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# Gender Disparities at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

## Disciplines

Education | Higher Education

# Gender disparities at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Marybeth Gasman, Ufuoma Abiola and Ashley Freeman

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*Gender disparities are shaping the overall climate at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The significant gap between women and men at HBCUs has created some fascinating dynamics on these campuses. The objective of this paper is to focus on the consequences of the gender disparity dynamic on HBCU campuses. This paper presents descriptive statistics detailing the changes in gender on HBCU campuses between 1992 and 2009; discusses the effects of gender disparities on the personal relationships between students and professional relationships with faculty; explores how some institutions, such as Central State University and Saint Augustine's College, have kept their gender ratio at roughly 50 per cent; and recommends ways to recruit and retain Black male and female students at HBCUs.*

Keywords: gender disparity, gender gap, gender imbalance, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), higher education

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With the founding of Harvard in 1636, postsecondary institutions began excluding women. It was not until the 1920s that true movement began for women in terms of their presence on college and university campuses. By 1940, 40 per cent of the enrolment at US higher education institutions was women (Thelin, 2004). 1978 was the last year that men had an advantage over women (Snyder, Dillow and Hoffman, 2008). From 1979 to the current day, women outnumber men at the majority of colleges and universities and in higher education overall. The gender imbalance at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is particularly poignant and is the subject of our paper. This paper presents statistics detailing the changes in gender on HBCU campuses, discusses the effects of gender disparities on the personal relationships between students and professional relationships with faculty members, explores

how some institutions have kept their gender ratio at roughly 50 per cent, and recommends ways to recruit and retain Black male students at HBCUs. The paper is important because it asks readers to consider the ramifications of gender imbalance on college campuses, especially when this imbalance is juxtaposed with race and ethnicity. Although racial and ethnic diversity in the US is much more prevalent than many other parts of the world, the demographics of the world are changing, with more underrepresented immigrant populations clustering in Europe, for example. As these clusters grow, issues of gender parity among them on college campuses across the world will become more important beyond the US context.

### **Gender, enrolment, and academic experiences in college**

In terms of college completion rates, men earned 42 per cent of baccalaureate degrees awarded in 2008–2009, even though 46 per cent of freshmen in 2002 were men (NCES, 2010: using 2002 data allows for a six-year graduation period.). These data show that men graduate at lower rates than women. Additionally, between 1998–1999 and 2008–2009, the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded to women increased by 34 per cent. Women earned 58 per cent of all baccalaureate degrees in 2008–09 (NCES, 2010).

The enrolment gap between men and women can be explained, in part, by their academic performance in high school. Men in college have lower GPAs and credits in the first semester because they arrive with lower non-cognitive skills, reflected by lower grades in high school (Jacob, 2002). Because women have higher high school grades than men, they may have higher non-cognitive skills, which improve their access to postsecondary institutions (Jacob, 2002).

In terms of other female advantages in college enrolment, women not only have higher high school grade point averages, they are also more likely to graduate from high school, and more likely to take more rigorous course loads while in high school than men (Peter and Horn, 2005). Women have an advantage in non-academic areas, such as in parenting, peer relationships, and teacher expectations as well as non-cognitive skills, such as being organized, attentive, and searching for help from others (Jacob, 2002; Reynolds and Burge, 2004). These non-cognitive advantages not only enhance women's acceptance to a postsecondary institution, but they also decrease the challenges that may be experienced with learning, understanding, and applying rigorous college and university level material.

Research has shown that even though men are less likely to enrol in college in comparison to women, the men who do attend college seem

to have higher SAT scores than women. These men also do not require as much remediation in college level mathematics as women (LoGerfo, Nichols, and Chaplin, 2006; Long, Iatarola, and Conger, 2009). Women are less likely to have a concentration in mathematics and engineering, with stringent grading practices (Turner and Bowen, 1989). Women are also more likely to attend colleges that have less stringent admissions standards and higher rates of admission (Jacobs, 1999). Likewise, women are more likely to apply for, receive, and respond to tuition and other academic support systems in place at their institution (Angrist *et al*, 2006). Overall, men tend to take fewer credits, earn lower grades, and are less likely to persist in college than women. Furthermore, in terms of leadership style, women are more likely to adopt a more democratic, participative, and relational style and a less autocratic or directive style than men (Astin and Leland, 1991; Dugan, 2006; Helgesen, 1990). However, there is also research that shows that college women demonstrate less efficacy and lower aspirations related to leadership (Adams and Keim, 2000; Boatwright and Egidio, 2003; Kezar and Moriarty, 2000). These results illustrate a gap between women's capacity for leadership and self-efficacy for leadership and highlight the gender disparity.

