

Are Historically Black Colleges and Universities Relevant in the 21st Century?

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Abstract: The original purpose of Historically Black Colleges and Universities was to offer African-Americans the opportunity to receive advanced degrees. Legal measures taken to integrate schools significantly impacted the mission of HBCUS. Recently, HBCUs have been plagued with low enrollment, dwindling graduate rates and funding received from donors and federal government. The relevancy of many HBCUs has been under fire over the past decade. This project seeks to investigate these issues of relevancy at HBCUs from the point of view of students, faculty members and alumni of these institutions. The researcher proposes a three-part investigative series of news packages to assess the current state of HBCUs in Florida and a multimedia website to accompany this project:
hbcurelevancy.yolasite.com.

Introduction

Historically Black Colleges and Universities, also known as HBCUs, were established to provide African-Americans' access to institutes of higher education. Before the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* case in 1954, HBCUs were a necessity because, at the time, racial segregation of students was legal. HBCUs were needed to facilitate blacks wanting to receive an advanced degree (Harper, 2007). Recently, the relevance of HBCUs has been called into question (Alim, 2011). The heavy recruitment of minority students at Predominately White Institutes (PWIs), and increased graduation rates of these students at these institutes, has contributed significantly to this issue. Graduation statistics show on average forty-two percent of African-American students graduate from universities nationwide. This is in comparison to their white counterparts with a graduation rate of sixty-two percent. These numbers are even more abysmal at HBCUs with nearly two-thirds or more of all enrolling black students not earning a diploma (Journal of Black Education, 2007).

The goal of this project is to discover the differences in experiences of African-American students at PWIs and HBCUs. In addition, this project will examine how these differences hinder or help these students obtain success and graduate. Finally, the reporter hopes to discover if HBCUs are evolving and remaining competitive institutes of higher learning.

This project is significant because a review of relative literature shows a sparse number of qualitative studies about this subject. Researchers who have studied this topic found a disparity between African-American students enrolling in college, graduating and gaining employment after in comparison to their white counterparts (Allen, 1992; Mikyong & Conrad, 2006; Brower & Ketterhagen, 2004). While statistical data provides part of the picture, researchers have not interacted with students at these institutes to look deeper into the issue. This

quantitative approach to the problem provides descriptive data but no explanatory information. It answers “what” but not “why” or “how”.

A qualitative research approach, particularly in-depth interviews of students, alumni, faculty and staff, is necessary to gain a better understanding into how blacks achieve success at their respective institutes. This is where a project of this magnitude is necessary. The scope of this project seeks to go beyond utilizing descriptive numerical data and dig deep into why there is discrepancy among black students and their white counterparts. The reporter will synthesize previous research, contribute new research and communicate the findings in a condensed and understandable manner for the general public through a series of investigative broadcast reports.

Literature Review

The Origin and Growth of HBCUs

Historically Black Colleges and Universities were designed to provide “academic equity afforded other Americans” to African-Americans during a period of widespread racial discrimination (Harper, 2007). With the help of donations from philanthropists, the first HBCU, Cheyney State Teachers College, was founded in 1837, granting access to higher education to black students (Harper, 2007). Up until the Morrill Act of 1890, black institutes were solely controlled by white administrators (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009). The Morrill Act established a separate and unequal pattern of education by legalizing the segregation of black and white public institutions (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009).

By 1950, approximately ninety percent of blacks attending a college or university were enrolled at HBCUs (Nichols, 2004). However, following the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision (1954), the future of HBCUs became threatened (Benton, 2001). Once segregation became illegal, Predominately White Institutes pressured by abolitionists and legislatures, began heavy recruitment of top African-American students. As a result, by 1967,

seventy-five percent of black students enrolled at institutes of higher education attended PWIs (Nichols, 2004). The enrollment of black students attending HBCUs increased by less than half the amount as the enrollment of PWIs during 1960-1970 (Harper, 2007).

