ethnic minority students in graduate preparation programs poses negative implications for the multiethnic composition of the profession and the administrative pipeline.

#### **Demographic Trends in Student Affairs Administration**

Rapp (1997) argues that the underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minorities continues to be a major shortcoming of the student affairs profession. Turrentine and Conley (2001) found that only 12-15% of entry-level practitioners between 1995 and 1998 were African American. In his analysis of data from the NASPA Salary Survey, Jackson (2003) discovered that African Americans comprised approximately 8.4% of all student affairs administrators, while Brown (2002) confirms that 9.4% of the students on predominantly White campuses are African American. These findings are consistent with Flowers' (2003) study, which revealed that the percentage of African American student affairs administrators is lower than the percentage of African American students at postsecondary institutions across the country. He too recommends that graduate preparation programs devote more effort and attention to actively recruiting African American students who have an interest in student affairs administration.

Reason, Walker, and Robinson (2002) note that in addition to racial/ethnic minorities, women are also disproportionately underrepresented at senior administrative levels. Although nearly 68% of entry-level student affairs practitioners between 1995 and 1998 were female (Turrentine & Conley, 2001), Hamrick and Carlisle (1990) and Twale (1995) found that women held significantly fewer senior-level student affairs administrative positions than did men, and they were overrepresented in "traditionally female" areas of responsibility (i.e. counseling). In a study of 43 African American senior student affairs officers (SSAOs), Reason (2003) found that even though more women held doctoral degrees than did men, they earned approximately \$32,000 less than their male counterparts. He also found that women were more likely to work at smaller institutions. Despite ongoing attempts to diversify the profession and eradicate gender disparities in senior-level representation and compensation, inequities that negatively affect staff recruitment continually persist.

### Staffing Practices in Student Affairs Divisions

To increase racial/ethnic minority participation in the field, Turrentine and Conley (2001) offer what they acknowledge to be a "risky" approach: searching beyond graduate preparation programs in student affairs to find applicants from underrepresented groups. Yet they admit, "A new professional who enters the profession without the normal professional preparation could be set up for failure" (p. 100). Carpenter (1998) would agree with this anticipated outcome, as he deems the hiring of people with no formal educational preparation in student affairs "deplorable." Carpenter makes clear that access to certain other professions (law, medicine, etc.) is reserved exclusively for those who have been prepared by post-baccalaureate degree programs that adhere to national quality standards regarding desired outcomes for practitioners. In addition to entry-level staff members, some even make it to the level of senior student affairs officer without graduate degrees in higher education or student affairs, he maintains. Furthermore, Carpenter (2003) asserts that graduate preparation programs that are aligned with the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) guidelines unfortunately do not produce enough new professionals each year to fill all of the vacant positions in student affairs divisions across the country. Thus, institutions are sometimes forced to hire student affairs staff members and administrators who earn graduate degrees in other disciplines.

In their book, *Improving Staffing Practices in Student Affairs*, Winston and Creamer (1997) report, "There is some feeling in the field that advanced education is not necessary for professional practice in student affairs; we, however, disagree" (p. xv). Their national study confirmed an overwhelming preference among contemporary hiring authorities for staff members with doctoral or master's degrees in higher education and student affairs. Findings

from their research also unequivocally suggest that those who graduate from preparation programs are more effective in their immediate and long-term professional roles, an outcome that hiring officials should find desirable. Despite this, only 53% of the chief student affairs officers, 31% of the senior student affairs officers, and 20% of the directors in their sample held graduate degrees in student affairs or higher education administration.

Winston and Creamer's study is based on survey responses from 937 full-time student affairs professionals from 151 colleges and universities around the country. That none of the selected institutions are HBCUs is particularly noteworthy. Of the total respondents, 30.4% (n = 285) were administrators at the director, senior student affairs officer, and chief student affairs officer levels, 18.9% of whom held bachelors degrees or lower and 34.4% of whom held doctorates. The chief student affairs officers in Winston and Creamer's study reported using the following vehicles to announce vacant positions and recruit mid-level and senior-level student affairs administrators: 88% in local media, 84% in on-campus job postings, 66% in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 61% in regional professional media, and 53% through professional student affairs conferences. Recent data from career placement services at NASPA and ACPA annual conferences show that candidates outnumber job listings by a ratio of more than 2.4:1 (Phelps Tobin, 1998; Komives, 1998).

