

15

MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Building on and Extending Lines of Inquiry for the Advancement of the Public Good

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Minority-serving institutions (MSIs)—colleges and universities identified for their commitment to serving individuals historically underrepresented in higher education—contribute substantially to the public good. Adding to the diversity of institution types and increasing the diversity of the student population, MSIs strengthen two hallmarks of life and learning in the United States: choice and opportunity. Yet relatively little scholarship has focused on these institutions. In this chapter, we argue that contemporary scholars have an extraordinary opportunity to build on, and substantially extend, the extant literature on MSIs. In so doing, we believe that researchers can develop a deeper understanding of the

contributions made by MSIs and, in turn, influence policy and practice to continue the advancement of higher education and the public good writ large.

This chapter advances three lines of inquiry related to MSIs. We articulate how each line represents a promising approach to inquiry and suggest ways in which each may be pushed further during the coming years. The three lines of inquiry that serve as organizing questions for this chapter are as follows:

1. What are the individual and societal benefits of MSIs?
2. What policies and practices can contribute to attracting, retaining, and enhancing the

educational experiences of other-race students in MSIs?

3. What might predominantly white institutions (PWIs) learn from MSIs about “best practices” for supporting and enhancing the education of all students?

Each of these questions has connections to existing research and, in our view, has great potential for meaningful future scholarship related to MSIs. After briefly discussing why we believe that these questions can lead to research findings that are relevant to the needs of multiple stakeholders, we provide an overview of MSIs and their categorizations, with some cautionary notes about making sense of their similarities and differences. Following this synopsis, we explicate each of the three lines of inquiry.

Research along these three lines of inquiry can be meaningful, at least in part, because it would address the needs and concerns of multiple stakeholders, including individual students and their families, institutional leaders, and public policymakers. Despite the fact that the higher education student population has become increasingly diverse during recent generations, historically underrepresented students continue to be, well, underrepresented (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2004). Consequently, gaps in higher education opportunity contribute to increasing economic and societal stratification in our society. To identify policies and practices that can significantly improve higher education access, retention, and success for underrepresented groups of students, leaders of both MSIs and PWIs need more knowledge and perspective that is anchored in rigorous relevant research. In spite of this great need, existing research is not sufficient for guiding such action.

A better understanding of MSIs also must be developed to inform public policy. Recognizing the important role that MSIs play in expanding higher education to populations that have not been well served by American higher education institutions and the challenges that often limit the availability of resources at MSIs, the federal government targets several sources of funds to these institutions. MSIs may be eligible for institutional grants through programs such as

the Strengthening Institutions Program (Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965), the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program (Title V of the Higher Education Act), and the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978 (administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs). During an era of restricted public financial resources and growing demands for accountability, continued and additional availability of federal and state financial support may rest, at least in part, on policy-makers’ understandings of the contributions that MSIs make to the public good.

BACKGROUNDS OF MSIS: RECOGNIZING THE SIMILARITIES, UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES

Understanding the different ways in which MSIs are defined, categorized, and organized is challenging, not least because the identities of colleges and universities are shaped by institutions themselves, by their students, by their communities, and by associated agencies and organizations. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) publishes basic descriptive statistics related to MSIs using data from NCES’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). OCR’s reports are informed by, and responsive to, a collection of federal statutes that have created and/or provided guidelines for recognition of MSIs. As such, OCR’s approach is centered in a legal or bureaucratic framework for viewing MSIs. Several regional and national professional organizations that are dedicated to supporting MSIs offer their own definitions and participant lists, but these are not always aligned with those of OCR. To establish a general sense of the roles that MSIs play in American postsecondary education, we begin with an overview of the perspective provided by OCR. We then briefly describe each MSI type as defined by OCR, guided throughout by understandings communicated by the regional and national associations that represent each type of institution.

OCR may designate an institution as belonging in one or more of the following categories: minority postsecondary institutions (MPIs),

historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), tribal colleges and universities (TCUs), and Alaska Native- or Native Hawaiian-serving institutions (AHIs). In broad strokes, MPIs are institutions in which a single minority group or combination of minority groups comprises at least 50% of the student population. The MPI and other MSI categories overlap substantially but not completely. More than 300 institutions, or about one third of all MSIs, do not meet the criteria for being an MPI; at these MSIs, fewer than 50% of the students are minorities. The remaining MSIs are designated as both MPIs and either HBCUs, HSIs, TCUs, or AHIs.

Mirroring the characteristics of colleges and universities nationwide, OCR's list of designated MSIs reflects the diversity of the nation's higher education system. MSIs include institutions that are public and private, 2-year and 4-year, single-sex and coeducational, and religious and secular. Although the vast majority of MSIs are not-for-profit institutions, a few are for-profit institutions (e.g., ITT Technical Institute of Tucson, AZ, an HSI).

In fall 2002, OCR (2004) recognized 737 MSIs located in 43 states and 81 MSIs located in 7 U.S. territories and outlying areas. These 818 MSIs accounted for approximately 17% of the more than 4,200 colleges and universities in operation throughout the United States and its territories and surrounding areas. These numbers take on new meanings and expanded complexities when illuminated within each type of identity-specific MSI.