### **The HBCU context and gender**

For over 175 years, Historically Black Colleges and Universities have been giving Blacks access to higher education. Until the Civil Rights Movement, HBCUs were, with few exceptions, the only resource for higher education degrees for Blacks in the United States. These institutions were created in myriad ways. Some were started by religious organizations and White philanthropy, and others were started with government assistance, such as the Morrill Land-Grant of 1890. HBCUs currently graduate over twenty percent of Black college graduates (Gasman, 2013). Nearly seven out of every ten graduating students at HBCUs are women (Gasman *et al*, 2010). Recent enrolment patterns since the early 1990s suggest that these graduation rates will continue to be higher for Black women than Black men. Some changes in enrolment can be attributed to the changes in curriculum at HBCUs; for example, the move toward curricula that are geared to producing teachers (Lundy-Wagner and Gasman, 2011).

Gender disparities are shaping the overall climate at HBCUs. The significant gap between women and men at HBCUs has created some fascinating dynamics on these campuses. The objective of this paper is to focus on the consequences of the gender disparity dynamic on HBCU campuses. This paper will present descriptive statistics detailing the

changes in gender on HBCU campuses between 1992 and 2009. We will also focus on the effects of gender disparities on the personal relationships between students, the professional relationships between students and faculty, and the gender makeup of faculty members at HBCUs. Lastly, this paper seeks to examine how some Black colleges have kept their gender ratio at roughly 50 percent, and recommend ways to recruit and retain Black students.

The disparity in gender at some HBCUs is much higher than others. For example, in 2009, Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia, had an enrolment of 72 percent women (IPEDS, 2009) and in 2009 Coppin State University in Baltimore, Maryland, had a female enrolment rate of 76 percent (IPEDS, 2009). This imbalance, which exists at most HBCUs, raises several questions about the current state and goals of HBCUs. Should HBCUs strive to have equal numbers of men and women on their college campuses? What are the consequences of gender disparities on dating at HBCUs? Should the gender of faculty at HBCUs reflect the gender of most of the students? These are just some of the questions that surface as a result of disparities in gender at HBCUs.

### **The gender landscape at HBCUs**

According to IPEDS data (2009), in 1992 there were 113,801 men enrolled at HBCUs and 163,026 women. Women were the majority but not overwhelmingly. In 2009 there were 125,102 men enrolled at HBCUs and 196,467 women. Although there was some growth in male enrolment at HBCUs between 1992 and 2009, there was a much larger growth in the female population. Specifically, there was a ten per cent increase in Black male enrolment and a 21 percent increase in female enrolment. Of note, there are five HBCUs with relatively equal male and female student bodies: Saint Augustine's College, Central State University, Trenholm State Technical College, Saint Paul College, and Benedict College. Moreover, five colleges (not including Morehouse College) have more men than women on their campus: Arkansas Baptist College, Edward Waters College, Concordia College-Selma, Livingstone College, and Texas College. Perhaps these institutions have information, strategies, and approaches as to how to recruit and retain Black men to HBCUs campuses from which other HBCUs can learn.

Tables 1 and 2 show that public HBCUs did a better job overall at maintaining the gender balance than private HBCUs in 1992. However, this advantage faded away by 2009, with private HBCUs boasting the most gender parity. The reasons for this change are yet to be explored by researchers or policymakers. We speculate that the drop in gender parity at public HBCUs could be related to funding issues (both individual and

TABLE 1  
*Top 10 HBCUs with the greatest gender parity, 1992*

Rank	Institute	Sector	Enrolment	Men	Women	Gender Balance
1	Barber-Scotia College	Private nonprofit 4-year or above	705	352	353	50%
2	North Carolina A&T State University	Public-4-year or above	7723	3803	3920	51%
3	Denmark Technical College	Public-2-year	597	293	304	51%
4	Lane College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	534	262	272	51%
5	St. Philip's College	Public-2-year	6166	3009	3157	51%
6	Prairie View A&M University	Public-4-year or above	5660	2744	3916	52%
7	Central State University	Public-4-year or above	3236	1568	1668	52%
8	University of Maryland Eastern Shore	Public-4-year or above	2430	1256	1174	48%
9	Virginia Union University	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	1511	720	791	52%
10	Meharry Medical College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	681	324	357	52%