The professional preparation values and trends, demographics, and staffing practices described herein beg the question: what about student affairs professionals at HBCUs? What are the educational backgrounds and aspirations of those who serve as directors, senior student affairs officers, and chief student affairs officers at those institutions? Specifically, how many hold graduate degrees in student affairs and higher education administration? To what degrees do racial and gender inequities exist among student affairs administrators on those campuses? And what staff recruitment processes attracted and led to the hiring of current student affairs administrators at HBCUs? Answers to these questions are especially needed since the most comprehensive national study of staffing practices in student affairs included no HBCUs.

## Methods

### Data Source

To explore demographics and staffing practices in student affairs divisions at HBCUs, a modified version of Winston and Creamer's (1997) *Student Affairs Staffing Survey* was used (with permission). Their survey included demographic information, personal approaches to supervision, job satisfaction, and staff development activities; only the demographic variables from the survey were used in the present study. Specifically, 11 of the 15 demographic items from the original survey were used. Five new items regarding future educational aspirations, prior educational affiliation with



the current institution, and the methods used to search and apply for current positions at HBCUs were added.

### Sampling Procedures

The 16-item survey was sent to every four-year HBCU in the nation ( $n = 89$ ). Letters describing the project were mailed to chief student affairs officers (Vice Presidents/Vice Chancellors for Student Affairs) at each institution, who were asked to personally participate in the study and distribute surveys to all other student affairs administrators at the director-level and above on their campuses. Fifty-two chief student affairs officers returned packets of completed surveys, which represents a 58.4% institutional response rate. A total of 273 individual surveys were returned; three were discarded because the respondents served in roles below the director-level. Thus, the final sample consists of 270 respondents from 52 four-year HBCUs. Administrators at the director-level comprise 77% of the sample ( $n = 208$ ); senior student affairs officers (Deans of Students, Associate/Assistant Vice Presidents for Student Affairs, and Associate/Assistant Deans of Students) represent 15.2% of the sample ( $n = 41$ ), and the remaining 7.8% of the respondents ( $n = 21$ ) were chief student affairs officers.

### Variable Specification and Analysis

Demographic trends and characteristics among directors, SSAOs, and CSAOs were investigated using the following nominal variables: sex, race/ethnicity, field of highest degree, prior educational affiliation with current institution (undergraduate and graduate study), intent to pursue additional degrees, and job search method. Two ordinal variables—highest degree earned and ultimate degree aspiration—were also examined within each group. Because the variables were largely nominal and exclusively categorical, the cross-tabulations function in SPSS was used to construct contingency tables across the three administrative subgroups in the sample. Data analysis was confined to this method because means and standard deviations are pointless in the analysis of nominal variables (Agresti, 2002).

### Results

The descriptive statistics reported in Table 1 show a slight overrepresentation of women at the director level, but more extreme disparities that favor men at the higher levels of administration. This gap is most pronounced at the SSAO level, where men outnumber women by 17.1 percentage points. The representation of non-African American administrators at the director and SSAO levels is nearly nonexistent; and every CSAO in the sample is African American. Three SSAOs and 58 directors had not earned higher than a bachelor's degree. Although nearly two-thirds of the CSAOs and more than one-third of the SSAOs held doctorates, directors were grossly underrepresented among doctoral degree holders

(12.5%). More than half of the SSAOs and 82.2% of the directors held degrees in fields other than student affairs and higher education administration. Across all levels, only 25.9% of the respondents earned degrees in student affairs and higher education administration.