Background: Historically Black Colleges and Universities

HBCUs not only have the longest and most well-documented history among MSIs but also are, arguably, the most contentious. The first HBCU was founded in 1837 (then the Institute for Colored Youth, now Cheyney University), and the majority of HBCUs were established during the 40 years after the Civil War. Reflecting the mores of the time, these institutions were established in large measure through the ingenuity and leadership of a relative few against the widely shared sentiment among the white majority to maintain their dominance in social and

economic life. The second Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890, which mandated that states receiving federal funds for land grant institutions must either open their postsecondary institutions to black students or create separate land grant institutions for blacks, was critical to the establishment of more than a dozen HBCUs.

Black colleges and universities established firm roots in both cities and rural areas throughout the first half of the 20th century, often initially as 2-year colleges. Not infrequently, these institutions were located in geographical proximity to PWIs. Black colleges and universities were officially designated as HBCUs under the authorizing legislation of the Higher Education Act. The amended Higher Education Act of 1965 (1998) defined an HBCU as an accredited college or university that was established prior to 1964 and "whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans."

In fall 2002, there were 103 HBCUs located in 20 states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands (OCR, 2004). Although 1 HBCU is located in Michigan, 3 HBCUs are located in the District of Columbia, and 1 HBCU is located in the Virgin Islands, all other HBCUs are located in 19 southern and southern border states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Nearly half ($n = 48$) of the 103 HBCUs are private 4-year institutions, 40% ($n = 41$) are public 4-year institutions, 11% ($n = 11$) are public 2-year institutions, and 3% ($n = 3$) are private 2-year institutions (NCES, 2004). HBCUs include 19 land grant institutions as well as single-sex institutions, professional schools, liberal arts colleges, and research universities (Provasnik, Shafer, & Snyder, 2004).

Founded in 1969 by several presidents of HBCUs, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO, 2005) is charged with advancing the interests of HBCUs, as well as predominantly black colleges and universities, to federal and state governments, businesses, and other organizations. NAFEO (2005) has 120 member institutions located in 25 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Brazil.

Approximately 16% of all African Americans enrolled in higher education in fall 2001 attended HBCUs (NCES, 2004). When only 4-year institutions are considered, the share of African Americans enrolled at HBCUs increases to 21% (NCES, 2004). The critical role of HBCUs in providing access to higher education for black students is underscored by the fact that the 103 HBCUs make up less than 3% of all colleges and universities in the United States.

Background: Tribal Colleges and Universities

According to the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act, a TCU is an accredited institution at which American Indians represent at least 50% of total enrollments (OCR, 2004). In fall 2002, there were 34 TCUs located in 12 states (OCR, 2004). Montana is home to the largest number of TCUs ($n = 7$), followed by North Dakota ($n = 5$) and South Dakota ($n = 4$). TCUs are also located in 5 other states in the Midwest (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Nebraska, and Kansas), 3 states in the Southwest (New Mexico, Arizona, and California), and 1 state in the Pacific Northwest (Washington) (OCR, 2004).

Whereas most HBCUs are more than 100 years old, TCUs are relatively young. Among active TCUs, Diné College (Tsaile, AZ) has the longest history, established by the Navajo Nation in 1968 (American Indian Higher Education Consortium [AIHEC], 1999). Most TCUs were established during the 1970s and 1980s, and four were established during the 1990s. Whereas 85% of HBCUs are 4-year institutions, all TCUs were founded as 2-year institutions, with most offering certificate and associate's degree programs. Over time, four TCUs expanded their missions to offer baccalaureate degrees, and two now offer master's degrees (AIHEC, 1999). The majority (about two thirds) of all TCUs are public 2-year institutions (NCES, 2004).

Although TCUs are fewer in number and have more limited missions compared with HBCUs, TCUs and HBCUs have many similarities, particularly with respect to institutional identity. To wit, HBCUs were established to provide educational, social, and economic

opportunities to a population essentially shut out from the mainstream educational system. TCUs were established to provide opportunities to American Indians who were shut out of the mainstream educational system as a result of not only institutionalized prejudice but also geographical separation. Like HBCUs, TCUs have embraced, since their inception, both cultural and academic educational agendas in their organizing principles. According to AIHEC (1999),

In many ways, Tribal Colleges are similar to mainstream community colleges. However, the trait that distinguishes them from other community colleges is their dual mission: (1) to rebuild, reinforce, and explore traditional tribal cultures, using uniquely designed curricula and institutional settings; and at the same time, (2) to address Western models of learning by providing traditional disciplinary courses that are transferable to four-year institutions. (p. A-3)

Also similar to HBCUs, the institutional identities of TCUs preceded governmental legitimization. Although three TCUs were founded through federal charters, the first and majority of TCUs were established by American Indian tribes and subsequently recognized by federal agencies (AIHEC, 1999). The federally chartered TCUs are governed by national boards, and the other TCUs are managed locally (AIHEC, 1999).

The enduring role that HBCUs and TCUs have played as population-specific institutions is evident in these simple statistics. Across all HBCUs and TCUs, approximately 87% of HBCU students were black and 81% of TCU students were American Indian in fall 2002 (OCR, 2004). The high representation of blacks at HBCUs and of American Indians at TCUs stands in contrast to the relatively lower representation of Hispanics among enrollments at HSIs (53%) and of Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians among enrollments at AHIs (approximately 45%) in fall 2002 (OCR, 2004).