Source: IPEDS, Enrolment based on Fall Term

institutional) and scholarship availability at public HBCUs; however, private HBCUs have also suffered due to economic trends. Another reason that private HBCUs might have greater gender parity is that they may emphasize the recruitment of men in more substantial ways in their

TABLE 2  
*Top 10 HBCUs with the greatest gender parity, 2009*

Rank	Institute	Sector	Enrolment	Men	Women	Gender Balance
1	Saint Pauls College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	584	293	291	50%
2	H Council Trenholm State Technical College	Public-2-year	1733	871	862	50%
3	Central State University	Public-4-year or above	2436	1231	1205	49%
4	Benedict College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	2983	1468	1515	51%
5	Saint Augustines College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	1529	779	750	49%
6	Jarvis Christian College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	628	298	330	53%
7	Huston-Tillotson University	Private nonprofit 4-year or above	882	418	464	53%
8	Miles College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	1791	848	943	53%
9	Southwestern Christian College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	201	106	95	47%
10	Virginia University of Lynchburg	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	327	154	173	53%

Source: IPEDS, Enrolment based on Fall Term



TABLE 3  
*Top 10 HBCUs with the highest proportion of men, 1992*

Rank	Institute	Sector	Enrolment	Men	Women	Gender Balance
1	Clinton Junior College	Private nonprofit-2-year	125	101	24	81%
2	Interdenominational Theological Center	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	382	261	121	68%
3	Knoxville College	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	914	579	335	63%
4	Allen University	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	228	138	90	61%
5	Selma University	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	285	170	115	60%
6	Southwestern Christian College	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	217	121	96	56%
7	Livingstone College	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	677	371	306	55%
8	Texas College	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	543	296	247	55%
9	J F Drake State Technical College	Public-2-year	870	467	403	54%
10	University of Maryland Eastern Shore	Public-4-year or above	2430	1256	1174	52%

(Note: Morehouse College is not included in this list since it is a single-sex institution)

Source: IPEDS, Enrolment, based on Fall Term

admissions materials. At this point, we have identified the disparities, but future research needs to uncover the institution-level reasons for them. The data in Tables 1 and 2 also show that four-year HBCUs are closer to gender parity than two-year HBCUs.

According to Table 3, in 1992 the ten HBCUs with the largest percentage of Black men were predominantly private and also quite small. The University of Maryland, Eastern Shore was the only public four-year institution in the ten schools and the only institution with an enrolment over 1000.

In 2009, as shown in Table 4, none of the HBCUs that boast the largest percentage of Black men were public and only two had over 1000 students (Livingstone and St. Augustine's College). Public HBCUs were not doing their share in terms of educating Black men in 1992 but are doing even less of their share in 2009. We can only speculate with regard to the reasons for the drop in men at public HBCUs or the increase at private HBCUs. These reasons might include curricular offerings, athletics, and funding availability.

Tables 5 and 6 depict the HBCUs with the smallest percentage of Black men. Of note, there are three institutions that appear in both 1992 (Table 5) and 2009 (Table 6): Dillard University; Xavier University of Louisiana; and Southern University at Shreveport. All three of these HBCUs are located in Louisiana. Dillard and Xavier have a national draw in terms of students; Southern less so. Louisiana as a state ranks very low in terms of its educational system at the K-12 level and this is having a significant impact on the opportunities for young Black men in the state. The problem is so vivid that Ron Mason, the Chancellor of the Southern University system has established a new program focused on Black men beginning at birth through college. His program aims to find those Black men that are often overlooked in the education system and uplift them while also supporting their educational endeavours (Gasman, 2012).

Another interesting aspect of the data in Table 6 is that among the HBCUs with the lowest percentages of men in 2009, only one has over 30 per cent – Alcorn State University; the rest of the HBCUs hover in the mid to high twenties in term of percentages. The campuses listed in Table 6 are overwhelmingly female. Alcorn has strong athletics, which most likely draw male students but, at 32 per cent male, athletics is not the draw that it could be. Although these demographic numbers are interesting and cause for alarm, many of the resulting situations that result from gender disparities cause more concern and should prompt us to concentrate on empowering, enrolling, and retaining Black men at HBCUs.