**Table 1. Demographics and Frequencies**

Variables	Director	SSAO	CSAO
	n = 208	n = 41	n = 21
	%	%	%
<b>Sex</b>			
Female	56.25	41.46	42.86
Male	43.75	58.54	57.14
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
African American/Black	94.23	90.24	100.00
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	0.48	2.44	
Caucasian/White	2.40	4.88	
Latino/Hispanic	0.48	2.44	
Multiracial/Other	2.40		
<b>Highest Degree Earned</b>			
High School Diploma	1.44		
Associate's	0.96		
Bachelor's	25.48	7.32	
Master's	59.62	58.54	38.10
Doctoral	12.50	34.14	61.90
<b>Field of Highest Degree</b>			
Student Affairs/College Student Personnel	6.73	17.07	23.81
Higher Education Administration	11.06	31.71	38.09
Counseling/Counselor Education	21.15	14.63	19.05
K-12 Education	10.58	2.44	4.76
Other	50.48	34.15	14.29
Employed by Undergraduate Alma Mater	29.81	31.71	38.10
Earned Graduate Degree from Current Institution	21.33	26.32	4.76
Intending to Pursue Additional Degree(s)	69.94	50.00	20.00
<b>Ultimate Degree Aspiration</b>			
Associate's	0.52		
Bachelor's	2.08	2.56	
Master's	23.44	12.82	11.76
Doctoral	69.28	82.05	88.24
Other (certificates, licenses, etc.)	4.68	2.56	

Less than one-third of the respondents earned bachelor's degrees from the colleges or universities at which they worked. While 20.6% of all administrators in the sample earned graduate degrees from their current institutions, it is important to note that this was only the case for one CSAO. That nearly 70% of all directors and more than half of all SSAOs intended to pursue additional degrees someday is also noteworthy. Here is a comparison of the respondents who actually held doctorates compared to the number of those who reported the doctorate as their ultimate degree aspiration: Directors (12.5% vs. 69.3%); SSAOs (34.1% vs. 82.1%); and CSAOs (61.9% vs. 88.2%). Also, at the director level, most of those who held bachelor's degrees and lower aspired to pursue master's degrees someday.

Table 2 shows the self-reported vehicles through which the respondents searched for their current administrative positions at HBCUs. Accordingly, 80.4% found their jobs through local recruitment and internal announcement methods, with the most frequent being word-of-mouth correspondence, insights from friends, and informal communiqué, such as e-mail. Few respondents (5.9%) found their jobs through national advertisements in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. It is interesting to note that only one respondent (a director) found his position through career placement at a national student affairs conference. Six of the 20 respondents who checked "other" on the survey wrote in two websites, *studentaffairs.com* and *higheredjobs.com*, as the venues through which their position announcements were found.

**Table 2. Self-Reported Job Search and Acquisition Methods**

	Director	SSAO	CSAO	Total	
	n	n	n	n	%
Word-of-Mouth/Heard from Friend/ Informal Communiqué (e.g. e-mail)	72	6	2	80	29.63
Retrieved Announcement through On-Campus Job Posting Service	60	12	4	76	28.15
Promoted Internally at the Same Institution	37	9	5	51	18.89
Recruited by President and/or Other Senior-Level Administrator	8	2	6	16	5.93
Saw Advertisement in <i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i>	8	4	4	16	5.93
Saw Advertisement in Local Newspaper	9	1	0	10	3.70
Participated in Career Placement at National Student Affairs Conference	1	0	0	1	0.37
Saw Advertisement in Black Issues in Higher Education	0	0	0	0	0.00
Other	13	7	0	20	7.41

## Discussion

When considered in isolation, the data reported herein does not look good. However, in comparison to the findings from Winston and Creamer's (1997) national study, the results appear to be slightly less alarming, but are still cause for concern. That most HBCU administrators at the director level and above did not earn post-baccalaureate degrees from graduate preparation programs in student affairs and higher education administration is extremely problematic. Winston and Creamer found that 35.1% of the directors, SSAOs, and CSAOs held graduate degrees in these two areas; this was true for only one-fourth of those in the present study. Carpenter (1998, 2003) and Upcraft (1993) make clear the value of and outcomes associated with formal educational preparation in the field. Winston and Creamer assert in their book, as we do here, that more student affairs professionals, particularly those who serve in administrative capacities, need master's degrees and doctorates in higher education and student affairs to increase effectiveness.

