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The Impact of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program on the
Retention of Black Students

by
Angie Royal

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

The Impact of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program on the
Retention of Black Students

by
Angie Royal

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Education
at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigated a retention program for Black students on a small, private liberal arts campus in the Midwest, to determine if the program increased the retention of Black students. It also examined why students chose to (or not to) participate in the program, what components of the program students found helpful, the challenges Black students faced on campus, and whether they would recommend the program to future students.

The gap in the retention rates of Black students compared to other ethnic groups has continued to be a topic of concern on college campuses. At the research site, this gap was significantly higher than the national average. To attempt to close this gap and provide Black students with resources that could help them succeed, the institution created a retention program called the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program. To examine the impact of this program on the retention of Black students, the researcher investigated three hypotheses. The researcher used a z -test of proportions to determine if there was a statistically significant increase in the retention rates of BSEE participants compared to those eligible but who did not participate. In addition, the researcher examined retention rates by gender. The researcher also examined the following research questions: How do participants in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program feel their participation impacted their decision to remain at the institution studied? What components of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program did students find most helpful? Why did those eligible for the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program, but who chose not to participate, opt to remain at the institution studied? For those eligible for the program who did not participate, were

there any added components that would encourage them to participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program? Why did students choose to participate or not to participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program? The researcher gathered answers to these questions through interviews and surveys.

The researcher found in this study there was no statistically significant increase in the retention of BSEE program participants compared to those eligible but who did not participate, when gender was considered. When examining overall participation, there was moderate evidence of an increase in the retention of students who participated in BSEE. Information collected from the survey and interviews also suggested that students who participated in the program did believe that program participation impacted their decision to remain at the institution. Having organizations that give Black students a place where they felt wanted and where they felt like they belonged was important to the students who participated in this study. The study also verified the importance of Black faculty and staff serving as mentors to students of color. Study participants also indicated that the resources the BSEE program provided to help them be successful were necessary to their success as a student. The majority of program participants and those eligible but who did not participate stated that they would recommend participation in BSEE to future students, which spoke to the importance of the program.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

In 2015, First Lady Michelle Obama and *Essence* magazine co-hosted a panel that included women instrumental in the civil rights movement. During this discussion, First Lady Obama asserted that “the most important issue facing African-Americans today is education” (Ohl-McClatchy, 2015, para. 1). Obama went on to state:

If we really want to solve issues like mass incarceration, poverty, racial profiling, voting rights, and the kinds of challenges that shocked so many of us over the past year, then we simply cannot afford to lose out on the potential of even one young person. We cannot allow even one more young person to fall through the cracks (Ohl-McClatchy, 2015, para. 9).

Suppose education can be that safety net for our youth. In that case, we owe it to them to examine what institutions are doing to provide an environment conducive to the successful completion of a degree.

Statement of the Problem

Retaining students is one of the most widely studied matters in higher education (Tinto, 2006). The first retention study dates back to 1938, when John McNeely gathered various data from 60 institutions, including information on why students were leaving college (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). This study served as a catalyst for much interest in the concept of retention. It served as the foundation for many studies starting in the 1960s, when retention of students began to become a well-researched area of higher education (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

After World War II and due to the GI Bill, more than two million veterans enrolled in college (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). The GI Bill, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Higher Education Act of 1965 encouraged institutions to grant more access to higher education to various students, including middle and low-income students and students of color (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). These enrollment booms put quite a strain on institutions unprepared to serve these populations. Thus, more formal conversations about what institutions were doing to serve and ultimately retain students began to happen (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). When institutions began focusing on the retention of students in the 1960s, they initially focused on the individual student and what they lacked in skill and motivation. In the 1970s, institutions began to shift their focus from the individual student to the institution's role in students' decisions to discontinue pursuing their degree (Tinto, 2006). As Tinto (2006) stated, "It is one thing to understand why students leave; it is another to know what institutions can do to help students stay and succeed" (p. 6).

Although institutions shifted their focus on their role in student success, the retention and successful completion of a degree for students of color remained an issue of concern. To put this issue into perspective, per the *Digest of Education Statistics* (2018), the six-year graduation rate for Black students in the 2011 cohort at private institutions nationally is 43.9%, compared to 69.7% for White students. At the research site, that number is even lower. At an assessment summit held in the summer of 2018, the campus assessment coordinator shared that the six-year graduation rate for Black students in the 2011 cohort was only 29% (Weitzel, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to investigate whether the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program had any effect on the fall-to-fall retention rates of first- and second-year Black students at a Midwest private liberal arts institution. The researcher compared the retention rates of students who participated in the program to those eligible but did not participate. In addition to the quantitative data comparing the retention rates of participants to non-participants, the researcher used interviews and surveys to gather qualitative information regarding which components of the program participants felt most impacted them.

Through this comparison, the researcher identified strengths and weaknesses in the BSEE program to provide feedback to program administrators on the components that should remain in the program, those components to remove, and the elements that may be missing. Assuming the research study proved that participation in the program positively impacted the retention of Black students, this study aimed to provide data that could result in higher participation rates in the program. Institutions seeking to create similar programs or determine what resources are needed to positively affect the retention of Black students could use these findings. Institutions could also use the results to determine whether the components of their current programs are impactful.

Significance of the Study

All students face several stressors when attending college, including financial difficulties and academic struggles. However, Black students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) face additional challenges not faced by their White counterparts. Black students often feel unwanted, alienated, and isolated at PWIs (Hunn, 2014). Black

students that attend PWIs can experience adjustment issues, as many are leaving an environment of color to enter the predominantly White culture of the university (Hunn, 2014). A sense of belonging is critical for student success (Tinto, 2012). According to Hunn (2014), Black students seek out others with shared life experiences, so having Black role models can provide “a more supportive environment for African American students” (Brittain et al., 2009, p. 89). However, finding Black role models can be difficult at predominantly White institutions if they cannot locate Black faculty or staff to identify with (Brittain et al., 2009). This study is essential because as institutions attempt to create programs that will assist Black students, it is critical that they know what components to include so that their programs have a better chance of being successful.

Theoretical Framework

Since the 1970s, institutions have been increasingly utilizing student development theory to attempt to understand the behavior and outcomes of college students (Evans et al., 1998; Patton et al., 2007). College campuses were faced with several changes during this time, due to the social unrest caused by the Vietnam War and the civil rights and women’s movements (Hamrick et al., 2002). Practitioners began using student development theory to make sense of trends more formally and better understand their diverse populations to serve them best (Evans et al., 1998; Hamrick et al., 2002; Patton et al., 2007). While Vincent Tinto’s retention theory is woven throughout this study, the primary theoretical framework is Critical Race Theory.

As a theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory in education examines traditional educational structures, the dominant and subordinate positions on campus, and how these systems perpetuate racism (“Critical Race Theory,” 2015; Patton, 2016; Patton

et al., 2007). Critical Race Theory grew from failures in the critical legal studies movement to affirm the role of racism in the American legal system (Hiraldo, 2010; Jackson, 2018; Martinez, 2014). Legal scholars of color founded it as they sought to understand the failure of pieces of civil rights legislation and the connection between the law and race (Hiraldo, 2010; Jackson, 2018; Patton et al., 2007).

