

Foreword

In the last decade, the rates of enrollment and retention of certain students of color have declined. Although attention to the need to diversify the student body and create a welcoming climate has increased, success has been limited. In a social and political climate where affirmative action is under attack and the means for ensuring diversity are becoming narrower, we need strategies for retaining students who are able to enter higher education. Over the last few decades, professionals have searched for generalized strategies and techniques to retain students, but often studies have not examined the specific needs of students of color. Because students of color often make up a much smaller percentage of students in studies, their experiences and needs are often lost and go undetected. As Swail, Redd, and Perna describe, the United States will become significantly less white over the next fifty years, so these issues are becoming more urgent.

Retaining Minority Students in Higher Education: A Framework for Success by Watson Scott Swail, with Kenneth E. Redd and Laura W. Perna, is being published at a crucial time: campuses realize they need to make changes yet have few if any strategies to move forward. This monograph, which provides a framework that can fundamentally alter retention and success of all students, begins with a description of the context for students of color, retrenchment of affirmative action, and the reduction in the pipeline of students of color. The authors highlight the need to move from a focus on access, the main thrust of federal policy the last three decades, to success. In the following chapters, the monograph shifts the discussion to what happens once students of color come to college campuses. The heart of the book outlines why students leave college,

exploring Tinto's attrition model, Bean's synthetic model, and Anderson's force field analysis. The authors focus on a host of issues such as academic preparation, campus climate, and social integration, presenting a complex picture from the breadth of literature produced in the last thirty years. The framework for retention developed by the authors responds to the host of social, cognitive, and institutional factors identified as issues in the research and are tied to specific support units and services on campuses. Moreover, the framework places the student at the center of the model and focuses on the institutional role in shaping students' experiences, an area where professionals have some level of control. As the authors note, "The strength in the model and the framework that follows is in its ability to help institutions work proactively to support student persistence and achievement."

Programs and services are not enough to ensure success; monitoring student progress is critical. Data and evidence (both quantitative and qualitative) on the success of students must be collected and reviewed on a systemic and ongoing basis. The monograph also underscores the importance of thinking across the entire institution to successfully implement and lead a retention effort. Tinto's seven action principles serve as a helpful strategy. A wealth of promising programs and practices is listed in the appendix. I invite readers to share this monograph with others who care about the success of students of color.

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Series Editor

Acknowledgments

This volume is the culmination of several years of research and work, and it would not have happened without the assistance of a number of individuals. I wish to thank the following persons for their hard work and support during this period and this project, in particular the late Dennis Holmes, the George Washington University, for general guidance; Bernard Charles, the McKenzie Group, for helping develop the original research project; Nancy Adelman, SRI International, for her leadership; and Manya Walton, consultant, for her assistance on the literature review.

Special thanks to Ken Redd of NASFAA and Laura Perna of the University of Maryland for their continual goodwill and expert support. They made this volume a much better reference for readers.

A special thanks is due Jorge Balan of the Ford Foundation for sponsoring this project and SRI International for project management. All of us in the education community appreciate the continued support of research and practice with respect to educational opportunity.