TABLE 4  
*Top 10 HBCUs with the highest proportion of men, 2009*

Rank	Institute	Sector	Enrolment	Men	Women	Gender Balance
1	Selma University	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	148	130	18	88%
2	Arkansas Baptist College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	640	403	237	63%
3	Edward Waters College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	831	479	352	58%
4	Concordia College-Selma	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	568	321	247	57%
5	Livingstone College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	1082	595	487	55%
6	Texas College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	964	524	440	54%
7	Interdenominational Theological Center	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	421	228	193	54%
8	Paul Quinn College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	171	91	80	53%
9	Southwestern Christian College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	201	106	95	53%
10	Saint Augustines College	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	1529	779	750	51%

(Note: Morehouse College is not included in this list since it is a single-sex institution)

Source: IPEDS, Enrolment, based on Fall Term

TABLE 5  
*Top 10 HBCUs with the lowest proportion of men, 1992*

Rank	Institute	Sector	Enrolment	Men	Women	Gender Balance
1	Lewis College of Business	Private-nonprofit-2-year	322	73	249	23%
2	Harris-Stowe State University	Public-4-year or above	1978	473	1505	24%
3	Dillard University	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	1511	373	1138	25%
4	Le Moyne-Owen College	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	1205	338	867	28%
5	Southern University at Shreveport	Public-2-year	1067	302	765	28%
6	Fisk University	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	872	254	618	29%
7	Stillman College	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	888	271	617	31%
8	Xavier University of Louisiana	Private-nonprofit-4-year or above	3303	1017	2286	31%
9	Bishop State Community College	Public-2-year	2757	858	1899	31%
10	Concordia College-Selma	Private-nonprofit-2-year	356	111	245	31%

(Note: Morehouse College is not included in this list since it is a single-sex institution)

Source: IPEDS, Enrolment, based on Fall Term

TABLE 6  
*Top 10 HBCUs with the lowest proportion of men, 2009*

Rank	Institute	Sector	Enrolment	Men	Women	Gender Balance
1	Coppin State University	Public-4-year or above	3801	904	2897	24%
2	Southern University at Shreveport	Public-2-year	3014	751	2263	25%
3	University of the Virgin Islands	Public-4-year or above	2602	680	1922	26%
4	Dillard University	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	1011	272	739	27%
5	Clark Atlanta University	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	3873	1083	2790	28%
6	Southern University at New Orleans	Public-4-year or above	3141	880	2261	28%
7	Xavier University of Louisiana	Private nonprofit-4-year or above	3338	951	2387	28%
8	Winston-Salem State University	Public-4-year or above	6427	1877	4550	29%
9	Alcorn State University	Public-4-year or above	3334	1055	2279	32%
10	Harris Stowe University	Public-4-year or above	2025	708	1317	35%

Source: IPEDS, Enrolment, based on Fall Term

## **Dating, HIV/AIDS, and gender at HBCUs**

Recently, in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Ernie Suggs (2012) wrote ‘Men are a distinct minority at HBCUs’: the title of this article suggests that these institutions should take responsibility for increasing the number of men on these campuses. Another issue explored in the article is the different ways that gender disparities are affecting the dating climate at HBCUs. One of the consequences of the gender imbalance is a phenomenon called ‘man sharing’. Man sharing is one of the ways in which some women and men are dealing with the drastic difference in enrolment between men and women at HBCUs. Man sharing refers to a woman dating a man, knowing that he is dating another woman, who is also aware of the man’s other woman. Other women choose not to date on campus and others choose not to date at all. There are some drawbacks for man sharing. For example, man sharing can lead to greater chances of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. For those who participate in man sharing relationships it eliminates the option for monogamy and offers a less likely chance of these women or men building relationships that might later lead to marriage (Alleyne and Gaston, 2010) Is dating a significant part the college experience? Some would say yes, arguing that these women, who are heterosexual, at HBCUs are missing out on that experience.