While there is little difference in the percentages of administrators who held bachelor's degrees and lower—18.9% in Winston and Creamer's study, and 22.6% here—this phenomenon seems inappropriate in both cases, especially given the advocacy for advanced study in the existing literature. Slightly more than one-third of the administrators in Winston and Creamer's study held doctoral degrees, compared to 19.6% of the HBCU administrators in the present study. Surprisingly, 38.1% of the Vice Presidents/Vice Chancellors lead HBCU student affairs divisions with master's degrees. Given the administrative competencies that are associated with doctoral-level preparation in student affairs and higher education (see Beatty & Stamatakos, 1990; Komives & Taub, 2000; and Saunders & Cooper, 1999), it is highly likely that administrative practice at all institutions, including HBCUs, would be significantly enhanced if more directors, SSAOs, and CSAOs earned doctoral degrees. The future degree aspirations reported by the administrators in this study pose some important and promising implications that are discussed later in this article.

The gender inequities found at the highest levels of administration at HBCUs are consistent with longstanding trends from other campuses across the country (Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990; Reason, 2003; Reason, Walker, & Robinson, 2002; Turrentine & Conley, 2001; Twale, 1995). Similar trends along racial/ethnic lines also persist. For instance, Flowers (2003) advocates a proportional representation of African American student affairs administrators to African American students. Interestingly, Brown (2002) notes that White students comprise 16.5% of HBCU enrollments nationally, yet White administrators represented only 2.4% of the directors, 4.9% of the SSAOs, and none of the CSAOs in the present study. Greater racial/ethnic diversity is obviously needed in student affairs divisions on historically Black campuses, particularly at the administrative levels. Moreover, women (African American and otherwise) should be recruited more aggressively and given

higher consideration for top administrative roles in student affairs divisions at HBCUs.

Lastly, the results of the present study counter anecdotal reports of HBCUs being closed systems that only hire their own graduates, as less than one-third of the respondents in this study worked at the institutions from which their bachelor's degrees were awarded. What is clear, however, is that access to information about administrative career opportunities and advancement is reserved almost exclusively for insiders. That more than 80% of the respondents reported having found their positions through local and internal announcement venues confirms that HBCU administrative aspirants from elsewhere are disadvantaged in the job recruitment process.

### Implications for Practice

Several practical implications can be derived from the results of this study. Recommendations for HBCU student affairs divisions, graduate preparation programs in student affairs and higher education administration, and national student affairs professional associations are offered in this section.

### Recommendations for HBCU Student Affairs Divisions

Beyond the obvious—hiring more professionals with formal educational preparation in student affairs, recruiting and selecting more non-African American staff and administrators, and strategically striving to close gender gaps at the highest levels of administration—several other approaches seem both necessary and appropriate. For instance, HBCUs should advertise more often in external recruitment venues, such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education and Diverse Issues in Higher Education* (formerly *Black Issues in Higher Education*), to attract qualified applicants from across the country and a larger, more diverse applicant pool. Realizing that funds may not be available to publicize every job in these two publications, institutions may consider posting position descriptions to [studentaffairs.com](http://studentaffairs.com) and [higheredjobs.com](http://higheredjobs.com), where the advertising costs are significantly lower. For instance, colleges and universities can post as many jobs as they would like to [studentaffairs.com](http://studentaffairs.com) for an annual flat fee that is based on the size of the institution. Additionally, positions can be posted to the online career placement sections of the NASPA and ACPA websites for a nominal fee. These websites, as well as the two aforementioned national printed publications, are the sources upon which most students in graduate preparation programs rely when they are searching for full-time career opportunities.

HBCU administrators should also take advantage of career placement services at the national professional association conferences to recruit the best and brightest talent, which may include, but is not limited to African Americans. Recent data show that candidates outnumber job listings by a ratio of more than 2.4:1 at these conferences (Phelps Tobin, 1998; Komives,

1998). More often than not, the candidates who participate in an interview for jobs through placement have graduate degrees in student affairs and higher education administration. Once staff members and administrators have been hired who hold master's and doctoral degrees from preparation programs, CSAOs should encourage them to conduct workshops for their local colleagues on the value of such programs, as well as on the theories and best practices they learned as graduate students. Similarly, CSAOs may consider inviting faculty members from these programs to their campuses to do workshops for staff in the student affairs division.