Background: Hispanic-Serving Institutions

A college or university is recognized as an HSI by OCR if at least 25% of its full-time

equivalent undergraduates who are U.S. citizens are Hispanic. According to this definition, there are currently 362 HSIs in the United States and outlying areas (299 in 15 states and 63 in Puerto Rico) (OCR, 2004). The highest concentrations of HSIs in the United States are found in California ($n = 115$), Texas ($n = 55$), New Mexico ($n = 27$), Florida ($n = 23$), New York ($n = 21$), and Arizona ($n = 21$). Nine other states are home to a dozen or fewer HSIs.

The U.S. Department of Education uses a more restrictive designation of HSIs for its Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program. This program, which awards funds to eligible not-for-profit institutions under Title V of the Higher Education Act, defines HSIs by the aforementioned criterion (minimum of 25% Hispanic student enrollment) plus the criterion that at least 50% of their Hispanic student enrollment meets certain low-income qualifications. In 2002, 242 HSIs distributed among 14 states and Puerto Rico met this more restrictive designation (OCR, 2004). The highest concentrations of these HSIs are found in Texas and California.

Whereas the numbers of HBCUs and TCUs remain relatively unchanged from year to year, the number of institutions identified as HSIs may fluctuate from year to year because both definitions of HSIs are based on student enrollments. The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), a national organization founded in 1986 to provide organization and advocacy for HSIs, offers a more identity-based definition of HSIs. To be a voting member of HACU, an institution must be an accredited nonprofit college or university with a student population that is at least 25% Hispanic. HACU also recognizes associate members—that is, accredited nonprofit colleges and universities where at least 1,000 students are Hispanic and with student populations that are at least 10% Hispanic—as well as international members (HACU, 2004). HACU (2005) counted more than 400 colleges and universities located in the United States, Puerto Rico, Latin America, and Spain among its consortium of institutions.

As noted earlier, HSIs' Hispanic student enrollment is approximately 53% (OCR, 2004). This percentage is inflated somewhat by the inclusion of HSIs located in Puerto Rico given

that Hispanics represent nearly 100% of enrollments at HSIs in Puerto Rico. At the 299 HSIs in the states, Hispanics represent an average of 43% of enrollments (OCR, 2004). Like HBCUs, HSIs include a diverse array of institutional types, including public and private institutions, for-profit and not-for-profit institutions, and a full range of colleges and universities within the Carnegie classification system. Approximately one third of all HSIs offer postbaccalaureate programs.

Background: Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Institutions

The newest MSI designation is AHI. The categorization scheme for AHIs is similar to that for HSIs in that it is based on the demographics of student enrollments. The 1998 amendments to the Higher Education Act define AHIs as institutions with at least 20% Alaskan Native students or at least 10% Native Hawaiian students. In fall 2002, there were 12 AHIs (11 located in Alaska and 1 located in Hawaii) (OCR, 2004). The number of colleges and universities reported for Hawaii is somewhat suspect given the challenges associated with identifying the number of Native Hawaiian students. The primary source of data for the race/ethnicity of enrollments, IPEDS, includes one category for "American Indian/Alaskan Native" and no category for Native Hawaiian. Thus, designation as an AHI depends, in part, on the availability of supplemental institutional reports. At the AHIs in Alaska, Alaska Native students made up approximately 45% of the total student enrollment in fall 2002 (OCR, 2004). Native Hawaiians represented approximately 18% of all students enrolled at the one AHI in Hawaii in fall 2002 (OCR, 2004).

Recognizing the Similarities, Understanding the Differences

By necessity and design, MSIs have done, and will continue to do at least in the foreseeable future, more than their share in supporting the access and persistence of traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in higher education. They serve as gateways for specific student populations and their families as well as

symbols of equity for the entire system of higher education in the United States and surrounding areas. The effectiveness of MSIs as practical gateways can be questioned, of course, and their symbolic value may be critiqued from a variety of perspectives.

Notwithstanding their similarities, we must of course not assume that all MSIs are the same either across or within groups of MSIs. Variation in definitions and categorizations of MSIs is one source of difference across groups of MSIs. MSIs also differ across and within groups owing to differences in the histories, identities, and cultures of member institutions and their surrounding communities. Moreover, MSIs vary in the extent to which they serve not only their identified student population but also other populations. Therefore, assuming homogeneity of mission, racial/ethnic representation, or some other characteristic masks true heterogeneity. It is with this sensibility that we turn to identifying and elaborating on the three lines of inquiry that we believe may serve and challenge these institutions—and PWIs—in the future.

BENEFITS OF MSIS: FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FOR SOCIETY

In 1977, with support from the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, Howard Bowen published *Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education*. This volume, released in a second edition in 1997, has been highly influential, particularly with regard to the way in which Bowen framed inquiry into the benefits of higher education. His exploration of the connections and distinctions between individual and social gains afforded by higher education—without, we should add, getting mired in the “private gain versus public good” debate—created ripples that have propelled “benefits” studies on this matter in multiple disciplines for more than two decades and counting. Among the most important touchstones was Bowen’s inclusion of nonclassroom experiences in his discussion of the value of higher education for individuals and his examination of the impact of the social value of higher education on equality and inequality (Bowen, 1977/1997).