Ladson-Billings and Tate applied Critical Race Theory to education in the mid-1990s because they felt that race was minimized when considering educational inequalities (“Critical Race Theory,” 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Patton et al., 2007). They based their application of Critical Race Theory to education on three arguments:

1. Race is a significant factor in defining inequities in the United States.
2. Property rights are the basis of our society.
3. Inequities can be better understood when analyzed by looking at the intersection of property and race (“Critical Race Theory,” 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Patton et al., 2007).

Race and educational inequalities. Ladson-Billings and Tate asserted that race continues to play a significant role in producing inequities in educational institutions (as cited in Patton et al., 2007). The academic achievement of students of color has proved to be less than that of their White peers. Practitioners must recognize how their practices perpetuate racial inequalities (Hiraldo, 2010; Patton et al., 2007). For example, using a curriculum that only focuses on White, Western viewpoints can alienate students of color (Patton et al., 2007). If we encourage students to put theory to practice, we must utilize approaches that consider race (Patton et al., 2007). Furthermore, if we wish to transform

higher education, we must provide an inclusive curriculum that includes conversations about race (Patton et al., 2007).

Race and property rights on college campuses. There have been several examples of tensions and conflicts over property rights throughout history. Some examples include land taken from American Indians and viewing enslaved African Americans as property (Patton et al., 2007). With property ownership comes societal benefits (Patton et al., 2007). University administrators who examine their practices through the lens of critical race should acknowledge that property differences exhibit themselves in different ways on a college campus (Patton et al., 2007). For example, faculty “own” their curriculum and design it based on their own beliefs, which could be a disadvantage for students of color if that faculty only prescribes to White, Western viewpoints (Patton et al., 2007).

Intersection of race and property. Ladson-Billings and Tate assert in their final argument that often, Whiteness is the ultimate property, which can be very harmful to students of color (as cited in Patton et al., 2007). Ladson-Billings and Tate argued that Whiteness as a property is validated when students are rewarded for conforming to things like White speech patterns, dress, and behaviors (Patton et al., 2007). This argument is further validated when examining the racial makeup of university administrators. “The fact that the overwhelming majority of college faculty and senior academic administrators, such as presidents, provosts, vice presidents, and deans are White translates to the notion that being White carries more status and power than being of color” (Patton et al., 2007, p. 46).

Critical Race Theory, unlike many other theoretical frameworks and academic lenses, contains an element of activism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). It not only serves to help us better understand our social situation but to change it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 8). It challenges us to identify the racial lines drawn by society and to transform them for the better (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). For this study, the research sought to better understand the experience of Black students on a predominantly White campus, determine what is needed to improve their experience, and make recommendations to the research site to implement the changes.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

With the above in mind, the researcher investigated the following null hypotheses and addressed the following research questions in this study:

Null Hypothesis 1. There is no increase in the retention rates of students participating in The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program and those students eligible for the program who do not participate.

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no increase in the retention rates of female students participating in The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program and those female students eligible for the program who do not participate.

Null Hypothesis 3. There is no increase in the retention rates of male students participating in The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program and those male students eligible for the program who do not participate.

Research Question 1. How do participants in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program feel their participation impacted their decision to remain at the institution studied?

Research Question 2. What components of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program do students find most helpful?

Research Question 3. Why did those eligible for the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program but who chose not to participate opt to remain at the institution studied?

Research Question 4. For those eligible for the program who did not participate, are there any added components that would encourage them to participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program?

Research Question 5. Why did students choose to participate or not to participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program?

Definition of Terms

Attrition. Attrition is the decrease in the number of students resulting from lower student retention (Hagedorn, 2005).

Drop-outs. Students who leave school before achieving their goals (College Student Retention, n.d.; Hagedorn, 2005)

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The Higher Education Act of 1965 defines HBCUs as “any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation” (“What is an HBCU,” n.d., para. 1).

Opt-outs. Students who choose to leave their institutions because they have achieved their particular goal, which may not include completing a degree (Bonham & Luckie, 1993).

Persistence. The behavior of continuing action despite obstacles (Rovai, 2002, p. 1).

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Institutions of higher learning in which 50% or more of student enrollment are White (Lomotey, 2010).

Progression. A student continuing to enroll each semester and completing courses toward a degree (College Student Retention, n.d.)

Retention Rate. Percentage of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall semester enrolled in the current fall semester (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018-2019)

Stop-outs. Students who enroll again after dropping out (College Student Retention, n.d.)

Transfer-outs. Students who start at one institution and then switch to another institution (College Student Retention, n.d.)

Study Limitations

There were some limitations identified in this study. The first limitation was the length of time the BSEE program has been in existence at the research site. Because this program had only been in place for one academic year at the onset of the study, only one year of retention data was available. However, the researcher opted to continue only studying the program's first year due to the following limitation. During the study, the research site sent students home for the remainder of the academic year due to the

COVID-19 pandemic. Removing students from campus may have impacted students' responses to interview and survey requests. It may have also impacted students' experiences and their decision to return to the institution for upcoming years, so the researcher chose only to analyze retention data for the program's first year.

An additional limitation of the study may have been the use of interviews. Participants' responses in an interview are dependent on how willing a participant is to be honest and share. To address any concerns about sharing, the researcher reminded the students that this was an anonymous conversation and that their honesty was necessary to help improve the experience of Black students at the research site. Another limitation of using interviews was the location of the interviews. If students could not travel to campus for the interview, they may have felt like they could not participate. The researcher was willing to complete the interviews over the phone. However, the recruitment emails sent to students did not specifically mention that, so students may have opted out if they did not know they could complete the interview over the phone. As the researcher continued to visit Black Student Union and BSEE meetings, she did identify to students that she would be willing to complete telephone interviews. The final limitation with interviews is that the researcher may have received different results if the students had been willing to participate in focus groups instead of one-on-one interviews, as others' responses may have sparked additional thoughts or feelings.

The use of surveys could also be a limitation of the study. While the researcher attempted to make the questions very straightforward, participants may not have fully understood the questions in the survey. For example, one of the survey questions asked what their class level was in 2018-2019. Because the survey was administered in the

spring of 2020, they may have misunderstood and answered what their current class level was. Students were given contact information for the researcher at the beginning of the study to address any questions. Unfortunately, they may not have opted to reach out with questions, whereas they could ask questions directly to the researcher and receive an immediate response in an interview.

Another limitation identified was the size of the program. The number of participants in the program was small, which resulted in a reduced sample size. While the researcher asked questions to understand better Black students' journey as college students at the research site, the findings from this study may not apply to all Black students.

Another potential limitation was the race of the researcher compared to the participants in the study. Because of the researcher's position at the research site, students were aware that the researcher was White. Because of past experiences, Black students could mistrust the intentions of a White researcher. They could fear that this study was not meant to be supportive, but to be critical.

When reviewing the qualitative data, the researcher discovered that the instrumentation did not fully answer Research Question #3. The question intended to explore why those who did not participate in BSEE chose to remain enrolled at the research site. After further review of the data, the researcher was able to identify responses that did pertain to this question.

Finally, student retention, in general, is an extraordinarily complex issue. Many variables can affect a student's ability to persist. Because the researcher did not have access to data on students who left the research institution, they could not use the

information on why those students left the institution in the study. Instead, the researcher chose to focus her study on what factors impact students' decision to stay.