There used to be an expectation that at college both Black women and men would find compatible mates in order to get married and have children (Barna, 1990; Gallup, 1984). However, for the women who choose to date at HBCUs this is no longer the expectation. For example, Wallace (1995) discusses the climate for Black undergraduate female students at a particular HBCU campus in the 1960s. The author states that she left the HBCU after her first semester because her female peers were more focused on finding romantic partners than on advancing the status of Black people. Wallace was struggling to understand and reconcile what it meant to be a feminist. Her ideological conflicts in the HBCU setting led to an overwhelming sense of isolation (Wallace, 1995).

The second and most prominent theme in the literature on gender imbalance has to do with HIV/AIDS rates on HBCU campuses. HIV/AIDS affects Black people at disproportionate rates, especially Black women (Hill-Collins, 2004). The rates for HIV/AIDS cases on HBCU campuses are alarming and are one of the consequences of the gender disparity at some of these institutions. In North Carolina, HIV/AIDS cases among Black college-going students increased from six cases in 2000 to 30 in 2003 and these cases are linked to the Black colleges in the state ([www.cdc.com](http://www.cdc.com), 2005).

HIV/AIDS on HBCU campuses is on the rise: there are organisations, individuals, institutions, and government programs attempting to address this issue. For instance, in 2004, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry disbursed millions of dollars to HBCUs to, 'promote health and quality of life by reducing the disproportionate burden of preventable disease, death and injury among specific racial and ethnic populations' (CDC/ATSDR, 2004). Johnson C Smith University (JCSU) in Charlotte, North Carolina has made the course, *HIV 101*, mandatory for all incoming freshmen at its historically Black institution (Hawkins, 2004). JCSU has since 1997 taken a position to educate its students on the risks of HIV/AIDS. Organizations such as National Minority AIDS Council and the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS have launched partnerships with Bennett College in Greensboro, NC, Virginia Union University in Richmond, VA., Howard University in Washington, DC, and Bowie State University in Maryland, to provide financial support for campus-based awareness about HIV/AIDS on HBCU campuses (Hawkins, 2004). There is a sustainable amount of work being done to solve this issue on HBCU campuses but more could be done to address prevention of HIV/AIDS, provide support, and offer a sense of community for individuals affected, to improve their higher education experience.

### **Gender and professional relationships at HBCUs**

Disparities in gender affect not only personal relationships developed at HBCUs, but also professional relationships developed with faculty and staff at these institutions (Gasman, 2007). Gender imbalance among students and/or faculty can potentially have an effect on the success and education of students at HBCUs. Gender disparities also come into play with the challenges that women faculty face at HBCUs. To what extent should the faculty of colleges or universities represent the student body population? This section of the paper will begin to explore the ways in which gender has affected the professional relationships of faculty and students at HBCUs.

Although Black female students make up most of the student body, faculty and administration at HBCUs still represent a male dominated world, and, female professors at HBCUs experience discrimination in pay and in position (Bonner, 2001). Therefore, gender is not just an issue that needs to be addressed with regard to the students at HBCUs, but an issue that is affecting the faculty at HBCUs:

HBCU faculty women were less likely to be tenured (37.1 per cent) than were men (43.4 per cent) and were less likely to hold the ranks

of professor (33.7 per cent compared to 46.8 per cent) and associate professor (29.0 per cent compared to 33.6 per cent)

Bonner (2001:185)

Women on the tenure track at HBCUs were more likely than men to be among the lower ranks of instructors and lecturers as well as the nonacademic ranks (16.6 per cent compared to 11.5 per cent) (Bonner, 2001). Additionally, Gwendolyn Wright (2008) argues that women have been excluded from the office of presidency within higher education. Although, there is an increasing proportion of female presidents at HBCUs, the numbers still do not reflect the student body at these institutions:

Women are presidents of the smaller institutions that is, those with student populations mostly below 1,000 and small faculties and staffs. Men typically head the larger, more prestigious HBCUs while women, on average, are clustered in the lower ranks and earn lower salaries than do their male counterparts.

Bonner (2001: 185)

Although women predominate in the student ranks at HBCUs they continue to be held back in terms of the faculty and administrative ranks.

### **Recruiting black men to HBCU campuses**

Byrd and Edwards (2009) recommend recruiting Black men directly from high schools and community colleges into HBCUs through partnerships between these institutions. HBCUs need to take the initiative to build relationships with neighboring high schools and community colleges with large percentages of Black men, in order to promote awareness of their institution and increase the enrolment of Black men to their HBCU. HBCUs can create access and bridge programs with these feeder institutions specifically to target and recruit Black men into their institution (Byrd and Edwards, 2009).