The widely shared understanding of the benefits of MSIs is that they provide underrepresented individuals with otherwise unavailable access to higher education and that, in turn, both society and individuals benefit from a more diverse, well-educated public. Historically, HBCUs often provided the only access to higher education for African Americans. There was also, of course, the perverse “benefit” for the white majority that HBCUs were wholly separate from other colleges and universities. Such an egregiously discriminatory foundation was not laid so explicitly for TCUs, HSIs, or AHIs—which emerged on the scene much more recently—but the overarching principles of access to individuals and the benefits of diversity to society make them kindred spirits with HBCUs.

Further research on the individual and societal benefits of MSIs is especially important at a time when the purposes of these institutions and their progress in advancing equality of opportunity for all students are being widely debated. What are the benefits of attending MSIs for individual students? What economic benefits can be found? What do we know about the personal growth and development experienced by students that is distinctly the result of attending MSIs? What are the social benefits of MSIs? What contributions do MSIs make to the communities with which they share identities? What are the benefits of MSIs to society’s educational, industrial, governmental, and corporate institutions? In short, in what ways do MSIs contribute to the public good?

An exemplar of an investigation of the individual and social benefits of MSIs is Laura Perna’s report that was published in *Research in Education*. Perna’s (2001) study focused on the comparative contributions of HBCUs and other colleges and universities to the preparation of African Americans for faculty careers. Perna’s study provides a useful point of reflection for identifying ways in which future research and inquiry could advance our understandings of the individual and social benefits of HBCUs as well as other MSIs.

Building on extant research that offered evidence of the personal and academic benefits to African American students attending HBCUs, Perna (2001) looked to the 1992 National Study

of Postsecondary Faculty for answers to the following questions:

- a. How do the characteristics of African American faculty who earned their bachelor's degrees from an HBCU compare with the characteristics of other African American faculty?
- b. How do the characteristics of African American faculty who received their doctoral degree from an HBCU compare with the characteristics of other African American faculty who have earned doctoral degrees?
- c. Is having earned a bachelor's degree or a doctoral degree from an HBCU related to research productivity, one indicator of faculty preparation, among African American men and women faculty?
- d. Is having earned a bachelor's degree or a doctoral degree from an HBCU related to satisfaction with the work setting, a second indicator of preparation, among African American men and women faculty? (p. 271)

Using both descriptive and inferential statistics, Perna (2001) identified several noteworthy relationships between HBCU enrollment and African American faculty career preparation. Although many of Perna's findings confirmed assumptions that many might have made in light of earlier research, some findings deviated from what many might have suspected. A few key findings are especially conducive to excavating the individual and social benefits of MSIs.

According to Perna (2001), African Americans accounted for 5.2% of faculty at colleges and universities throughout the United States, a figure far lower than the percentage of African Americans in the country's population as a whole (12.6%). Therein lies the basic impetus for her line of inquiry: If African American representation among higher education faculty is lagging, and we know that HBCUs have made significant contributions to the education of African Americans in general, it is important to consider the role of HBCUs in the preparation of African American faculty. The primary finding of the study offers a window into these relationships: Insofar as preparation for a faculty

career is defined by research production and satisfaction in the workplace, having earned a baccalaureate or doctoral degree from an HBCU is unrelated to the preparation of African American faculty.

The absence of a significant relationship between African American faculty career preparation and graduating from an HBCU may be interpreted in a variety of ways. On the one hand, one might hope to see that HBCUs are more influential—that they prepare African Americans for faculty careers *better than* do PWIs. On the other hand, the results show that HBCUs contribute to African Americans' faculty career preparation *just as well as* do PWIs, and this belies a common stereotype of HBCUs as being somehow inferior institutions.

Perna (2001) measured the contributions of HBCUs relative to PWIs based on the dependent variables of satisfaction with the work setting and research productivity. Other statistics identified by Perna provide insight into how receiving a baccalaureate or doctoral degree from an HBCU influences certain characteristics among African American faculty. For example, Perna noted that female African American faculty are more likely to have received their baccalaureate degrees from HBCUs than are male African American faculty. The study also found that African American faculty who earned their baccalaureate degrees at HBCUs are overrepresented among faculty at predominantly black colleges and universities (PBCUs, i.e., institutions that are composed of a majority of black students but that are not necessarily classified as HBCUs) and underrepresented among faculty at research universities. These and other findings invite research that probes the reasons for these little-understood phenomena.

Two additional results from the study offer serious points of reflection for future research and inquiry related to individual and social benefits of HBCUs. According to Perna (2001), in spite of the fact that African American faculty who obtained baccalaureate and/or doctoral degrees from HBCUs are more likely to work at PBCUs than at PWIs, African American faculty at PBCUs are less satisfied with their work settings. This may raise concerns regarding PBCUs' ability to attract and retain African

American faculty in the future. Researchers and practitioners alike should consider probing this finding to understand why satisfaction levels differ based on institutional type.

Perna (2001) also found that HBCUs have become especially proficient at generating faculty in the fields of education, engineering, and the natural sciences. Considering that the underrepresentation of African Americans is particularly severe among faculty in the sciences (NCES, 2004), this finding suggests another area where HBCUs are generating individual and societal benefits. Yet this achievement may be occurring for reasons that even HBCUs do not fully understand. Developing an understanding of this phenomenon may be valuable not only for HBCUs but also for any institutions of higher education striving to increase diversity in their graduate programs and to contribute to the diversity of American higher education faculty.

