

¹²Robert A. Kaye. "A Required Counseling-Study Skills Program for Failing College Freshmen." *Journal of College Student Personnel*. 13 (March, 1972) 159-162.

¹³Andrew Goodrich. *Developing a Data-Driven Retention Model for Improving Minority Student Persistence in Predominantly White and Historically Black Colleges*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979).

¹⁴Ron Simmons and C. Maxwell-Simmons. *Principles of Success in Programs for Minority Students*. (Hoboken, NJ: Stevens Institute of Technology, 1978).

Critique

Increased retention of minority undergraduates is a goal that can be supported for a variety of reasons, from the avoidance of human waste, to concern for balanced institutional budgets, to the desirability of turning out larger numbers of minority graduates who will become professional role models for the next generation. The authors have presented a state-of-the-art review of some promising retention programs, together with recommendations for strengthening such programs.

The changes in student recruitment pools since the open access period of the 1960s have been, reasonably enough, accompanied by changes in institutional strategies for retention of these diverse groups. As a significant proportion of the "non-traditional" student body, minority students have been the focus of special concern and of programs growing from that concern, since their attrition rates have been higher than those for white students. The nature of these retention programs, the authors argue, must reflect the mission and goals of the institutions housing them, for each educational institution brings forces and demands of a particular type and strength to bear on its students.

Despite these institution-specific stresses, there are, it would seem, relatively universal predictors of minority attrition. The authors summarize the characteristics of several program models developed from these predictors and present recommendations in the areas of the environment, the faculty and staff, and the students which build

upon their summary of exemplary programs.

While the selection of some models and omission of others can be argued—why was UCLA’s well-developed program not mentioned, for example—the general premises of the selected models are consistent with the best retention programs nation-wide.

In discussing the educational environment, the author’s recommendations regarding admissions, enrollment and financial aid are useful. Orientation is a much more complex subject, however. Pre-admission orientation for minorities can easily backfire, stigmatizing them and requiring them to leave much-needed employment well before school begins. Ongoing alliances with feeder schools can provide means for transmitting some of this orientation information, and “rolling” orientation sessions—keyed to present assistance in topical areas when the need arises might be productive alternatives.

On the subject of courses, the authors did not speak to the need for relevance in course content, the strongest issue to come from our recent research with minority graduates, and a frequently mentioned priority elsewhere. Racist bias in instructional materials and the absence of minority role models in the professional case examples presented in class contribute to the lack of career goals cited in this article as a factor contributing to attrition. Clearly, curriculum evaluation and revision has implications for minority retention.

The recommendations regarding faculty/staff involvement in the retention issue are clear, strong and urgent. In-service training programs are necessary to teach these support skills, to build helpful alliances, and to move institutional commitment from the theoretical level to the practical. Many administrators would welcome research and development of model training programs for these purposes.

Finally, while responsibility for educational performance rests with the student, institutions have accepted, if only to keep their enrollments up, a share in that responsibility. Sensitive faculty and staff welcome assistance such as here presented in avoiding or overcoming barriers to educational performance. Further delineation of the types of institutional support which most effectively compensate for environmental deficiencies would be welcome.

Linda M.C. Abbott
California School of Professional
Psychology - Fresno