Summary

The retention and persistence of students continue to be a topic of concern at institutions across the country. Retention and graduation rates often influence the public's view of an institution's success (Millea et al., 2018). While the retention of all students regardless of race or ethnicity is important, at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), unfortunately, more significant percentages of Black students will not complete their degrees (Molina & Perry, 2017). Therefore, institutions must pay close attention to the resources they are providing Black students to assist them in completing their degrees.

In this study, the researcher examined a strategy implemented by an institution to increase the retention of Black students—the creation of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program (BSEE). This study focused on a variety of aspects of BSEE. It analyzed what enticed students to participate (and why students did not), what components students found most helpful, any recommended additions to the program, and whether Black students would recommend the program to others. It also compared retention rates of program participants to those eligible for the program but who did not participate to see whether there was an increase in retention. Relevant research related to the topic of retention found useful for this study was discussed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

The literature review begins with an historical overview of Black students and their pursuit of higher education, followed by a discussion on the theoretical framework used, Critical Race Theory. The importance of obtaining a college degree is discussed, including both financial and non-pecuniary benefits. The evolution of retention theories is reviewed. After that, institutional factors that impact the retention of students are discussed, followed by student characteristics that impact the ability to persist. The literature review concludes with a discussion on additional factors that impact Black student retention.

Historical Background

From the arrival of the first enslaved people in Jamestown in 1619, African Americans have faced many struggles, including the right to education (Haynes, 2006). Before the Civil War, it was illegal to educate enslaved people. Knowledge can be powerful, and enslavers did not wish to arm their enslaved people with anything that might make them rebel or question their treatment. However, showing great resolve, many enslaved people began to educate themselves (Haynes, 2006). In 1823 the first Black student, Alexander Lucius Twilight, graduated from college (Forest & Kinser, 2002). In 1854, the first college for Black students, Lincoln University, was chartered (Forest & Kinser, 2002). Furthermore, in 1862, Mary Jane Patterson became the first Black woman to graduate from college (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006).

The end of the Civil War brought an explosion of opportunities for Black students. Thirty-nine higher education institutions were founded explicitly for Black students between 1865 and 1880 (Haynes, 2006). The number of institutions created for

Black students was higher during this time than at any other point in history (Haynes, 2006). Institutions like Fisk, Clark, and Howard Universities served “as a source of opportunity and hope for thousands of free Blacks and former slaves seeking access to the American educational system” (Haynes, 2006, p. 10).

The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1890 also significantly impacted access to higher education for people of color. This act denied federal funds to institutions where a student’s race was a factor considered in the admission of students, thereby encouraging states to provide African Americans access to higher education (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006). The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1890 gave states two options: admit Black students to existing institutions or create separate institutions, yet equitably divide the funds (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006). This dual system was challenged but upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in the landmark 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, which said that separate but equal was still constitutional (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006).

The conclusion of World War II brought about significant changes to higher education that impacted African Americans (Haynes, 2006). Thousands of troops, including Black soldiers, returned from the war, ready to pursue higher education through the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act, more commonly known as the G.I. Bill (Haynes, 2006). The education portion of the G.I. Bill provided funding for veterans to attend the college of their choice (Haynes, 2006). However, the strict segregation policies of many White institutions limited Black veterans’ options, as the institutions either limited the number of Black veterans admitted or denied them admission (Forest & Kinser, 2002). Therefore, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) remained the institutions

where many Black veterans landed (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006). The influx of Black veterans placed a significant strain on these institutions. They did not have adequate facilities, such as housing and classroom space, for so many returning veterans (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006). HBCUs turned away nearly 20,000 Black veterans because they could not provide the space or resources to facilitate their needs (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006; McCardle, 2017).

Despite these challenges, the overall impact of the G.I. Bill on Black veterans was positive (Forest & Kinser, 2002). More predominantly White institutions (PWIs) in the north enrolled an increased number of Black students and began to provide services and even Black faculty and staff to meet their needs (Forest & Kinser, 2002). The boom in Black student enrollment because of the G.I. Bill also helped pave the way for legislation that would ultimately end segregation in higher education (Forest & Kinser, 2002).

The segregated higher education system remained in place until the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, in 1954 (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006). This ruling found that it was unconstitutional to have a "separate but equal" system of education (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006; Lark, 2012). Many institutions opted to ignore this federal mandate and continued to exclude Black students from attending, especially those PWIs in the south (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006). The Civil Rights Act of 1964, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, was intended to end racial discrimination (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Haynes, 2006). Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 sparked the beginning of the actual desegregation of colleges and universities (Lark, 2012; U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). This act prohibited discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in any program

or activity that receives federal funds or other federal financial assistance (Lark, 2012; U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).

The desegregation of PWIs hurt enrollment at predominantly Black institutions (Haynes, 2006). The education of over 90% of Black undergraduate students occurred at predominantly Black institutions before integration (Haynes, 2006). By 2015, that number was at 9% (Anderson, 2017). Because most Black students are not attending HBCUs, we must examine the measures taken to ensure that Black students succeed at predominantly White institutions. Nevertheless, as practitioners consider what they are doing on their campuses to create an environment where students can be successful, they must consider their practices through a critical race lens.

Critical Race Theory

As was discussed in Chapter One, the basis of the theoretical framework of this study is Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory introduced the concept of cultural pluralism, which argues that race must be acknowledged and that racial differences should be celebrated (Jackson, 2018; Martinez, 2014). The application of Critical Race Theory to education includes five basic tenets.

1. Racism is a part of everyday life people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solorzano et al., 2000). Often when using the word "racism," people deny that it still occurs, as they still refer to Jim Crow-era racism (Martinez, 2014). Moreover, while the Civil Rights Movement did disassemble more blatant forms of racism, systemic and institutional inequities still exist for people of color today (Martinez, 2014). We can only eradicate racism if we

acknowledge that it is a part of everyday life (Jackson, 2018; Solorzano et al., 2000).

2. The second tenet focuses on interest convergence, the concept that we will only eradicate racism when it converges with the interest of Whites (Bell, 1980, p. 523; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). An example of interest convergence could be the creation of chief diversity officer positions on college campuses, as students may be less likely to attend a campus that does not demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (Shih, 2017). However, if racism benefits Whites, there can be little incentive to enact policies to eliminate it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In terms of education, inequitable access to quality education ensures continued privilege for Whites (Shih, 2017). So, are PWIs genuinely committed to providing quality education to students of color, knowing that it could come at the expense of their privilege?
3. The third tenet is that race is a social construct, categorizing people by physical characteristics, that society uses when convenient (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The thought that people with common origins may share common physical traits, but it has little to do with personality, intelligence, and morals, is of great interest to critical race theorists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).
4. The fourth tenet looks at the intersectionality of identities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). No one person has a single facet to their identity. People can be African American and gay. Or White and transgender. We must understand

students' overlapping identities to better serve them (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

5. The final tenet focuses on the importance of counter-storytelling. Students of color can give a unique voice to the oppression they have faced, which can tell a different story than the privileged (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Importance of a College Degree

As we reflect on the struggles that African Americans have faced in pursuing education, one may ask, why such a fight to obtain a college degree? A question that receives ongoing national attention is whether individuals should pursue a college education. Why would someone attend college? Historically, people attended college to train to be public servants like ministers, complete research, or learn how to think critically (Chan, 2016). Today, some might argue that the purpose of a college education is to gain knowledge to prepare individuals for a variety of roles in a global society (Chan, 2016). Nevertheless, does the burden of a college education outweigh the benefits? Examining the multiple benefits of a college degree is essential before making that decision.