Struggling to remain competitive in recruitment of black students, HBCUs solicited help from Congress for funding to offset the lack of donations received. The Title III Act of Higher Education of 1965 attempted to address these issues for HBCUs. The act officially defined an HBCU as “any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principle mission was, and is, the education of black Americans historically,” (Avery, 2009, p.328). In conjunction with the Title III Act, Congress set aside funding for loans, grants and work study opportunities specifically to assist HBCUs. This was in an effort to create a level playing field and to increase racial equality in higher education (Harper, 2007).

During this period, efforts to increase diversity prompted many white universities to allow blacks in with lower admission standards to meet a certain race quota. However, in 1978 the Supreme Court prohibited racial quotas but still allowed universities to consider race a factor in admissions (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009). Terms like “Affirmative Action” and “Reverse Racism” were coined during this time to describe admission tactics for enrolling larger numbers of African-American students at PWIs.

As enrollment of African-American students increased at PWIs, researchers (Gurin & Epps, 1975; Fleming, 1984) began to inquire about which environments were best suited to fostering the success of black students in higher education. Research about African-Americans in higher education focused on academic achievement, postgraduate degrees and overall psychological achievements of black students in comparison to their white counterparts (Allen, 1992). Gurin and Epps (1975) completed a survey questionnaire of black students enrolled at HBCUs and

PWIs. Over 5,000 students were sampled over a four-year period. They found a positive correlation between campus racial compositions and academic achievement. Their findings revealed that during this time black students felt ostracized and an overall lack of confidence in their abilities. The results of their study led the researchers to conclude African-American students had increased psychological adjustment, more significant academic gains and greater cultural awareness than blacks who attended PWIs (Allen, 1992)

Other researchers (Fleming, 1984) found a disconnect between the needs of African-American students and the expectations of faculty and staff at PWIs. Black students sampled for the study reported lower grades and less favorable relationships with their professors than their white counterparts in the same class level at PWIs. Fleming found that schools with a lack of remedial and tutorial programs available to black students were key hindrances to their success as well. During the 1960s-1980s research on black students at PWIs revealed a common theme of disengagement between the needs of African-American students and expectations of staff and faculty at PWIs (Allen, 1992).

Allen (1992) completed a survey among a random sample of black students at PWIs and HBCUs. Allen investigated the relationships between academic achievement, social outcome and demographic characteristics as predictors of student success. Implications from Allen's study were interpersonal relationships were the x-factor in bridging the gap between individual predispositions and the institutional context or setting. Ultimately, Allen concluded that the strongest contributor to the success of black students was the concept of integration. Students who were well integrated into campus social and academic life are more likely to graduate and be successful students (Allen, 1992).

HBCUs: 1990-Present

Before the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, ninety percent of African-American students enrolled in universities attended HBCUs (Nichols, 2004). By 1967, that number dropped to seventy-five percent (Nichols, 2004.) By 1996, only seventeen percent of African-American students enrolled at colleges and universities attended an HBCU (Brower & Ketterhagen, 2004). Currently, HBCUs enroll about thirteen percent of black undergraduate students but produce approximately twenty-two percent of black Bachelor's degrees and eleven percent of Master's and Doctoral degrees received by African-Americans (Harper, 2007). This number is in comparison to 1977 when over thirty-five percent of all Bachelor's degrees awarded to blacks were from an HBCU (Harper, 2007). A 2004 Education Trust report revealed only thirty-nine percent of African-Americans who enroll in college actually receive a degree in comparison to fifty-seven percent of white students (Harper, 2007)

Mikyong and Conrad (2006) studied students from over ten different HBCUs and thirty-four PWIs using a survey method over nine years. The researchers found no significant difference in the GPA of students who attended PWIs vs. HBCUs. They found that HBCUs offered a lower student-faculty ratio, lower enrollment, and higher student-faculty interaction, which were all positive predictors of student development (Mikyong & Conrad, 2006). They did find that the overall percentage of transfers during undergraduate years were higher at HBCUs. While their research found no significant differences in degree completion, the researchers concluded their findings supported previous research in that HBCUs have a greater impact of graduation rates of African-American students (Mikyong & Conrad, 2006). A survey completed by Brower and Ketterhagen (2004) found that blacks at PWIs feel more connected to members of the same ethnic group but disconnected from the campus as a whole. They also elaborated on previous

research about the importance of integration and found blacks who set realistic academic goals and find a balance with social life have the same graduation rates as white students at PWIs. When there is match between the student's expectations there were no significant differences found in the success of black students attending either an HBCU or a PWI (Brown, 2003).

