

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF
UNDERPREPARED AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS AND
GRADUATION/RETENTION RATES AT TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

A Dissertation

by

James Robert White

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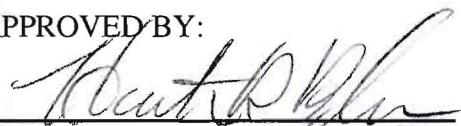
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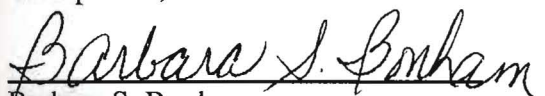
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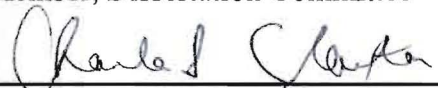
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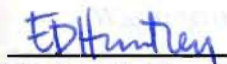
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ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF UNDERPREPARED AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS AND GRADUATION/RETENTION RATES AT TWO-YEAR COLLEGES. (July 1997)

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A primary enrollment path for African-Americans has been two-year colleges (community and technical), the gateway to further postsecondary education. However, African-American students are not graduating in large numbers (comparable to the majority population). The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of several factors (i.e., age, gender, financial aid, matriculation status, success in highest level developmental mathematics course, and first college level mathematics course) to persistence and retention. This study further explored the relationship of these factors to first-semester Grade Point Average (GPA) and cumulative GPA.

Stepwise multiple regression analyses were used to determine the significance and the amount of variance which these factors accounted for in the students' first semester GPA and cumulative GPA. The subjects of this study were a subsample selected from the sample of students included in the National Study of Developmental Education (Boylan, Bliss, & Bonham, 1993). The students included in the original sample were academically underprepared students

who were randomly selected from five types of institutions located in five major regions of the United States: (a) community colleges, (b) technical colleges, (c) four-year private colleges, (d) four-year public colleges, and (e) research universities. For this study, the students selected from the sample were African-American students enrolled in two-year colleges (community and technical colleges).

Why study African-American students at community and technical colleges, rather than at universities? This was done because while a large number of minorities seek their education through two-year schools, only a very small percentage of African-Americans are successful at two-year institutions (Boylan & Bonham, 1992). This situation has serious implications for local, state, and national education policy makers, and this dissertation may cast light on possible programmatic responses.

Equal access to college enrollment does not guarantee retention. Generally speaking, African-American students already have access to two-year colleges. But the success rate of African-American students at these institutions is disappointing (Boylan, Saxon, & White, 1994). This dissertation generated information that can be useful in the design of policies and interventions that will contribute to helping African-American students be more successful in two-year colleges.