To increase enthusiasm about pursuing graduate study in student affairs, CSAOs must offer support, incentives, and rewards to directors and SSAOs. This could include a more flexible work schedule that allows staff members to take classes, complete assignments, do research, and write their dissertations. Or, it could include some financial support to offset the costs associated with pursuing an additional degree. Furthermore, CSAOs could publicly applaud and recognize those who pursue such degrees by immediately offering opportunities for advancement after the degree is earned. Because presidents usually have the final say in the selection of their vice presidents, it is not surprising that 61.9% of the CSAOs in the present study held doctoral degrees, mostly in higher education and student affairs. As most HBCU presidents expect their senior-level administrators to hold doctorates, similar expectations should be held by CSAOs for those at other levels of administration within their divisions.

As is the case across institutional types, greater emphasis needs to be placed on increasing the pipeline for future student affairs professionals. HBCUs should join dozens of other institutions in hosting an annual "Careers in Student Affairs Week" on their campuses. This week usually includes a series of programs to introduce undergraduate students to career possibilities in the student affairs profession. Obviously, one major focus of this week should be the introduction of possibilities for graduate study through professional preparation programs. It is highly likely that an increase of HBCU alumni who seek master's and doctoral degrees in higher education and student affairs will yield a cadre of professionally prepared colleagues who may someday return to those institutions as staff and administrators. Similar to student affairs preparation programs with regional missions, some HBCUs may consider starting their own master's or doctoral programs. In addition to aligning the curricula with the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) guidelines, these programs could also have a deliberate mission of preparing graduate students specifically for student affairs practice and administrative work at HBCUs.

#### **Recommendations for Graduate Preparation Programs**

The results of this study suggest that partnerships between HBCUs and graduate preparation programs in student affairs and higher education

administration are needed. Komives and Taub (2000) assert that most preparation programs take a passive approach to recruiting prospective graduate students. Thus, the most glaring implication is the need for preparation programs to more aggressively recruit prospective students in general, and alumni from HBCUs in particular. This endeavor would achieve two aims: 1) The programs would become more diverse, as most of the students they attract from HBCUs, by default, will likely be African American, and 2) established programs will help prepare practitioners and administrators for an institutional-type that is often overlooked in the field. Preparation programs must be willing to invest resources into customizing recruitment materials for HBCUs that showcase African Americans (as well as others) and emphasize the relevance of their curricula for student affairs practice and administration on historically Black campuses.

Instead of pursuing recruitment initiatives in isolation, preparation programs might consider forming a consortium to increase the pipeline of prospective students from HBCUs. For example, Indiana University, Michigan State University, The Ohio State University, Penn State University, and the University of Michigan—all large, public Midwestern universities whose Higher Education graduate programs are often ranked among the top ten by *U.S. News & World Report*—may consider collaborating on HBCU recruitment brochures, joint recruitment fairs in cities where multiple HBCUs are located (e.g. Atlanta, Washington D.C., and Nashville), an annual multi-campus visitation week for prospective HBCU students, and other innovative initiatives. Preparation programs that are demographically or regionally comparable and those with similar reputations may undertake such partnerships.

Also, given that many directors and SSAOs in this study did not have doctorates, but most intended to pursue them someday, a mid-career doctoral program with weekend and online course offerings for full-time working professionals may be effective. This not only seems warranted for HBCU administrators, but also for others who wish to maintain full-time employment while pursuing the doctorate. A mid-career doctoral program is especially attractive to administrators who do not have a part-time program option in their local areas. Being able to drive or fly in one or two weekends per month for classes and completing some portion of program requirements through virtual engagement would be attractive to many. The University of Pennsylvania and Vanderbilt University have exemplary programs of this design.

Another recommendation for preparation programs is to send representatives to the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASAP) Annual Conference to recruit prospective students. NASAP continues to be an association comprised almost exclusively of student affairs professionals from HBCUs. In addition, many undergraduate students attend the NASAP annual conference. Therefore, any graduate program that is interested in recruiting African Americans and others from HBCUs will

likely find talented student leaders for master's programs, as well as directors and SSAOs for doctoral programs at NASAP conferences.