In addition to struggles recruiting and enrolling African-American students, HBCUs have dealt with severe budget cuts. An analysis of state funding (Lum, 2001) during the 2000-2001 school year found the average per-student allocation of appropriated state funds was \$6,064 at public HBCUs compared to \$10,266 at public PWIs (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009).

Adding on to issues of funding and retention in 2000, the National Telecommunication and Information Administration used the term "digital divide" to describe the technological lagging of HBCUs behind their counterparts at PWIs. Less than twenty-five percent of students at HBCUs owned computers and only three percent of HBCUs providing funding for students to purchase them (Harper, 2001).

With HBCUs trailing behind PWIs in recruitment, enrollment, retention and funding of African-American students, they have recently been heavily criticized for not remaining competitive. In fact, many critics of HBCUs have called into question whether they are still needed to educate African-American students seeking advanced degrees.

The Future of HBCUs

Challenges faced by HBCUs have been the topic of public speculation as well as an issue of debate at many conferences recently. The National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education's 37th annual dialogue discussed this issue of relevance in 2011. Executive Director of the White House Initiative on HBCUs, Dr. John Wilson, Jr., said, "It's a bad time for another round of negative publicity for us," (Alim, 2011, ¶ 3). He cites the media attention on

HBCUs as the reason for apprehension from outside donors to contribute funding to these institutes. Several panel members argued that HBCUs have been under attack. They also noted increased diversity overall as a reason HBCUs are not garnering the funding needed to properly educate students. Panelist Dr. Richard Vedder contributed to the discussion: “As racial progress is made, some private philanthropist may find less compelling the need to support HBCUs than heretofore. I suspect economic necessity is going to force many of you to rethink what you do and how you do it” (Alim, 2011, ¶ 14).

The sentiments of the discussion were a need for HBCU leaders to look forward to the future of education and how their respective institutes can remain a part of it. Some changes leaders called for were how graduation rates are calculated. The Education Department’s Integrated Post-secondary Education Data doesn’t calculate graduation rates of students who don’t complete their degree program in six years (Alim, 2011). Those present at the discussion acknowledged this may negatively skew graduation rates at HBCUs because many of their students graduate in eight years.

Where does this leave the future of HBCUs? Will increased funding help perpetuate the growth of HBCUs into the 21st Century? How do students feel about the quality of the education they’re receiving? President of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, Della Britton, questions the ability of HBCUs to survive higher education in the 21st Century: “In more recent years, the image of the HBCUs has faded, as budget cuts, aging buildings and failing infrastructures, not to mention the preference of many students to attend other colleges and universities, have undercut the once vital role many of these schools played in educating and uplifting the black community,” (Britton, 2011, ¶ 2). In addition, Britton noted funding plays a major role in low competition rates among HBCUs and ties to the major concern by the government, charities and

other donors to these schools with graduation rates. “The national college graduation rate for black students generally was four points higher than for students at HBCUs, challenging the deeply held notion that HBCUs are better suited to help black students finish school,” (Britton, 2011, ¶ 4). Further research is needed to assess the ability of HBCUs to foster the academic pursuits of African-American in higher graduation? Can HBCUs still live up to their mission statements and promises and is it even necessary for them to do so in 2011? The proposed research project seeks to provide insight into these currently unanswered questions.