To be sure, HSIs, TCUs, and AHIs may also benefit from such inquiries because their constituencies are also underrepresented in the academic ranks. Perna's (2001) study of HBCUs summons a series of questions concerning the overall status of underrepresented minority faculty. What contributions do MSIs make to the career preparation of Hispanic and Native American faculty? How do the publication records and job satisfaction measures of underrepresented minority faculty correspond to where they earned their baccalaureate or doctoral degrees? What are the dimensions of minority participation in academic roles outside of colleges and universities such as research groups and "think tanks"? What contributions do MSIs make to the preparation of individuals for other types of careers?

More broadly, and including all MSIs, if we are to strategize ways in which underrepresented persons may move "up the educational pipeline" (Perna, 2001, p. 288) into academic roles and other major professions in the public and private sectors, then the complexities implicit in Perna's findings lead us to imagine a pipeline that is full of twists and turns, parallel and divergent paths, dead ends, and gaps in need of repair. As Perna (2001) suggested in her call for future research, we know that such a pipeline is shaped by multiple socialization factors such as attitudes and values that are influenced by

many characteristics and experiences, including student-faculty relationships. Additional probing of the experiences of students using a range of methodologies is needed to provide a more detailed picture of this pipeline schematic that has been built between and within our institutions of higher learning.

More equitable participation in all facets of higher education results in a reciprocal web of individual and social benefits. First, individual students—eventual graduates—of colleges and universities benefit personally in terms of intellectual, moral, and economic development. In turn, those individuals join the proverbial "real world" and influence change in myriad ways. As Bowen (1977/1997) noted succinctly more than 25 years ago,

Education does not automatically mitigate human inequality. It may do so, it may work in the opposite direction, or it may have little or no effect. The influence of education upon inequality depends on the social origins of the students, the numbers being educated, the capacity of the educational programs offered to meet the needs of persons of varying backgrounds and aspirations, and the degree to which egalitarian ideas are conveyed through the attitudes and values it transmits. (p. 326)

The very existence of MSIs reflects higher education's efforts to work in the "opposite direction" of human inequality. Research and inquiry that attempt to understand in great detail the ways in which MSIs are working to redress historic imbalances will help to improve policies and practices at MSIs and in the nation's system of higher education as a whole.

The whole population of students is of concern to MSIs as well. Across all HBCUs, TCUs, HSIs, and AHIs, approximately 40% of the students enrolled are white (OCR, 2004). Furthermore, MSIs routinely enroll students who are underrepresented minorities but who do not share the expressed identities of MSIs (OCR, 2004). Serving other-race students is a part of MSIs' practice by default, by mission, and (for some) in accordance with the law. The question of what MSIs can do to serve these student populations is addressed in the following section.

ENROLLING OTHER-RACE STUDENTS AT MSIs: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Although the degree to which serving a specific minority population is a part of an MSI's explicit mission varies across and within types of MSIs, the student populations of many MSIs are made up of a significant number—if not a majority—of students from other-race groups, that is, groups other than the specified minority group. This being the case, MSIs may be challenged—like PWIs—to attract, enroll, retain, and enhance the educational experiences of multiple groups of students. There are, of course, similarities and differences in the sources and character of the challenge, and an examination of these is in part addressed here. Although an abundance of studies have focused on the experiences of black and Hispanic students at PWIs, few researchers have focused on the experiences of other-race students at MSIs. Expansions of this line of inquiry would no doubt yield many benefits, not least of which would be data and information to identify and inform policies and practices at MSIs that are likely to increase and sustain other-race student enrollments and degree completions.

If white students are overrepresented nationwide in higher education, and if MSIs are so successful in efforts to counteract prejudice institutionalized through colleges and universities, then why would (or should) MSIs be concerned with the enrollment of other-race students? This is a valid question, and the answers are at once common-sensical and open to scrutiny. Like PWIs, MSIs may be interested in the enrollment of other-race students simply for the sake of increasing their overall enrollments as well as the implicit value of diversifying the student body. Perhaps more urgently, some HBCUs—such as those in Mississippi—are faced, via court order and other mandates, with the task of eliminating the remnants of segregation and must seek to enroll non-black students to meet the demands of desegregation. An exploration of the situation faced by HBCUs illuminates ways in which this line of inquiry may be deepened and expanded with respect to HBCUs as well as other MSIs.

In collaboration with two other scholars, another author of this chapter conducted and

reported on the first major study focused on identifying the factors that contribute to the matriculation of white students at public HBCUs (Conrad, Brier, & Braxton, 1997). Through individual and group interviews with 80 stakeholders (36 students, 32 administrators, and 12 faculty members) at five public HBCUs (three known for their success in enrolling white students and two under court order to desegregate), the investigators identified 14 key factors influencing white students to enroll at HBCUs. The factors were organized into three major categories: (a) academic program offerings (program offerings in high-demand fields, unique program offerings, alternative program delivery systems, graduate program offerings in high-demand fields, and positive reputation for quality), (b) student financial support (student scholarships and low cost), and (c) institutional characteristics (positive image as a multiracial institution, supportive and inclusive campus culture, white student recruitment, articulation and cooperative agreements with PWIs, positive external relations, safe environment, and attractive campus appearance).