In addition, HBCUs can foster relationships with middle schools to identify high-achieving Black men at this early stage and form mentoring opportunities through high school and into college, which would promote application and enrolment by Black men at HBCUs (Byrd and Edwards, 2009; Sen, 2006).

Increasingly, HBCUs must maximize their skills in attaining parental, institutional, community, statewide, and federal support to more effectively provide programs and mentorship, with



performance incentives, for those who at highest risk for dropout and academic failure.

Byrd and Edwards (2009:144)

HBCUs should ensure the exposure of their college campuses to Black men through pipeline programs that begin at middle and high school. Moreover, there should be faculty led programming at HBCUs that targets and enhances the motivation and preparation of Black men to increase their access to and success in HBCUs (Byrd and Edwards, 2009).

To close the college gender gap HBCUs must be aggressive and strategic in their recruitment and planning efforts to target high-achieving Black men, and make this a priority at their institution.

Recruiting large numbers of African American men to the HBCU should be a campus-wide effort. Leaders of departments, colleges, and schools within the HBCU must be encouraged to work collaboratively with admissions departments to devise recruitment and retention plans that contain very clear goals, objectives, activities, and measurable outcomes for recruiting and retaining Black men.

Byrd and Edwards (2009: 145)

HBCUs would benefit from implementing Saturday academies/clinics and recruitment fairs to offer guidance to students about the college admission process, which can often be confusing and discouraging to students. HBCU Black male recruitment efforts need not only be located in large urban areas, but also rural areas and small communities. Further, HBCUs need to be creative in finding additional resources or restructuring existing resources to finance their recruitment initiatives to increase the enrolment of Black men. Grants, gifts, and the support of faculty and staff can be used for effective recruitment (Byrd and Edwards, 2009).

### **Retaining black men on HBCU campuses**

Lundy-Wagner and Gasman (2011) argue that a nurturing and supportive environment on HBCU campuses can promote postsecondary matriculation and success for African American male and female students. In addition, Palmer and Gasman (2008) found the following factors to be significant in increasing the academic success of Black men and women HBCU students: faculty relationships where professors display empathy and support to students; supportive

administrators who go above and beyond the call of duty for students; peer relationships that provide motivation and encouragement; access to role models and mentors; and having an overall supportive campus community. When

... professors and administrators were accessible and displayed a willingness to form supportive relationships with students ... these relationships encouraged persistence because the students realized that professors and administrators cared about them and their success at the university.

Palmer and Gasman (2008:58)

Palmer and Wood (2012) recognise that Black male college students are not a homogenous group, highlighting potential variances including those who are gay, high-achieving, academically unprepared, low-income, in STEM, American immigrants, millennials, collegiate fathers, affiliated with fraternities, and athletes. Recognising these and other differences, and not grouping Black men as one monolithic group, is key to working with and increasing the success of Black male college students.

In terms of the Black female experience at HBCUs, Allen *et al* (1989:30) state that: 'developmental profiles of black men evidenced advantage relative to black females' on HBCU campuses. Their research found that Black female HBCU students felt more anxiety in terms of competition than their Black male counterparts. These women felt less competent and tended to be less assertive in comparison to their male peers. Black female students at HBCUs were more willing to take on roles that made them seem less competent in order to not seem as threatening to men (Allen *et al*, 1989). It is therefore critical to pay more attention to mentoring and climate to decrease possible negative effects and increase the success and retention of Black female HBCU students.

When students feel valued, challenged, supported, and nourished, they are destined to thrive (Palmer and Gasman, 2008). To aid retention faculty members are therefore urged to go beyond their prescribed roles of teaching and research to establish meaningful relationships with their students. Faculty should also partner with student affairs administrators to enhance student success. Higher education institutions need to place more emphasis on student advising and mentoring in the criteria for tenure, in order to encourage faculty to become more supportive of students. Administrators can also support, mentor, and serve as role models to students; and encourage students to form substantive relationships with their peers to build a strong social network. Such

collaboration across the institution will ensure that the campus is truly a supportive and safe space that values student persistence and success (Palmer and Gasman, 2008).