Trends of Black Students in Higher Education

The Progress of Black Graduation Rates at Selected Historically Black Colleges and Universities
(Ranked by the Gain/Loss in Black Graduation Rates)

Institution	1998 Rate	2005 Rate	Difference
Fisk University	46%	64%	+18
Lincoln University (Missouri)	12	25	+13
Univ. of Md.-Eastern Shore	31	44	+13
Alcorn State University	33	45	+12
Howard University	47	56	+9
Morehouse College	55	64	+9
Prairie View A&M Univ.	28	37	+9
Winston-Salem State Univ.	39	48	+9
Cheney Univ. of Pennsylvania	23	30	+7
Paine College	20	27	+7
Stillman College	37	44	+7
Virginia State University	33	40	+7
Elizabeth City State Univ.	50	55	+5
Spelman College	72	77	+5
Jackson State University	32	36	+4
Tennessee State University	32	36	+4
Tuskegee University	44	48	+4
Morgan State University	35	39	+4
Alabama State University	20	23	+3
Coppin State College	23	26	+3
Delaware State University	29	32	+3
Texas Southern University	11	14	+3
Alabama A&M University	35	37	+2
Bennett College	44	46	+2
North Carolina Central Univ.	47	49	+2
Southern University	25	26	+1
Fort Valley State University	25	25	0
Livingstone College	31	31	0
North Carolina A&T State Univ.	44	44	0
Rust College	33	33	0
South Carolina State Univ.	46	46	0
Bethune-Cookman College	32	31	-1
LeMoyne-Owen College	18	16	-2
Mississippi Valley State Univ.	39	37	-2
Univ. of District of Columbia	11	7	-4
Virginia Union University	28	24	-4
Fayetteville State University	46	40	-6
Grambling State University	41	33	-8
Shaw University	39	31	-8
Lincoln University (Penn.)	49	40	-9
Florida A&M University	44	34	-10

Note: To avoid fluctuations from year to year, the graduation rate data listed here are four-year averages for the year noted and the three previous years. Due to the reporting requirements of the NCAA, these are the only historically black colleges and universities for which we have graduation data going back more than four years.

Source of Statistics: NCAA. Chart from *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*.

At Flagship State Universities, the University of Virginia Is the Leader By Far in Successfully Graduating Black Students

Ranking the States by the College Graduation Rate for Black Students at the State's Flagship Public University

University of Virginia	86.0 %	West Virginia University	49.0 %
Univ. of Calif.-Berkeley	70.0	Louisiana State Univ.	46.0
Univ. of New Hampshire	70.0	University of Iowa	45.0
Univ. of N.C.-Chapel Hill	69.0	University of Kentucky	45.0
University of Michigan	67.0	Univ. of Mississippi	45.0
Penn State University	65.0	Ohio State University	43.0
Univ. of Connecticut	65.0	Univ. of North Dakota	43.0
University of Florida	65.0	National Average*	42.0
University of Delaware	63.0	University of Oklahoma	41.0
State Univ. of New York	63.0	University of Kansas	40.0
Rutgers Univ. (N.J.)	61.0	University of Maryland	40.0
University of Georgia	61.0	Univ. of Rhode Island	40.0
University of Texas	61.0	University of Montana	39.0
University of Illinois	60.0	University of Arizona	38.0
University of Vermont	58.0	University of Idaho	38.0
Univ. of Washington	58.0	Univ. of New Mexico	37.0
University of Missouri	56.0	University of Minnesota	35.0
University of Maine	55.0	University of Wyoming	35.0
University of Alabama	54.0	University of Hawaii	34.0
Univ. of South Carolina	54.0	University of Nevada	33.0
University of Oregon	53.0	University of Arkansas	32.0
University of Colorado	52.0	University of Nebraska	32.0
University of Tennessee	52.0	University of Utah	32.0
Univ. of Massachusetts	50.0	Univ. of South Dakota	25.0
Indiana University	49.0	University of Alaska	15.0
University of Wisconsin	49.0	Univ. of Dist. of Col.	7.0

*For all large state-operated universities nationwide.
Source: ABRE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT analysis of data from the NCAA.

Source: *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2007.