One final implication relates to the need to assess the racial climates and curricular inclusiveness of graduate preparation programs. All of the strategies offered in this section would be woefully counterproductive if African American students who enroll in these programs do not fondly reflect upon their experiences and enthusiastically recommend that others consider those institutions for graduate study. The participants in Flowers and Howard-Hamilton's (2002) study hardly offered a ringing endorsement of the predominantly White graduate preparation programs in which they were enrolled. Assessment should lead to the improvement of environments as well as the inclusion of African American issues and HBCU-related topics in the curriculum.

### **Recommendations for National Professional Associations**

This final set of strategies is intended for national office staff and leaders of student affairs professional associations. First, NASAP may consider co-sponsoring with ACPA and NASPA a multi-day summer institute on professional preparation options in student affairs. This institute should have different tracks for undergraduate student leaders, mid-level staff, and senior administrators from HBCUs. The event can include materials from various graduate preparation programs around the country, faculty panelists, and African American alumni of those programs. Also, NASAP may consider extending a targeted call for sessions on graduate preparation programs for its future annual conferences. Likewise, ACPA, NASPA, and other national associations could invite administrators from HBCUs who graduated from preparation programs to offer workshops for HBCU staff at their annual conferences.

Associations that host career placement services at their national conferences should market directly to HBCUs and invite their participation. Special outreach is also needed from the associations to increase the presence of HBCU undergraduate students in current initiatives to expand and diversify the student affairs pipeline. For example, HBCU students should be targeted to participate in ACPA's annual Next Generation Conference and NASPA's Minority Undergraduate Fellows Program. Lastly, materials should be sent directly to women at HBCUs to encourage their participation in programs that are specifically designed to increase female representation in senior student affairs administration (e.g. NASPA's biennial Alice Manicur Women's Symposium).

### **Conclusion**

The results from this study confirm that greater attention must be devoted to improving staffing practices in student affairs at HBCUs. Although the published evidence unequivocally confirms that these institutions have a



more profound effect on African American student outcomes than do PWIs, administrative practice on those campuses would be significantly enhanced by an increase of student affairs administrators with graduate degrees in higher education administration and student affairs. As is the case at other institutions across the nation, greater accountability is needed to ensure the hiring of a diverse workforce and to increase the presence of women in senior administrative roles on HBCU campuses.

## References

- Agresti, A. (2002). *Categorical data analysis* (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Allen, W. R. (1992). The color of success: African American college student outcomes at predominantly White and historically Black public colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62, 26-44.
- Beatty, D. L., & Stamatakos, L. C. (1990). Faculty and administrator perceptions of knowledge, skills, and competencies as standards for doctoral preparation programs in student affairs administration. *Journal of College Student Development*, 31, 221-229.
- Berger, J. B., Milem, J. F. (2000). Exploring the impact of historically Black colleges in promoting the development of undergraduates' self-concept. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41, 381-394.
- Bohr, L., Pascarella, E. T., Nora, A., & Terenzini, P. T. (1995). Do Black students learn more at historically Black or predominantly White colleges? *Journal of College Student Development*, 36, 75-85.
- Brown II, M. C. (1998). African American college student retention and the ecological psychology of historically Black colleges and universities. *NASAP Journal*, 1, 50-66.
- Brown II, M. C. (2002). Good intentions: Collegiate desegregation and transdemographic enrollments. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25, 263-280.
- Carpenter, D. S. (1998). Continuing professional education in student affairs. In N. J. Evans & C. E. Phelps Tobin (Eds.), *The state of the art of preparation and practice in student affairs: Another look* (pp. 159-175). Lanham Maryland: American College Personnel Association and University Press of America.
- Carpenter, D. S. (2003). Professionalism. In S. R. Komives & D. B. Woodard (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (4th ed., 573-591). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