Employment Benefits

An apparent reason to obtain a college degree is to secure employment in a given field after graduation. Carnavale et al. (n.d.) found that of 55 million job openings in the United States through the year 2020, 35% will require a bachelor's degree, and 30% will require an associate's degree or at least some college. STEM, healthcare, and community services will make up the fastest-growing occupations; however, they also require the highest levels of postsecondary education (Carnavale et al., n.d.).

“Most jobs that provide a living wage, employment security, and the possibility of a promising career path require some level of postsecondary education” (Espinosa et al., 2019, p. 37). In a 2015 report for the Center for Education and the Workforce, Carnevale et al., defined good jobs as “those that are in the upper-third by median wages of occupations in which they are classified” (p. 4). They found that good jobs pay more than \$53,000 annually and hire 86% of their workers full-time (Carnevale et al., 2015). Individuals with bachelor’s degrees have filled over 90% of the 2.9 million good jobs created since the economic recovery in 2009 (Carnevale et al., 2015; Chan, 2016).

The higher the education level, typically, the lower the chance of being unemployed, living in poverty, or utilizing public assistance (Ma et al., 2016). In 2016, the unemployment rate of those ages 25 to 34 with only a high school diploma was 11.1%, triple that of those with a bachelor's degree (Espinosa et al., 2019). The unemployment rate of Black adults with a bachelor's degree was only 5.8%, compared to 18.6% for Black adults with only a high school diploma (Espinosa et al., 2019). In a 2015 study, only 4% of college graduates lived in poverty, compared to 13% of high school graduates (Ma et al., 2016). Twenty-nine percent of those with only a high school diploma used Medicaid, compared to only 12% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher (Ma et al., 2016). Only 2.6% of college graduates were unemployed, compared to 8.1% of high school graduates of the same age (Ma et al., 2016).

According to the Digest of Educational Statistics, in 2017, the median annual earnings for those with a high school diploma were \$31,830; compared to \$49,990 for those with a bachelor's degree; and \$64,070 for those with a master's degree or higher ("Median Annual Earnings," n.d.). When considering race, the median annual wage for

African Americans with a high school diploma was \$27,830, \$45,820 for those with a bachelor's degree, and \$59,650 for those with a master's degree or higher ("Median Annual Earnings," n.d.). These financial differences can add up throughout a lifetime. Trostel (2017) reported the average lifetime earnings of someone with a high school diploma to be \$549,010, compared to \$1,174,493 for someone with a bachelor's degree and \$1,593,959 for someone with an advanced degree.

The consideration of fringe benefits is important in addition to the difference in wages and employment rates. Sixty-eight percent of workers in good jobs are provided health insurance by their employer, and 61% have employer-provided retirement plans (Carnavale et al., 2015). In 2012, the average value of employer-provided health insurance was less than \$1,900 for high school graduates and over \$3,200 for college graduates (Trostel, 2017). In the same year, 27% of high school graduates had retirement plans through their employer, compared to 46% of college graduates (Trostel, 2017). Trostel (2017) also reported that high school graduates' average annual retirement income is only 42% of that of college graduates. In 2012, 80% of college graduates were employed, compared to 64.5% of high school graduates (Trostel, 2017). The unemployment rate for those with bachelor's degrees was half that of those with only high school diplomas (Trostel, 2017). When considering the difference in earnings, fringe benefits, and employment rates, the economic benefits of a college degree are apparent.

Non-pecuniary Benefits

A college education can also positively affect an individual's personal and social outcomes. Lochner (2010) found that the more education an individual has, the less likely they are to participate in a crime. He found that the increased wage that comes with

higher levels of education increases the opportunity cost of participating in a crime, thus serving as a deterrent for being involved in criminal activity (Lochner, 2010). He also asserted that higher levels of education could positively impact an individual's social networks, which could also dissuade them from participating in a crime (Lochner, 2010).

There is also evidence of a correlation between years of education and health-related behaviors among adults (Hahn & Truman, 2015). Only 8% of college graduates smoke, compared to 26% of high school graduates (Ma et al., 2016). In 2014, 69% of 25- to 34-year-olds with a bachelor's degree or higher reported exercising at least once a week, compared to 45% of high school graduates of the same age (Ma et al., 2016). Trostel (2017) reported that in 2013, only 50.5% of high school graduates described their health as very good or excellent, compared to 73.5% of college graduates. Meara et al. (2008) found that those who attended college's life expectancy was seven years longer than those who did not.

College graduates tend to be more civic-minded. Thirty-nine percent of college graduates reported volunteering, compared to 16% of high school graduates (Ma et al., 2016). Forty-eight percent of college graduates reported participating in community organizations, compared to only 26% of high school graduates (Trostel, 2017). In the 2014 midterm election, 45% of 25- to 44-year-olds with at least a bachelor's degree reported voting, compared to 20% of high school graduates in the same age group (Ma et al., 2016). High school graduates donate less than \$400 or 1.6% of their earnings, compared to college graduates who donate \$1,300 or 2.3% of their earnings annually (Trostel, 2017).

Retention and Persistence

As the above research has shown, there are many benefits to obtaining a college degree. Unfortunately, however, the benefits are not always enough to keep students enrolled. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2018) defines retention as enrollment at the same institution for the second year and persistence as enrolling at any institution for the second year. Of students who entered college in the fall of 2015, 73.4% persisted to their second year at any institution, and 61.1% remained at their original institution (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018). Unfortunately, the odds are stacked against historically underrepresented populations when it comes to persisting to a degree. When factoring in race, White students persisted to their second year at a rate of 78.6%, while Black students only persisted at a rate of 67% (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018).

Regarding retention overall, 62.6% of White students were retained by their original institution, compared to 52.5% of Black students (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018). At private institutions, 89.6% of White students persisted to their second year, while only 79.3% of Black students did (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018). Furthermore, 75.3% of White students at private institutions remained at their original institution, compared to 62.4% of Black students (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018).

Not only are Black students overall graduating from college at a lower rate, but Black men are also at even more significant risk of not persisting to a degree. Per the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), in the 2011 cohort, only 37.5% of Black males completed their degree within six years, compared to 49% of Black females. In

response to statistics such as this, many campuses have enacted strategies to connect Black male students with mentors and other activities they can get involved in to strengthen their connection to campus (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012).

As was mentioned in Chapter One, after the enrollment boom of the 60s, institutions started to have a more formal focus on retention. During this time, two psychosocial theorists' works had a significant impact on the study of student development and retention—Erik Erikson and Arthur Chickering. Erik Erikson's work on psychosocial development broke student development down into a series of eight developmental tasks or stages: 1) trust vs. mistrust, 2) autonomy vs. shame, 3) initiative vs. guilt, 4) industry vs. inferiority, 5) identity vs. role confusion, 6) intimacy vs. isolation, 7) generativity vs. stagnation, 8) ego integrity vs. despair (as cited in McLeod, 2017). Erikson assumed crises would occur at each stage. Facing each of these crises could positively or negatively impact development (as cited in Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Building on Erikson's work, Chickering described seven vectors of development that contributed to students' sense of identity: 1) developing competence, 2) managing emotions, 3) developing autonomy, 4) establishing identity, 5) freeing interpersonal relationships, 6) developing purpose, 7) developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1998). The vectors focused on how students think, feel, believe, and relate to others, and Chickering felt that institutions could use this research to help them better understand where students are and which way they were heading (Chickering & Reisser, 1998).