Research Questions/ Interview Questions

R1: How do PWIs remain relevant in catering to the needs of African-American students?

- a. What specific programs and services do PWIs offer that cater to the needs of minority systems?
- b. How effective have these programs been in recruiting and retaining minority students?

R2: What steps are HBCUS taking with recruitment, educational resources, faculty and staff to remain relevant and competitive with PWIs?

R3: What role do African-American faculty and administration play in fostering success and maintaining relevance among African-American students at PWIS and HBCUs?

R4: Does racial composition affect the ability of African-American students to be successful in institutes of higher education?

R5: Do African-American alumni from HBCUs believe their respective university prepared them for post-graduate life?

- a. What changes or improvement would they recommend to their Alma mater?

Methods

The reporter plans to answer the aforementioned research questions through a series of in-depth news pieces. The series of three pieces will be produced in broadcast format and presented to the WUFT-TV News Director for broadcast. Each of these pieces will run a minimum of two minutes and a maximum of three minutes. Since each piece will be submitted to the WUFT-TV News Director for broadcast it is important to stay within the strict time constraints for air. Also, the reporter will be compiling a portfolio from these pieces to send out to various broadcast markets for a position upon graduation so the time and format of each piece is a vital component to achieving the long-term goals of this project. An in-depth review of the literature and media coverage of blacks at public universities nationwide has shown a disparity between black students and their white counterparts. Recently, the topic of the relevancy of HBCUs has been a subject of debate among black leaders; however, their assertions have

resulted from statistical enrollment and graduation data. These studies have not looked deeper into the issues through the eyes of the students, faculty and administration directly involved. In addition, PWIs have seen growing enrollment rates and higher rates of black students than HBCUs though these numbers remain appallingly low. Previous research has not examined ways PWIs have been successful in assisting black students in receiving degrees. Also, previous research has not offered recommendations or solutions. This is where the value of this project becomes evident. The reporter plans to add to this topic of discussion with the hope of inspiring further research.

The scope of this study will be limited to two Florida public universities: University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) in Tallahassee, Florida. These two institutes were selected because they are both public institutes within close proximity to one another which diminishes any geographic discrepancy. In addition, according to *US News and World Report* (2011), FAMU is ranked number one among all public HBCUs and number ten among all HBCUs overall, making it the highest ranked HBCU in Florida and the largest with an enrollment of 10, 244 students. The University of Florida is the highest ranked public institute in Florida as well as the largest with a total enrollment of 50, 961 students (*US News and World Report*, 2011.) These factors make these two universities the most appropriate choices for the reporter's goals of this project.

The reporter will complete a three-part series of pieces with a maximum length of three minutes per package. The series will air on WUFT-TV, be featured on the WUFT website and on the reporter's multimedia website accompanying the project. Each of these pieces will run a minimum of two minutes and a maximum of three minutes. The multimedia website (hbcurelevancy.yolasite.com) will feature all three series pieces, with a written component and a page for additional information featuring raw interviews, any used footage and graphs/tables elaborating on the complex issues discussed in the news packages.

Topics for three series pieces

I. Package one (part one): How are HBCUs and PWIs supporting black students: academically, socially, financially?

This package will feature interviews from students and faculty as well as program directors associated with promoting campus involvement. What campus programs and organizations are offered to smooth the transition for black students? Are there career and financial aid counselors? Are there scholarships for minority students? Are African-American students taking part in these programs and do they find them helpful in their collegiate success?

Research Questions Answered:

- R1: How do PWIs remain relevant in catering to the needs of African-American students?
 - a. What specific programs and services do PWIs offer that cater to the needs of minority systems?
 - b. How effective have these programs been in recruiting and retaining minority students?
- R2: What steps are HBCUS taking with recruitment, educational resources, faculty and staff to remain relevant and competitive with PWIs?