*HBCU Student Affairs Administrators*

- Desousa, D. J., & Kuh, G. D. (1996). Does institutional racial composition make a difference in what Black students gain from college? *Journal of College Student Development*, 37, 257-267.
- Fleming, J. (1984). *Blacks in college: A comparative study of students' success in Black and in White institutions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Flowers, L. A. (2002). The impact of college racial composition on African American students' academic and social gains: Additional evidence. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43, 403-410.
- Flowers, L. A. (2003). Investigating the representation of African American student affairs administrators: A preliminary study. *NASAP Journal*, 6, 35-42.
- Flowers, L.A., & Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2002). A qualitative study of graduate students' perceptions of diversity issues in student affairs preparation programs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43, 119-123.
- Flowers, L. A., & Pascarella, E. T. (1999). Cognitive effects of college racial composition on African American students after 3 years of college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40, 669-677.
- Freeman, K., & Thomas, G. E. (2002). Black colleges and college choice: Characteristics of students who choose HBCUs. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25, 349-358.
- Fries-Britt, S. (2004). The challenges and needs of high-achieving Black college students. In M. C. Brown II & K. Freeman (Eds.), *Black colleges: New perspectives on policy and practice* (pp. 161-176). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Fries-Britt, S., & Turner, B. (2002). Uneven stories: Successful Black collegians at a Black and a White campus. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25, 315-330.
- Hamrick, F. A., & Carlisle, L. W. (1990). Gender diversity in student affairs: Administrative perceptions and recommendations. *NASPA Journal*, 27, 306-311.
- Harper, S. R., Carini, R. M., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. (2004). Gender differences in student engagement among African American undergraduates at historically Black colleges and universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45, 271-284.

Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D., Walter M. Kimbrough, Ph.D.

Jackson, J. F. L. (2003). Engaging, retaining, and advancing African Americans in student affairs administration: An analysis of employment status. *NASAP Journal*, 6, 9-24.

Komives, S. R. (1998). Linking student affairs preparation with practice. In N. J. Evans & C. E. Phelps Tobin (Eds.), *The state of the art of preparation and practice in student affairs: Another look* (pp. 177-200). Lanham Maryland: American College Personnel Association and University Press of America.

Komives, S. R., & Taub, D. J. (2000). Advancing professionally through doctoral education. In M. J. Barr & M. K. Dessler (Eds.), *The handbook of student affairs administration* (2nd ed., pp. 508-534). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nettles, M. T. (1987). Black and White college student performance in majority White and majority Black academic settings. In J. Williams (Ed.), *Title IV regulation of higher education: Problems and progress* (pp. 197-208). New York: Teachers College Press.

Phelps Tobin, C. E. (1998). Recruiting and retaining qualified graduate students. In N. J. Evans & C. E. Phelps Tobin (Eds.), *The state of the art of preparation and practice in student affairs: Another look* (pp. 83-104). Lanham Maryland: American College Personnel Association and University Press of America.

Rapp, J. L. (1997). Staff diversity: The need for enhancing minority participation in student affairs. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 16, 73-84.

Reason, R. D. (2003). Gender-based salary differences in African American senior student affairs officers. *NASAP Journal*, 6, 67-78.

Reason, R. D., Walker, D. A., & Robinson, D. C. (2002). Gender, ethnicity, and highest degree earned as salary determinants for senior student affairs officers at public institutions. *NASPA Journal*, 39, 251-265.

Saunders, S. A., & Cooper, D. L. (1999). The doctorate in student affairs: Essential skills and competencies for midmanagement. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40, 185-191.

Turrentine, C. G., & Conley, V. M. (2001). Two measures of the diversity of the labor pool for entry-level student affairs positions. *NASPA Journal*, 39, 84-102.

*HBCU Student Affairs Administrators*

- Twale, D. J. (1995). Gender comparisons of NASPA membership. *NASPA Journal*, 32, 293-301.
- Upcraft, M. L. (1993). Translating theory into practice. In M. J. Barr (Ed.), *The handbook of student affairs administration* (pp. 260-273). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Watson, L. W., & Kuh, G. D. (1996). The influence of dominant race environments on student involvement, perceptions, and educational gains: A look at historically Black and predominantly White liberal arts institutions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37, 415-424.
- Winston, R. B., & Creamer, D. G. (1997). *Improving staffing practices in student affairs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Winston, R. B., Creamer, D. G., & Miller, T. K. (2001). The professional student affairs administrator: Roles and functions. In R. B. Winston, D. G. Creamer, & T. K. Miller (Eds.), *The professional student affairs administrator: Educator, leader, and manager* (pp. 3-38). New York: Brunner-Routledge.