Conrad and colleagues (1997) went on to analyze the correspondence between the 14 factors identified in their study and the primary factors that other research has found to be associated with white students' decisions to enroll at PWIs. They concluded that "the factors that attract whites to HBCUs are, for the most part, significantly different from factors that attract students to PWIs as identified in studies of mostly white student selection of PWIs" (p. 56). Of the five primary factors that Conrad and colleagues identified, only one (academic quality/reputation) overlapped with the seven (academic quality/reputation, special academic programs, costs, availability of financial aid, location, size, and social atmosphere) that the authors had found reported in previous studies. Moreover, this particular factor ranked first for white students at PWIs but ranked only fourth for white students at HBCUs.

Conrad and colleagues (1997) concluded their report by identifying policies and practices at the state and institutional levels for encouraging white students to attend HBCUs. They urged states to create and maintain high-demand programs at HBCUs, to "sharpen the missions of all

public institutions by assigning program exclusivity to various institutions" so as to avoid program duplication (a stipulation of desegregation guidelines), and to provide funding streams sufficient for other elements of institutional quality that attract white students (p. 57). At the institutional level, the authors suggested that HBCUs develop strategies for developing program distinctiveness, financial support specifically dedicated to the recruitment of white students, and other institutional enhancement initiatives.

Conrad and colleagues' (1997) study is useful for informing future inquiry on several major fronts. First and foremost, its conclusion that the criteria white students consider in their selection of HBCUs is different from the criteria they consider in their selection of PWIs provides leverage and illumination for further examination of such differences. Furthermore, this conclusion provides a starting point for considering related lines of inquiry that might be developed with respect to other types of MSIs as well as both public and private HBCUs. The remainder of this section sketches ways in which future research and inquiry might be developed with regard to attracting, enrolling, and retaining other-race students at MSIs.

Noting that Conrad and colleagues' (1997) study is nearly 10 years old, we wonder how the five campuses in their study may have changed. The interviews that informed this study took place less than 5 years after the 1992 *United States v. Fordice* decision in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states must eliminate any vestiges of segregation in their public colleges and universities. Since that time, ideas and attitudes among faculty, staff, and students have likely crystallized in new ways, making them ripe for further examination. Furthermore, state and institutional policies and procedures, regardless of whether they were influenced by the publication of the 1997 article, would certainly be primed for examination at this point in time. In addition to seeing what has changed, future research should try to identify what may have been missed and probe some of the findings more deeply.

If we were to reorganize the 14 factors identified in the Conrad and colleagues' (1997) study along a continuum ranging from least

subjective/most objective to most subjective/least objective, some of the most intriguing questions for a second similar study would be found at the latter end of the continuum. For example, the study identified academic program quality or reputation as one of the most frequently noted influences associated with white students' decisions to attend HBCUs. And the perceptions vis-à-vis program quality were powerful, as demonstrated by one student when she said,

I believe that there is a different culture in the white institution than the black institution. In the black institution, a part of the culture is that the faculty is there to support a student's progress through the program. And that is not always the case in historically white universities. . . . I attended historically white universities, and they have been some of the coldest institutions I have known. (p. 47)

What is not clear from Conrad and colleagues' (1997) study are answers to the infinite *why* questions. Why are certain programs viewed as having a positive reputation? With respect to institutional characteristics, why are HBCUs seen as supportive and inclusive? Pursuing questions like these will develop a stronger understanding of how HBCUs advance these characteristics—and how students and others can develop and nurture them.

One of the limitations of Conrad and colleagues' (1997) study is that it attempted to ascertain an understanding of white students' decisions to attend HBCUs through solely reflective and perspectival questioning. That is, students were asked to reflect on their decisions to attend HBCUs after they had already made their decisions to enroll and had the experience of being at HBCUs. Faculty and administrators were asked to offer their perspectives on these same students. Additional insights may be gained through a study of white students attending high schools in proximity to HBCUs. By interviewing white students and their teachers, counselors, and parents during the period of time when students were actually in the process of making their college choices, much could be learned about the factors that shape students'

decisions. Implicit in the 1997 study were thresholds encountered by white students in their decisions to attend HBCUs. A study of high school juniors and seniors may produce a more in-depth examination of the thresholds. Among the factors that contribute to these students' college choices (whether HBCUs or not), which have the weight to swing the balance? Among the potential questions to guide future research are the following. What beliefs about HBCUs are held by white high school students for whom enrollment at HBCUs is a real option given their close geographic proximity? What images of HBCUs are dominant in the culture of high schools? What do counselors and teachers and parents say about HBCUs? How does information about academic programs, such as course options and teacher quality, get communicated to high school students? What do students say to each other about HBCUs? How do the responses to questions vary among students, counselors, teachers, and parents of different racial/ethnic groups? Are there differences in how prospective black students and prospective white students view academic program offerings, high-demand fields, unique program offerings, alternative delivery systems, and multiracial images? And arguably the most revealing question: Why do students choose *not* to attend HBCUs? Answers to such questions might begin to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the college choice process with regard to HBCUs.