II. Package two (part two): How important is faculty in a student's success?

In this package African-American faculty members from HBCUs and PWIs will be interviewed to share their experiences in teaching black students. Additionally, students at

HBCUs and PWIs will be interviewed to share the type of relationships they have with professors. Are there additional measures taken to help these students be successful? These faculty members and students will also be interviewed regarding their perceptions of each school and how funding and other resources may positively or negatively affect their ability to be successful in the classroom.

Research Question Addressed:

R3: What role do African-American faculty and administration play in fostering success and maintaining relevance among African-American students at PWIS and HBCUs?

III. Package three (Part three): A comparison/contrast of how PWIs and HBCUs recruit African-American students.

In this package a combination of admission, recruitment officers and students at HBCUs and PWIS will be interviewed to discuss the process of recruiting African-American students to their respective institute. Do they offer unique programs to promote diversity? Are there any additional measures taken to attract more black students? What are some issues experienced in recruitment? What improvements does each university want to make in this process. How do students feel about the recruitment and application process?




Research Question Addressed:

- R2: What steps are HBCUS taking with recruitment, educational resources, faculty and staff to remain relevant and competitive with PWIs?

IV. Multimedia Website: Below is a rough sketch for the pages of the website and how the pages will be formatted for the news packages. (hbcurelevancy.yolasite.com)

- Home Page: overview of the topic and issues with blacks in higher education
- Background: This page will be a synopsis of previous research as outlined in literature review.

- Packages: The three packages
- Additional Info: Graphs, charts, tables and any raw material not featured in the packages will be made available here.
- Implications: This page will further elaborate on the findings and future of HBCUS
- About: Will introduce the reporter and give overview of personal interest in this topic

Home	Background	Packages	Add'l Info	Implications	About
					
Part One	Part Two	Part Three			

Project Goals/Outline

The reporter is working toward a master's degree with a focus on broadcast journalism. It is the goal of this project to display the skills accumulated in the respective degree program through coursework, internships and applied work at The University of Florida's broadcast facilities. The reporter hopes the ability to showcase newsgathering, writing, shooting and editing skills will contribute to the success of this project and increase chances of obtaining employment upon graduation at a news station.

This project is multi-fold: it creates a portfolio, showcases masters' level skills, contributes to the reporter's career goals and adds to research within the field showing in-depth coverage of African-Americans in higher education.

Findings

Throughout the course of completing this project, the reporter identified new findings that add onto previous research of HBCUS. National metrics used to compute graduation rates for colleges and universities use a four-year standard. However, Historically Black Colleges and Universities compute student graduation rates based upon a cohort of six years. Table 2.1 and 2.1 below show FAMU graduation rates based upon a six-year graduation rate. This data shows a great disparity in what is calculated for the national graduation rate versus the school's metrics used. According to the *U.S. News and World Report* (2012), FAMU has an overall graduation rate of 13% in comparison to the national graduation rate of just over 60%.

