

Chapter 2

The Promise for African American Male Students in Graduate Studies and Professional Development at Marygrove College

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ABSTRACT

The recruitment of African American males into chosen professions in the United States of America is an increasing challenge at national, state, and local levels. Gender and racial disparities between teachers in this country and the students they teach are present in classrooms. This chapter examines the Marygrove College's Griot program as an initiative established to address the underrepresentation of African American males in additional designated occupations. The philosophy and heritage from which the Griot Program was developed, along with key events and decisions throughout its life span are discussed. Model African American initiatives that can help shape Griot's future as it tries to increase the recruitment, retention, and success of African American men in graduate school to assume leadership roles in human resource management, in social justice, as well as in education are also presented.

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INTRODUCTION

African American males' representation in professional careers has been an ongoing concern in the academic environment. It is difficult to read an academic journal or newspaper in the United States of America (USA) that does not include an article or editorial on underrepresentation of African American males in many professions. Of particular concern is the critical nature of these articles and the negative editorials. From occupation to occupation according to Bourree (2015), the disparity from (Legal, Education, Health, Social Services, etc.) cannot be over emphasized. Bourree continued that it has been documented for decades that "American workforce has been divided by race. Although, this gap might have improved, the gap still persists" (para. 1).

A debate exists regarding the lack of African American male in many careers in the USA, with supporters (those who defend having more African American men in the world of work) and detractors (those who believe they are not needed) failing to reach a consensus on this issue. Nevertheless, it is a well-established fact that institutions of higher education in the United States of America do not successfully recruit, retain and graduate African American men. The low graduation rates of African American men in colleges and universities have been the subject of many research projects (Jones & Jenkins, 2012). "Black Student College Graduation Rates" 2006 reported that the nationwide college graduation rate for black students, including males, remains at a very low rate of 42 percent. This percentage is 20 points below the 62 percent rate for white students.

"The lack of postsecondary success for African American males has garnered significant attention from academic scholars and public policy leaders" (Baber, 2014, p. 3). According to Barnum (2018), Black students are less likely to graduate from high school and college, including [graduate] school due to an education policy that sometimes assumes that socioeconomic status such as family income matters more than race and racism. An example can be seen in the results of math and reading exams. Barnum further reports that white eighth graders who were eligible for subsidized lunch outscored Black eighth graders who were ineligible.

Okahana and Zhou (2018) provide data on graduate school enrollments by race and ethnicity. The report shows that in 2017, 49,482 Black students enrolled in graduate schools for the first time. They made up 11.9 percent of all first-time graduate students at U.S. universities. Of these first-time Black graduate students, 68.9 percent were women.

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