The 1970s marked the true dawn of theory in the formal study of student retention (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). William Spady performed one of the first widely recognized retention studies in 1970 (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011;

Godor, 2017). At the time, Spady felt that the research on retention lacked clarity, methodological rigor, depth and breadth of design, and analytic sophistication (Godor, 2017). Taking an unconventional approach, Spady based his theory on Durkheim's theory of suicide, stating the below as his reason:

Durkheim's theory of suicide provides a fruitful vehicle for summarizing a large proportion of current research, and focusing future attention on the interaction between student attributes (i.e., dispositions, interests, attitudes, and skills) and the influences, expectations, and demands imposed by various sources in the university environment (as cited in Godor, 2017, p. 260).

By combining Durkheim's work with research on student retention, Spady developed a more sociological approach to retention theory (as cited in Godor, 2017). Through his work, he found that the following variables contributed to students' social integration to campus and could be linked indirectly to their decision to drop out of school: academic potential, grade performance, intellectual development, normative congruence, and support of friends (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). In 1971, he published a study finding that academic performance was the ultimate factor determining attrition (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

After Spady, another theorist opted to utilize Durkheim's work in reference to student retention. In 1975, Vincent Tinto found that applying Durkheim's "egotistical" type of suicide (where the victim's degree of social integration is low) to student retention might provide a deeper understanding of why students drop out (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Godor, 2017). According to Tinto (as cited in Godor, 2017), most suicides "represent a form of voluntary withdrawal" from a community. Tinto described

students dropping out as a voluntary withdrawal from the academic community (Godor, 2017, p. 260). Like suicide, he felt that while dropping out is an individual choice, it also reflected on the university community (Godor, 2017). However, what differentiated Tinto from Spady is that while he agreed that academic performance is essential to retention, he focused on students' social integration to campus as a retention factor (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

Enrollment declines in the 1980s led to the development of enrollment management, a university-wide approach to recruitment and retention (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Notable theorists of the 1980s included John Bean and Alexander Astin (as cited in Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Bean's theory focused on students' backgrounds in determining reasons for student departure, such as past academic performance and preparation, socioeconomic status, distance from home, and student satisfaction (Bean, 1981; Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). He also found that men and women leave institutions for different reasons (Bean, 1981; Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). In 1984, Alexander Astin's theory emphasized the role of student involvement in retention (Astin, 1999; Evans et al., 1998). He described involvement as a behavior or action, not a thought or feeling (Astin, 1999).

Astin's theory proposed the following:

1. "Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects" (Astin, 1999, p. 519). These objects can include the overall student experience or a specific activity, such as their involvement in a student organization (Astin, 1999; Evans et al., 1998).

2. “Regardless of the object, involvement occurs along a continuum” (Astin, 1999, p. 519). Some will exert more energy than others or be more involved in certain experiences than others (Astin, 1999; Evans et al., 1998).
3. “Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features” (Astin, 1999, p. 519). A quantitative measure of involvement may be the amount of time devoted to something, while a qualitative measure might be the seriousness in which the activity was approached (Astin, 1999; Evans et al., 1998).
4. “The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program” (Astin, 1999, p. 519). In essence, the more students put into something, the more they will get out of it (Astin, 1999; Evans et al., 1998).
5. “The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement” (Astin, 1999, p. 519). If the policy or practice is counteractive to student involvement, then that policy or practice should not be implemented (Astin, 1999; Evans et al., 1998).

What set Astin apart from other theorists at this time was that his work focused on the factors that facilitate development (and ultimately retention) instead of examining development itself (as cited in Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Astin focused on three factors that influence a student’s involvement in higher education: 1) demographics and prior experiences; 2) students’ environment and experiences during college; 3) their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

The 1990s brought about retention theories focused on underrepresented populations, such as students of color (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). During the 1990s, Tinto revised his earlier model to include African American students, students with a lower socioeconomic status, transfer students, and adult learners (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). The latter half of the decade brought focus to the transition of students, specifically the transition of first-year students (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). During the latter half of the decade, a focus on academic advising emerged. Both Anderson in 1997 and Tinto in 1999 stressed that academic advising was a vital part of a student's experience and impacted student development (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

University-wide approaches to retention carried over into the 2000s. A variety of theories at this time asserted that retention programs should address students' experiences both inside and outside of the classroom (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Throughout the 2000s, Tinto published several studies suggesting that institutions provide easy access to academic, social, and personal support services (Tinto, 2006; 2010; 2012; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). He stated that the interactions students have with individuals in these areas can impact their sense of connection to the university, their ability to navigate the campus culture, and, ultimately, their ability to graduate (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Tinto, 2006; 2010; 2012; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). He found that universities that actively involve students in their educational experience create an environment where students are more likely to succeed (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Tinto, 2006; 2010; 2012; Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

In 2008, Voigt and Hundrieser posited that when looking at retention, there are typically two questions asked:

1. Why do students leave?
2. Why do students stay?

Students do not remain enrolled for several reasons. For many reasons, students may select another institution and transfer out. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2018) found that almost one in eight students who start college transfer to a different institution by the following fall. Some students enroll in college never intending to complete a degree, and may opt out once they have achieved their intended goal (Bonham & Luckie, 1993). For example, someone may enroll in college to take a course for personal or professional gain. Others may stop out, taking a break with the intention of re-enrolling later (College Student Retention, n.d.). And some drop out entirely (Hagedorn, 2005; College Student Retention, n.d.). Black students represent the only ethnic group more likely to stop out or discontinue enrollment than complete their degree within six years (Espinosa et al., 2019; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2017).

Why should institutions be concerned with retention? Retention and graduation rates are critical measures of an institution's success (Lau, 2003; Millea et al., 2018; O'Keefe, 2013). Leaving before completing a degree costs both the institution and the student (Millea et al., 2018; O'Keefe, 2013). For students, dropping out can mean lower earnings and unrealized potential (Millea et al., 2018). For institutions, it can be financially devastating. Every student enrolled at an institution directly represents revenue for that institution, whether through tuition and fees, the room and board paid,

alumni giving, or the state and federal funding per student (Lau, 2003; O'Keefe, 2013; Raisman, 2013). In addition, institutions lose thousands of dollars in expenses related to recruiting replacement students (Lau, 2003; Millea et al., 2018). A 2013 study of 1,669 institutions found that institutions lost approximately \$16.5 billion from students leaving (Raisman, 2013). When looking at the research site compared to seven other institutions in the area, the research site ranked sixth of seven in most dollars lost, with losses totaling \$20.5 million (Raisman, 2013). For these reasons, institutions must examine factors contributing to retention and graduation rates. Millea et al. (2018) categorized these factors into three broad areas: institutional factors, student characteristics, and financial factors.

