

An Overview of this Issue

This special issue addresses theoretical, institutional, student and family issues that significantly impact the academic success of African-American students today. The Kinsler article is a critique and analysis of existing theories that guide the educational process in institutions of learning, but which are often detrimental to African-American students. Carter follows with a presentation exploring the often conflictual relationship between African-American cultural variables and predominantly white colleges and universities. These articles together provide balance that is often absent in writings related to this topic. While Kinsler presents very valid points in an explanation for why African-American students might fail, Carter also effectively explores why some African-American students fail and some succeed. Both perspectives are critical to increasing readers' understanding of culture-specific differences that are often not acknowledged or attended to, but which seriously influence African-American students' progression within predominantly white educational institutions.

Logan highlights the current critical issue of increasing representation of African-Americans in the overall population in contrast to the decreasing representation of African-American students within institutions of higher education. She proposes recommendations that institutions must begin to consistently address if this imbalance is to be corrected.

Cook addresses the outcome of cultural differences between African-American students and the predominantly white university setting as indicated in the previous articles, i.e., alienation. Cook offers a valid and comprehen-

sive overview of alienation which challenges institutions of higher education toward introspection and action. Finally, another outcome of cultural conflict is examined. McRae addresses the impact of race and gender socialization upon career choice for a specific group: African-American females.

The next section of articles systematically addresses specific areas of recommended programming that have been effective in assisting institutions in overcoming the problems related to the cultural conflicts often existing between institutions and African-American students. Wright presents an emphasis on joining with the family system as a means to decrease the tendency for development of an adversarial relationship between white institutions, the African-American family, and conjointly, the African-American student. Steward and Jackson empirically examine within-group diversity on levels of personal competency that differentiate those African-American students who persist to senior status over a five-year period. Programming recommendations are offered as a response to the findings. Richardson, Kohatsu, and Waters present a critique of how graduate school recruitment strategies discriminate against African-American students, offering concrete recommendations for change. And finally, Midgett and Stephens describe an effective, innovative program developed to enhance African-American student retention.

I sincerely hope that this issue will provide alternative perspectives and elicit reaction that will stimulate discussion, reflection, and action in order to facilitate the academic progression of African-American students in all institutions of higher education.

Robbie J. Steward, Ph.D.
Guest Editor
University of Kansas, Lawrence