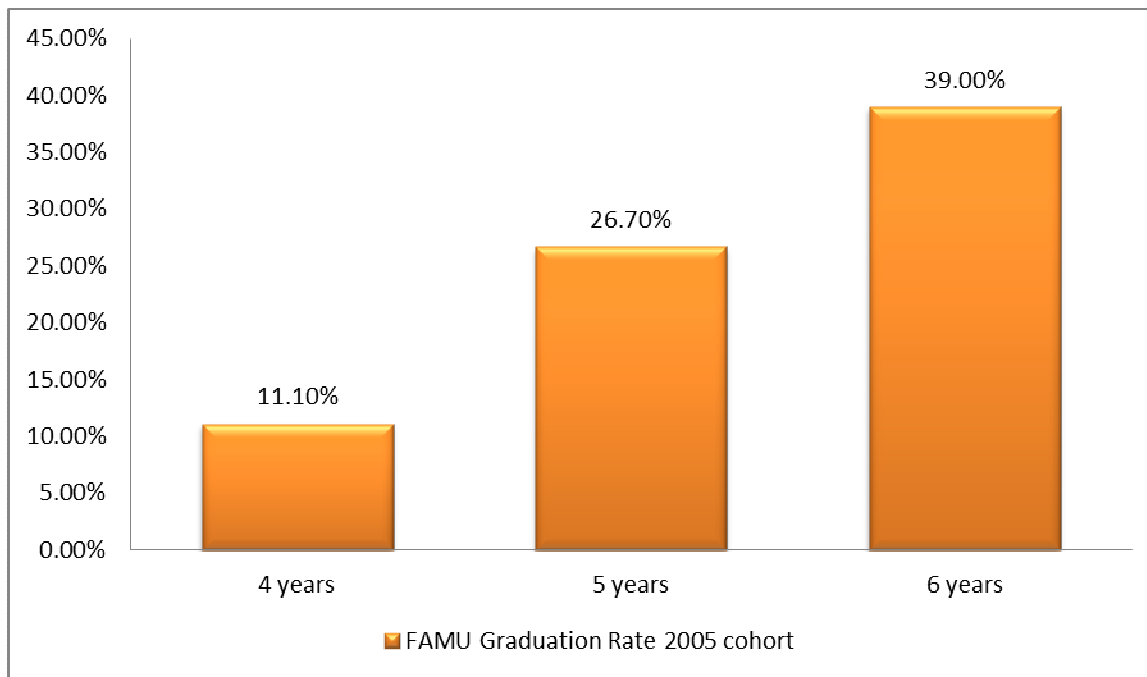


Table 2.1

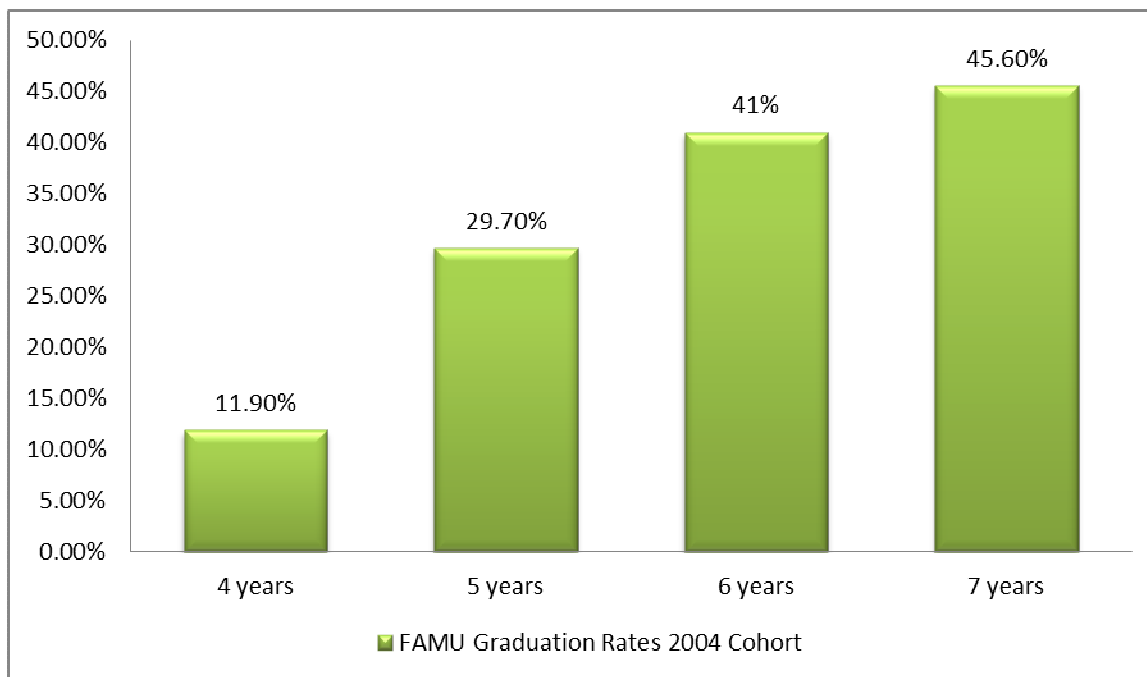


Table 2.2

This is an issue today affecting the relevancy of HBCUs that may portray a different picture if a six-year rate was considered instead for these institutes. In-depth interviews with

faculty, staff and administrators at FAMU revealed a higher percentage of their students come from a single-parent home or low socio-economic status. This factor affects their ability to attend school on a full-time basis and also contributes to a higher rate of students needing to withdraw for a semester of two or maintain full-time jobs to support themselves and family members back home.