Institutional Factors

What are the conditions and types of environments within universities needed to bolster student success? Tinto and Pusser (2006) pointed to several conditions within universities essential to promoting student success. The first and most important is a commitment to student success, especially for low-income and underrepresented students (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Is the institution willing to devote resources and provide the incentives needed to increase student success (Kinzie & Kuh, 2017; Millea et al., 2018; Tinto & Pusser, 2006)? College presidents play a critical role in students' success through their decisions regarding the resources allocated to support student success (Tinto, 2012; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Without commitment, student success programs rarely can sustain and prosper long term (Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

High expectations for students can also impact student success (Tinto, 2012; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Expectations influence student success because they shape the way

students determine how to spend their time and energy (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). When institutions ask more of students, they tend to perform better, and institutions with higher expectations tend to have higher retention rates (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Tinto, 2010). Faculty play an especially significant role in setting expectations. The difficulty of assignments, for example, can communicate expectations (Tinto, 2012). The level of challenge and support we show students can send compelling messages to them about what we expect of them and how much we believe in their ability to succeed (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Tinto, 2012). Often, however, institutions expect too little of students, especially during their first year of college (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). For example, a rule-of-thumb commonly stated in higher education is that students are to study two hours outside of class for every hour spent inside of the classroom (McCormick, 2011). Since its first administration in 2000, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSEE) has found consistently that college students typically only spend half of the recommended time studying outside of class (McCormick, 2011). Tinto and Pusser (2006) suggested that institutions construct educational settings that require students to study more. Tinto (2010) also recommended that faculty and staff make no assumptions that students understand expectations, so they must be committed to communicating clear expectations to students. Faculty and staff must give students clear and consistent road maps for completing educational requirements and personal goals (Tinto, 1999).

The level of institutional support is another factor that promotes student success (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Tinto and Pusser (2006) point to three forms of support: academic, social, and financial. Academic supports can include programs that support learning, such as new student orientation, tutoring centers, study skills courses, academic

advisement, career planning, and supplemental instruction programs (Dadgar et al., 2014; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). There is quite a breadth of evidence showing that academic supports such as these effectively impact the retention of first-year students specifically (Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

The social support students receive outside of the classroom also impacts their ability to succeed. Informal social support, such as establishing friendships and getting to know new people, and more formal social support, such as counseling centers and peer mentoring programs, can help students navigate the stressors of college and develop a sense of belonging (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). These friendships can provide stability during somewhat uncertain times and positively impact retention (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Students who connect with other faculty, staff, and students are more likely to persist (Tinto, 1999). For students of color, cultural centers can provide additional social support by creating a haven for students looking to find their place on campus (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Without social networks and these safe spaces, students may feel isolated and opt to leave (Tinto, 2010).

When considering the financial climate of higher education, the average cost of tuition has doubled at institutions of higher learning over the past 30 years (Woo & Dunlop Velez, 2016). Black students graduate with the highest student loan debt of any ethnic group (Espinosa et al., 2019). Black students have an average of \$34,000 in student loan debt, compared to \$30,000 for White students (Espinosa et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2019). The stress of paying for college and looming student loan debt can cause anxiety, negatively impacting students' abilities to succeed. Therefore, institutions must provide adequate financial support for students. (Jones et al., 2016; Millea et al.,

2018). Institutions can provide financial support not just through the scholarship money and financial aid they have available but also through delivering financial workshops to help students learn how to manage their finances better, making paying for college less of a stressor (Jones et al., 2016). Students cannot remain enrolled in college if they cannot afford it. Work-study programs can effectively provide students with the financial means to stay enrolled. Still, they also allow students to become involved with other members of the institution, thus creating a supportive network (Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

Whether it be academic, social, or financial support, universities must make sure that students are made aware of the support systems in place to help them succeed. Tinto (1999) asserted that "support that is readily available and connected to other parts of students' collegiate experience leads to retention" (p. 5). When students feel valued and supported, they almost feel obligated to succeed (Forest & Kinser, 2002).

Institutions can also provide an avenue of success for students by using data to steer decision-making regarding student success (Tinto & Pusser, 2006; Trussel & Burke-Smalley, 2018). Universities possess a great deal of information about students that they can use to effectively intervene at the right time to enhance their chances of success (Trussel & Burke-Smalley, 2018). One example of this is early warning systems (Tinto & Pusser, 2006; Trussel & Burke-Smalley, 2018). Rather than waiting on four-week grades, universities could use demographic information, socioeconomic status, and other pre-college factors to predict the likelihood of student success to implement interventions sooner than later (Trussel & Burke-Smalley, 2018).

The final institutional factor essential to promoting student success, according to Tinto and Pusser (2006), is involvement. The more a student is involved, the less likely

they will withdraw (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). The more time a student is actively engaged in learning, both independently and with others, the more likely they will persist (Tinto, 1999). Unfortunately, most first-year students tend to be isolated learners, simply passively expecting faculty to teach them instead of active participants in their learning (Tinto, 1999).

In addition to the time and effort devoted to their academic experience, another critical component of engagement is the resources institutions devote to activities that encourage students to be actively involved (Laird et al., 2008). Successfully retaining students lies in the ability of the institution to get faculty, staff, and administrators to come together to provide an educational and social environment that actively engages students in their college experience. So, for institutions, the question is not whether students should get involved but how to make involvement meaningful and reach students with multiple outside obligations involved (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Astin (1999) also encouraged institutions to look at their policies and practices to ensure they create environments that encourage, not deter, students from getting involved. While it is clear that involvement is essential, what is less clear is how institutions can provide opportunities for involvement in various settings for such different types of students (Tinto, 2006).

Tinto (2006) recommends that while using theory to understand students is acceptable, institutions must move from theory to action and formulate a plan to make students stay. It is one thing to understand why students leave; it is another thing to create an environment that makes them want to stay (Tinto, 2006). Formulating a plan is easier said than done, as many student departure theories are often abstract and use variables

that make it difficult to operationalize or are beyond the institution's control (Tinto, 2006). For example, while it may be helpful to know that high school experiences and family support can impact persistence, colleges and universities have little control over students' experiences prior to arriving on campus (Tinto, 2006).

After formulating a plan of action, institutions must effectively implement the plan to impact retention positively (Tinto, 2006). Institutions must be committed to seeing the program through and investing for the long haul (Tinto, 2006). Unfortunately, too many institutions are unwilling to invest the time and resources needed for long-term change and growth (Tinto, 2006). Often, they will use existing activities to focus their retention efforts on instead of altering or creating new experiences for students (Tinto, 2006). Why? Unfortunately, retention is not always high on everyone's list of priorities. Some at the institution may not feel like they are responsible for retaining students. For example, faculty may feel it is more the responsibility of the student affairs staff when in fact, it is everyone's responsibility (Tinto, 2006).

Many institutions began implementing high-impact practices in response to the need to improve retention and persistence rates. High impact practices are activities that, when participated in, typically result in enhanced engagement and deeper learning, positively impacting retention (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). These include things like bridge programs, orientation programs, first-year seminars, learning communities, early warning/early alert systems, and service learning (Howard & Flora, 2015; Kuh, 2008). Ashley Finley and Tia McNair found that historically underrepresented populations especially benefited from participating in high-impact practices (as cited in Kuh & Kinzie, 2018).