### **HBCUs taking action**

Some colleges and universities are addressing their gender disparity. Texas College has increased the number of African American men that enrol in the college with its Black Male Initiative, working hard to increase the number of African American men who enrol at the school from different areas of Texas such as Tyler, Dallas, Houston and Fort Worth. The college aims to have a 5 per cent annual increase in its Black male population through this initiative. The Initiative is also creating African American male learning communities to bolster academic learning, using focus groups. Each student will complete the Myers-Briggs Assessment Inventory to determine their learning style and adapt programming to cater to all learning styles. Specific focus areas will include etiquette, interviewing skills, professional dress, financial skills, budgeting, and conflict resolution. There will also be a community service component to the program, and students will be encouraged to participate in leadership opportunities on campus.

Edward Waters College has created the Black Male College Explorers Program (BMCEP), focused on African American males who have a high possibility of dropping out of high school. Middle and high school professionals are asked to identify 'at-risk' Black males in grades 7 – 11 to participate in the program. The initiative aims to prevent students from leaving high school, to foster greater knowledge and education in a positive environment, and to increase understanding of the college admission process. BMCEP staff work with parents and community members to help students acquire the ability and skills to become self-sufficient adults in the future. Counsellors monitor and document student performance in the program and in the student's public school and develop evaluation procedures. The courses in which students will study include mathematics, language arts, reading, science, social studies, and information technology; and there are academic and summer components. A supportive environment that encourages and enhances motivation, self-discipline, and learning, and student success is expected to increase college admission numbers.

Central State University has a program to support African American men who want to attend college but find it difficult to fund their education. This university provides several scholarships specifically for Black men to help students who meet admission criteria to pay for their tuition. For example, the Lewis Lattimer Scholarship for entrance into

the College of Education requires a minimum 3.0/4.0 high school GPA and/or a minimum score of 21 on the ACT. This scholarship is renewable for up to \$6,000 if the student maintains a minimum 3.0/4.0 undergraduate GPA in education. There are similar requirements for the NAACP Hubertus WV Willems Scholarship for Male Students, but this also requires the student to major in engineering, chemistry, physics or mathematical sciences.

Morehouse College, the only US Black all-male postsecondary institution, is arguably the standard for enrolling and retaining Black men. Widespread name recognition means that Morehouse typically enrolls 2600 students (Suggs, 2012), but it also provides the Stamps Leadership Scholarships to male students with a minimum 3.7/4.0 GPA. Students receive full scholarships valued at approximately \$200,000 each. Students also have access to an enrichment fund of \$10,000 each to support study abroad trips, undergraduate research trips, unpaid internships and academic or co-curricular conferences; thus, increasing overall college success.

### **Future research**

Our paper provides a foundation for additional research, making clear the gender disparities and successes as well as some concomitants of gender disparities. Future research on gender at HBCUs might focus on the strategies that HBCUs use to attract male students to their campuses; with in-depth study of successful institutions and less successful institutions. In addition, future research could focus on the experiences of students at HBCUs in terms of personal relationships and dating. We are beginning to understand what is happening on HBCU campuses, but we need deeper understanding. Centring on the experiences of students and their dating patterns should shed light on the effects of gender imbalance beyond the important but narrow focus on HIV/AIDS. There should also be more research on the relationship between faculty and the students at HBCUs. This relationship is particularly important to the academic success of students attending these institutions. Gender disparities at HBCUs are similar to the national trends at institutions of higher education in the United States, but the underlying socio-economic and educational situation of African Americans make it imperative that more progress be made for Black men.

### **Conclusion**

The significant gap between women and men at HBCUs has created some fascinating dynamics on these campuses. This paper has presented descriptive statistics detailing the changes in gender on

HBCU campuses between 1992 and 2009; documented how gender imbalances on HBCU campuses have led to greater number of HIV/AIDS cases; discussed the effects of gender disparities on the personal relationships between students and professional relationships with faculty; and recommended ways to recruit and retain Black male students at HBCUs. It is significant that at both HBCUs and predominantly white institutions Black men finish college at lower rates than women. Although some HBCUs have devised specific programs actively to address low male enrolment rates, and some have been successful in maintaining or restoring gender balance, more HBCUs need to attend to the gender disparity, which can have wide negative effects on both students and faculty at HBCUs. As campuses across the globe continue to diversify, it is imperative that administrators and faculty stay attuned to growing gender disparities among these groups in order to ensure the optimal learning environment for all students.

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