Consistent with previous research done on HBCUs, the reporter found faculty and staff members do play a significant role in students being successful during their studies and in post-graduate life. Previous research found that the relationship between faculty and students at any university were positively correlated with student success academically and socially.

Other issues plaguing Historically Black Colleges, particularly FAMU, is the issue of funding. Since 2007, the university has lost \$35.9 million from their annual budget. More recently the State of Florida cut over \$300 million from education. The result of this was FAMU losing another 20% of its budget or just over \$19 million for the 2012-2013 school years. These budget cuts have resulted in the university laying off faculty and staff, increasing class sizes, program cuts and a halt on a number of campus projects and renovations. This issue of funding is one administrators are working to combat by soliciting more alumni financial support and scaling back on energy costs and in other areas to still provide a quality education.

Another common finding prevalent throughout the course of this research project was the theme of the historical significance and cultural relevancy of HBCUs. A number of students cited the rich tradition and history of HBCUs as well as their place in society and FAMU being the heart of the community as reasons why they elected to attend the university. HBCUs started with an original mission of affording African-Americans the opportunity to receive advanced

degrees but that has since evolved of one towards providing students support and nurturing them to be high achieving members of the black community.

Recommendation for future research

Using this case study as a guideline for more research into other HBCUs and their relevancy, future research should look further into the issue of how the graduation rates are calculated for HBCUs. FAMU calculates their institutional graduation rates based on a six year degree mapping plan. Future research needs to further assess the needs for a national calculation rate of six years for HBCUs instead of the current rate of four years. If this data is taken into consideration, the state of HBCUs might not appear so abysmal.

In addition, future research should not only look at the quantity of graduates from HCBUs but the quality of the alumnus. This can be done by accumulating data on the number of alumni that enroll in graduate programs or enter professional fields to examine how HBCUs are relevant in preparing students for life post-graduation.

Some limitations of this study are that the results cannot be generalized to all HBCUs because FAMU was the only university used. All of the findings and research are limited to that university only. There were also a number of issues affecting the reporter's ability to recruit and interview participants for this project. In November 2011, Marching 100 member Robert Champion died following a performance at the Orlando Classic. A few weeks later the Orange County Sheriff's Office made a statement that the department believed hazing was involved. From there, a full on investigation into FAMU was launched and the university became a national headline. This came just at the time that the reporter began contacting sources for interviews. The university essentially went on a media lockdown denying all requests for interviews of any type. After several months of contacting the university and going through IRB

protocol with the university the reporter was provided a list of people that were permitted to speak if they agreed to do so. Obviously, these issues and the pending investigation against FAMU had a significant impact on the reporter's ability to conduct interviews and the line of questioning the reporter was allowed to pursue, all of which are issues that need to be considered and taking into consideration for future inquiry of this topic.

Conclusion

The goal of this project was to expand on previous research about Historically Black Colleges and Universities and assess their relevancy in the 21st Century. While HBCUs face a number of issues today, this project shows using FAMU as a case study ways they are working to remain relevant, competitive and apart of society in the future.

In addition, the administrators and faculty of FAMU are working on ways to maintain that relevancy in the future by incrementally increasing admission standards to eventually be comparable to PWIS. It is the hope that by increasing admission standards and moving towards a four year degree mapping plan for students this will positively impact the image of HBCUS and increase their graduation rates. FAMU administrators are also working with other HBCUs to increase financial support from alumni and strategically develop strategies to combat the issues of funding that is a nationwide problem for many colleges and universities.

Although the results of this case study cannot be generalized, the findings of this project should serve as a guide to expand the research inquiry on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their places in society today.

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