Bridge programs. Bridge programs are programs designed to assist often at-risk students in their transition to college (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Summer Bridge Programs, usually residential in nature, strive to positively influence new first-year students' academic and social skills prior to the beginning of the semester (Howard & Flora, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These programs typically provide students with workshops and other seminars to expose them to the skills necessary to be successful, assist them in identifying resources on campus, and provide programming and activities to help with the adjustment to the social aspect of college (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019; Howard & Flora, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). A 2011 study, which looked at how participation in Summer Bridge Programs impacted academic self-efficacy, sense of belonging, academic skills, and social skills, found that participation in these programs had the most profound impact on academics, with participants achieving a 30% higher GPA than those who did not (Howard & Flora, 2015; Strayhorn, 2011). Douglas and Attewell (2014) found that students who participated in a Summer Bridge Program returned to their institution for a second year at a rate of 11 percentage points higher than those who did not. They also found that Black and Hispanic students who participated in a summer bridge program graduated at a rate of 12 percentage points higher than those that did not (Douglas & Attewell, 2014).

Orientation programs. Another pre-term program meant to improve students' retention is orientation programs (Howard & Flora, 2015). NODA – Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education defines orientation programs as:

deliberate programmatic and service efforts designed to facilitate the transition of new students to the institution; prepare students for the institution's educational opportunities and student responsibilities; initiate the integration of new students into the intellectual, cultural, and social climate of the institution; and support the parents, partners, guardians, and children of the new student (n.d., para 1).

Orientation programs typically provide students with information on program offerings and course registration, college students' expectations, information about financial aid and other assistance programs offered, and other support services that help students adjust to college (Pan et al., 2008). Students tend to come into the college environment with unrealistic expectations, so orientation programs can help students have a more realistic understanding of what it takes to succeed in college (Howard & Flora, 2015). A 2008 study found that orientation programs positively impacted GPA during the first year, so hosting orientation at the beginning of a student's academic career is recommended (Pan et al., 2008).

The most effective orientation programs strive to increase retention by targeting specific populations of students and providing information that matches both the students' and the institutions' needs (Howard & Flora, 2015). Calvin University, a private Evangelical institution in Michigan, hosts IMPACT, a three-day orientation for first-year students of color (Calvin University, n.d.). IMPACT includes activities, such as a resource tour, small group discussions, and sessions on affinity groups, cultural narratives, and empowerment (Calvin University, n.d.). While programs, such as orientation are essential, administrators must give sufficient attention to and allocate

resources for ongoing programs throughout a student's enrollment, rather than just focusing on orientation to improve retention rates and increase GPA (Pan et al., 2008).

First-year seminars. In 2008, the American Association of Colleges and Universities included first-year seminars on their High Impact Practices list (Sullivan & Haller, 2018). Since then, first-year seminars have become increasingly more common on college campuses, with many campuses requiring the completion of a first-year seminar (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015; Sullivan & Haller, 2018). First-year seminars intend to expose first-year students to the expectations of college and the resources offered to help them be successful. They also provide opportunities to help students build social networks with other new students and challenge them to employ critical thinking when approaching coursework and decisions (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015; Howard & Flora, 2015; Sullivan & Haller, 2018). Some institutions, including the research site, also employ first-year seminars centered around a particular theme or topic (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015; Howard & Flora, 2015). For example, first-year seminars at the research site include Biology in the News, Living that Leadership Life, Mind Gym: Unlocking the Human Potential, and more.

Learning communities. Expanding on the success of first-year seminars that bring first-year students together, many institutions introduced learning communities on their campuses. In their simplest form, learning communities involve registering students for a block of courses together (Tinto, 2000). The goal is to integrate learning across courses and engage students with more significant overarching questions outside the classroom (Kuh, 2008). In residential learning communities, students live together and take classes together. Drawing on inspiration from institutions like Oxford and

Cambridge, residential learning communities have been a part of U.S. higher education dating back to colonial times (Fink & Inkelas, 2015). While residential learning communities somewhat disappeared around the turn of the 19th century due to a questioning of the value of combining students' academic and residential life, they were reintroduced in the late 20th century after critics of higher education stated that students needed to be more engaged and connected (Fink & Inkelas, 2015). Today, learning communities continue to be named a high-impact educational practice regarding student retention (Kuh, 2008).

A study of a residential learning community at a predominantly White institution explicitly designed for racial/ethnic minority students found that the learning community provided a haven for students of color (Han et al., 2018). It gave students a sense of belonging, social connections, and a source of support for both the general stresses of college and for stressors specific to students of color (Han et al., 2018). It provided a space for students to be themselves and celebrate their culture (Han et al., 2018). In addition to promoting their personal development, their academic development was positively affected (Han et al., 2018).

Early warning/early alert systems. The National Clearinghouse on Early Alert Initiatives in Higher Education defines early alert systems as programs that provide assistance and resources promptly to address several issues that college students face throughout the year ("Definition of Early Alert," 2010). Early alert systems target specific predictors of success and provide feedback immediately when an academic or behavioral deficit presents itself in hopes that the issue will not persist ("Definition of Early Alert," 2010; Howard & Flora, 2015). Early alert systems serve to unite retention efforts and

direct students to proper resources at the exact time of need ("Definition of Early Alert," 2010). They take a holistic approach to student success, looking at the bigger picture and bringing together resources inside and outside the classroom to create a unified front to address students' needs (Howard & Flora, 2015). For students of color who may feel disconnected from faculty and staff, this intervention could provide the connection they need to persist and complete their degree successfully.

Service-learning. Service-learning programs allow students to use the knowledge and experiences they are gaining in the classroom to analyze and solve problems in the community (Kuh, 2008). Typically, students apply what they are learning and reflect upon how what they learned in the classroom could be utilized (Kuh, 2008). This practice gives students hands-on experience applying classroom concepts to the real world and reinforces the importance of building partnerships with the community and giving back (Kuh, 2008). Some institutions, such as the research site, encourage instructors to infuse service-learning into their first-year seminars.

In contrast, others develop courses that focus on active participation in service learning (Howard & Flora, 2015). Mungo (2017) found that students who completed a service-learning course graduated within six years at a rate 2.4 times higher than those who did not take a service-learning course. Black students who took a service-learning course graduated at a rate of approximately 10% higher than Black students who did not take a service-learning course (Mungo, 2017).

Student Characteristics

While institutions focus on increasing retention, some factors that impact students' ability to persist are attributed to the student themselves. Students tend to face adjustment

issues in one of four areas: academics, institutional and goal commitment, personal-emotional adjustment, and social adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1984).

Academic adjustment. High school coursework and college entrance exams, such as the ACT and SAT are typically what institutions look at to measure a student's likelihood of success in college. A 2020 study completed by researchers at the University of Chicago found that students' high school grade point average is a powerful predictor of college success (Allensworth & Clark, 2020). The average high school GPA of Black students is 2.7, compared to 3.1 for White students (Toldson & McGee, 2014). Why are Black student GPAs lower than White students? Black students may not have the same resources as other ethnic groups. Black students are more likely to have inexperienced teachers (U. S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Black students are four times as likely as Whites to attend schools where 20% or more of the teachers do not meet all state certification and licensure requirements (U. S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014).

To prepare them for the rigors of college coursework, students need access to high-level courses that help them gain content knowledge and develop higher-level thinking skills (McGee, 2013). Bryant (2015), citing a 2014 Department of Education study, noted that, unfortunately, only 57% of Black students have access to college-ready courses, compared to 71% of White students. While high school grades are important indicators of a student's likelihood of success in college, many institutions still rely on standardized tests as success predictors (Allensworth & Clark, 2020). Unfortunately, there does tend to be a significant difference in test scores between Black students and other ethnic groups (Harris, 2018). In 2009, the National Assessment of Educational

Progress found that only 14% of Black students met ACT college readiness standards in mathematics, compared to 30% for Latino students and 53% for White students (Harris, 2018).