A line of inquiry that focuses on white students at HBCUs might not appear to be relevant to other MSIs because other MSIs do not have the mandate to desegregate as some public HBCUs do. Although the sense of urgency and stakes might not be the same at other MSIs—or at private HBCUs, for that matter—the relevance remains. Given the complexities posed by racial and ethnic identities in the United States, and the ways in which higher education feeds on and into those complexities, more information is needed about other-race students' perspectives and experiences at all types of MSIs. This is a significantly understudied area of research. Extending this line of inquiry to all MSIs generates additional questions. For example, why do white students—or black, Hispanic, American

Indian, or Asian students—who attend HSIs, TCUs, and AHIs choose to do so? Are their reasons similar to those of white students who choose to attend HBCUs?

Given the respective histories and current enrollment patterns found at other MSIs, we might begin to develop some hypotheses and more specific questions to explore such as the following. Are students who attend MSIs where white students make up the majority of student enrollment aware of those institutions' designations as MSIs, and if so, to what degree is that designation a factor in their matriculation? In what ways does the relative newness of MSIs (other than HBCUs) work for or against enrolling other-race students? Answers to questions along these lines would be helpful in developing theory that will inform practice at high schools and institutions of higher education as well as state and institutional policies. Furthermore, expanding the inquiry beyond HBCUs may, in turn, be beneficial to HBCUs' efforts to respond to ongoing desegregation challenges as greater understandings of other-race enrollments at other types of MSIs are developed.

CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION: MSIs AND PWIs

What can PWIs learn from MSIs about best practices for supporting and enhancing the education of students at PWIs? As the previous sections have suggested, PWIs may have much to learn from MSIs with regard to advancing the progress of underrepresented students through the educational pipeline into academic positions and other areas of the world of work as well as shaping recruitment and retention efforts. The third central question advanced in this chapter is a direct exploration of such possibilities and is advanced in terms of two subquestions. First, what can PWIs learn from MSIs in terms of serving underrepresented student populations and the continued maturity of the educational pipeline? Second, what can PWIs learn from MSIs for the sake of serving *all* students at PWIs and the improvement of their core educational practices?

To be sure, serving the pipeline and institutional practices are interconnected. As Berta Vigil Laden noted in her study of “celebratory socialization” of underrepresented students at two community colleges, “Institutions can promote culturally-sensitive and culturally-specific programs in academic and student services to increase ethnic student motivation and commitment to college while also changing the institution as a result of the commitment to the students” (Laden, 1999, p. 176).

To put forth a line of inquiry that will build on and extend research related to PWI and MSI cross-institutional improvement and innovation, we use Laden’s (1999) study as a theoretical and methodological exemplar. Following a description of her report on this research, we articulate sets of questions for future consideration.

Laden (1999), employing an “ecological model which considers the cultural context of students’ lives” (p. 177), conducted ethnographic case studies of two community colleges in Northern California. Selected for the study because of their highly regarded efforts to support underrepresented students’ transfer into 4-year institutions, the schools had minority student enrollments of 59% and 27% among total enrollments of approximately 11,000 and 14,000, respectively. According to Laden’s descriptions, student services on each campus featured programs for Latino and Latina students; therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that at least one of the institutions, if not both, is classified as an HSI. (Laden did not make explicit the identities of the colleges in this way; as a side note, this is perhaps indicative of the way in which the HSI label is operationalized in practice and research in comparison with, say, HBCUs, where the MSI identity seems to be front and center almost without exception.) Laden indicated that she spent a year performing observations, reviewing institutional documents, and conducting interviews with 38 administrators, faculty, and support staff at the two colleges.

From her analysis of these rich data, Laden (1999) identified critical characteristics of exemplary organizational models that she found at these two community colleges. At both institutions, the campus leaders—the president at

one, other executive administrators at the other, and faculty at both—actively took ownership of the transfer challenge and publicly articulated their commitment to meeting it. They executed organizational and fiscal realignments in the form of a variety of curricular, co-curricular, and outreach programs. Examples of such undertakings included in-depth outreach and orientation programs for prospective and new students of color, English composition programs that incorporated reading and writing about students’ heritages, supplemental counseling and mentoring available through transfer centers, and physical spaces dedicated to providing information and assistance to facilitate the process of moving on to 4-year colleges and universities. All such initiatives were aligned with what were essentially moral imperatives adopted by the two colleges. According to Laden, “The interactions occurring among the various elements . . . have the potential for creating a web effect that leads to student empowerment and success” (pp. 190–191). Thus, the commitment to students leads to benefits not only for the individual students but also for the institutions in the forms of achieving their goals and changing structures and organizational cultures along the way.

Programs and services like those documented by Laden (1999) abound at colleges and universities of all shapes and sizes around the country, including many PWIs. In fact, we contend that one would be hard-pressed to find any PWI of average size or larger that does not have some combination of similar efforts expressly for underrepresented students. The availability of strong leadership and sufficient resource allocations for these programs and services varies, of course, and therein lies one of the tribulations routinely faced by advocates for minority students at several institutions. It is not insignificant that Laden found both creativity and commitment at those two exemplary community colleges.

In addition to aligning resources with goals, what more can PWIs learn from MSIs with regard to supporting underrepresented students through the educational pipeline? If Laden’s (1999) study had any shortcoming, it might be the absence of students as direct informants in

her fieldwork. She recorded some powerful statements and perspectives from the architects, builders, and managers of the efforts at the two schools, but the student voices were lacking, at least in this particular report. Future studies would benefit from asking student participants to describe and reflect on their experiences. One would not be surprised to learn that faculty and staff accounts of the value of a program or experience may be far different from the perspectives provided by students. Thus, a more inclusive approach should guide future explorations.

What can PWIs learn from MSIs for the sake of all students? Recall the statement made by a white student in the study by Conrad and colleagues (1997) concerning the supportive and welcoming nature of HBCUs in comparison with the impersonal nature of many PWIs. This student was reflecting on her experience with the whole institution, not a special program or service designed especially for white students. Having spent significant time at more than 20 HBCUs conducting research, one of the authors of this chapter (Conrad) can attest that something about many of these campuses seems to make nearly *everyone* feel welcome. We might infer from Perna's (2001) finding that African American faculty with degrees from HBCUs were more likely to work at HBCUs because they felt so welcomed and supported by these institutions that they brought them back. But what is *it*? Conrad and colleagues (1997) documented a variety of initiatives made by HBCU faculty and administrators to make the institution *seem* to embrace the multicultural heritage of all its students, but those used devices such as print and Web publications. Laden's (1999) study suggests that HBCUs may benefit from the significant contributions of strong leadership and commitment. But the applicability of findings from Laden's study of two MSIs to HBCUs is unclear given the historically conspicuous underfunding of HBCUs. We are persuaded that there are some special features of HBCUs in particular—and of MSIs in general—that research has not adequately addressed heretofore.

Some presume that such qualities of MSIs are unknowable or, even if known, are not replicable in PWIs. For example, in an essay that argued for public HBCUs to remain

predominantly black, Jackson, Snowden, and Eckes (2002) stated,

Perhaps most importantly, black culture and accomplishment are essential ingredients in the curriculum at black colleges. The attributes of the public HBCU cannot be replicated at white universities. At white universities, black students can be marginalized and the courses oftentimes ignore the contributions of blacks to the sciences, art, and literature. Continued access to HBCUs ultimately ensures full and meaningful participation of blacks in a multicultural democratic society, and the research supports these statements. (pp. 15–16)

Although PWIs cannot *become* HBCUs, and although specific structures or features of HBCUs cannot be grossly replicated at PWIs without likely resulting in an object lesson in futility, we believe that PWIs can learn and benefit from HBCUs and other MSIs. More specifically, we can study attributes of MSIs found to be linked to desirable educational outcomes and can deliberate over and experiment with how they may be adapted in the PWI context. Consider, for example, the community college in Laden's (1999) study that overhauled its curriculum by infusing it with ethnic and cultural studies themes, courses, and requirements. Like the curricular attributes referred to in Jackson and colleagues' (2002) study, such changes recognize how important it is for students to be able to see themselves, as it were, in elements of their courses. Incorporation of such principles into curriculum development at PWIs is a worthwhile endeavor. To assume otherwise, we believe, is to paint a bleak picture for the future.

On a somewhat tangential note, but important to the task nonetheless, the call for maintaining the demographic status quo at HBCUs by Jackson and colleagues (2002) rightly raises what we think is a critical question to pursue concurrent with this line of inquiry: Will increasing the number of white students who attend HBCUs result in a dismantling of those special qualities that HBCUs offer not only to black students but to all students? This seems to be a logical possibility. If so, then it poses

serious questions for social policy as the future generations of our institutions of higher education are evolving.

Recall that in the study by Conrad and colleagues (1997), white students found satisfaction in the whole of HBCUs rather than in the types of specialized programs identified in Laden's (1999) study. This observation raises an interesting question: How might future research account for what are apparently two modes of cultivating student belonging and success, and how might practice be influenced? One of the ways in which the HBCUs in Conrad and colleagues' (1997) study recruited white students was to offer high-demand curricula through evening programs, in one instance resulting in a "black HBCU by day" and a "white HBCU by night." This is at least partly analogous to the special English composition programs created at the community colleges in Laden's (1999) study. Is isolation an unintended consequence of such efforts to recruit, retain, and support these specific populations of students? If we are to take the evidence from HBCUs seriously, then we believe it is fair to speculate that, unless institutions change on the whole, special boutique-like programs ancillary to the central missions of institutions might not be the most effective solutions possible. Although they may be effective for supporting targeted populations *through* the pipeline, it is not the pipeline being changed; instead, it is more like the pipeline is being retrofitted. The most compelling evidence, of course, is not found through the creation of pithy metaphors; rather, it is found in analyses of data collected in the most rigorous and conscientious ways of which we, as a community, are capable.

CONCLUSION

MSIs enroll disproportionate shares of students from African American, Hispanic, Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian populations. Yet we know surprisingly little about the range of benefits that MSIs generate for individuals and society; the policies and practices that promote the enrollment, retention, and success of other-race students attending

MSIs; or the "secrets" to MSIs' success in creating a welcoming and supportive educational experience for minority students.

Pursuing these three lines of inquiry is important not only for addressing gaps in the literature but also for identifying ways in which to address the continued underrepresentation of these groups in American higher education more generally. Although MSIs educate disproportionate shares of minority students, students from these populations continue to be underrepresented at all levels of higher education. Addressing these three lines of inquiry may help all institutions to better respond to calls for accountability and for justifications of public financial support.

We invite our colleagues to embrace these three lines of inquiry. We are strongly persuaded that by building on and extending research on MSIs, researchers can greatly enhance our understandings of their contributions to the higher learning and, in turn, the public good.

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