In addition to entering the institution unprepared, some students leave because they are either unwilling or unable to meet the academic rigor of the institution (Forest & Kinser, 2002; Lau, 2003; Schwitzer et al., 1999). Some leave because they choose to, and others must go, due to being academically suspended. Approximately 25% of all students who drop out nationally do so for academic reasons (Spradlin et al., 2010). Tinto (2012) reported that less than 25% of those who leave for academic reasons are academically dismissed students. Therefore, most students who leave due to academic struggles leave voluntarily.

Institutional and goal commitment. Vincent Tinto (2012) believed that two critical commitments are involved in student retention. The first is the student's commitment to achieving their college degree, which Tinto referred to as goal commitment (Tinto, 2012). Not everyone enrolls with the intent of completing their degree. Some enter simply to take a few classes. The second is the student's commitment to achieving their degree at the institution they are enrolled in, which Tinto referred to as institutional commitment (Tinto, 2012). Tinto (2012) argued that the combination of goal commitment and institutional commitment would impact an institution's overall retention. However, not everyone enrolls with the intent of completing their degree at that particular institution (Forest & Kinser, 2002). Some start at the institution knowing that they will transfer to another institution. Others may come with goals that conflict with the institution's educational goals (Forest & Kinser, 2002). For some students, their goals

change as part of their natural development. As their goals change, they may transfer out or leave college altogether (Forest & Kinser, 2002). The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2018) found that Black students transfer out at a rate of 48.6%, which is higher than any other ethnic group.

Personal-emotional adjustment. While in college, students can face several personal issues that can affect their ability to persist. These issues can include everything from lack of determination, homesickness, a breakup, death or illness in the family, or full-blown anxiety or depression (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Forest & Kinser, 2002). Students who fail to interact with other community members can become isolated, whether socially or academically. Failure to make friends or interact with faculty can both be causes of attrition (Forest & Kinser, 2002). Social support in the form of counseling, mentors, and peer advisors can positively influence a student's decision to stay in college (Tinto, 2010). This social support is essential for first-generation, low-income, and students of color (Tinto, 2010).

Social adjustment. Some students struggle to adjust to college socially. A student's social adjustment to college can include things, such as forming support networks, navigating new social circles and freedoms, and adjusting to the social life that college can provide (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Russell & Jarvis, 2019). Social adjustment is a vital retention predictor for students of color (Hurtado et al., 1998). While institutions are quite proud of the diversity on their campuses, some students are unprepared to interact with those different from them (Jones et al., 2002). For a Black student not completely comfortable at a PWI, strong social connections to the Black community can help ease the discomfort (McDonald & Vrana, 2007).

Financial Factors

In addition to academic and social struggles, many students, especially those with lower socioeconomic statuses, simply cannot bear the financial burden of pursuing a college degree. Black students have disproportionately lower socioeconomic statuses than White students (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Fischer, 2007). While financial aid can certainly help ease some of the burdens, it is not enough for many students. A lack of financial support can negatively affect the amount of time a student can devote to being academically and socially engaged on campus (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Tinto, 2010). The pursuit of outside work can negatively affect their ability to persist (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Lau, 2003; Tinto, 2010). Work-study programs can be effective in that they provide students with the financial means to stay enrolled. However, they also give students the opportunity to become involved with other members of the institution, thus creating a supportive network (Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

Additional Factors Impacting Black Students' Adjustment

Even with strong academic and financial support, additional institutional factors impact the retention of students of color. Campus racial climate can positively and negatively impact the retention of students of color (Diehl et al., 2019; McClain & Perry, 2017). Fischer (2007) found that minority students with a negative perception of campus racial climate were less satisfied with their college experience. Hurtado et al. (1998) broke down campus racial climate into four components: the institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, structural diversity, psychological climate, and behavioral climate. "Schools that are consistent across these four elements are able to enhance

student outcomes through the creation of strong, supportive, and unified campus cultures" (Dey, 2009, para. 2).

Institution's legacy of inclusion or exclusion. An institution's history of exclusion can influence current practices (Hurtado et al., 1998; McClain & Perry, 2017). Researchers have found that the successful creation of a supportive campus environment can correlate to the institution's initial response to admitting students of color (Hurtado et al., 1998). For example, if an institution was pressured legally in the past to serve students of color equitably this can send the message that the institution is still not welcoming today and can be unsettling for students of color (Hurtado et al., 1998; McClain & Perry, 2017).

Compositional diversity. Research has shown that increasing the diversity of an institution's student, faculty, and staff makeup is an essential first step in improving the campus's racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998; McClain & Perry, 2017). Environments that lack diversity can make students of color feel as if they are merely tokens (Hurtado et al., 1998). A campus that fails to recognize the importance of diversity will struggle to retain students (O'Keefe, 2013). Committing to increasing diversity can communicate to students that a multicultural environment is a priority of the institution, thus making them feel more welcomed (Hurtado et al., 1998).

Psychological climate. The psychological climate includes individuals' perceptions of the relationship between different cultures and their attitudes toward those from cultural or ethnic backgrounds other than their own (Diehl et al., 2019; Hurtado et al., 1998, McClain & Perry, 2017). It also includes how students perceive the institution's response to diversity and their perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict on campus

(Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 289). Hurtado et al. (1998) found that the perception of the racial climate varies based on individuals and their positions within the institution. Campus leaders can strengthen the psychological climate on their campuses by designing programs to help everyone "identify and confront the stereotypes and myths that people have about those who are different from them" (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 291).

Behavioral climate. While the psychological climate deals with perceptions of the relationship between those with different ethnic backgrounds the behavioral climate looks at the actual interactions between varying ethnic groups and the quality of those interactions (Hurtado et al., 1998; Jones et al., 2002; McClain & Perry, 2017). In a 2002 study, Black students reported intentionally segregating, noting fear of rejection from White students (Jones et al., 2002). Hurtado et al. (1998) assert that paying particular attention to minority students' perceptions of integration on campus is important for reasons, such as this.

As colleges began focusing on factors impacting retention, research on the adjustment of Black students increased (Anglin & Wade, 2007). Schwitzer et al. (1999) focused on two significant areas impacting Black students' adjustment to college. The first area focused on adjusting to the overall campus climate (Schwitzer et al., 1999). Black students reported feeling isolated and underrepresented as a whole (Schwitzer et al., 1999). The second area focused on relationships with faculty (Schwitzer et al., 1999). Black students felt less intimidated and more comfortable approaching faculty of color (Schwitzer et al., 1999). When factoring in all ethnic groups, people of color make up a more significant percentage of enrolled students than ever before (Espinosa et al., 2019). Nevertheless, only 21.1% of full-time faculty are people of color (Espinosa et al., 2019).

In 2016, only 16.8% of college presidents were people of color (Espinosa et al., 2019). Approximately one in four university staff identifies as a person of color (Espinosa et al., 2019). Diverse faculty tend to attract a diverse student population (Espinosa et al., 2019). Diverse faculty are needed to serve as mentors to students of color (Espinosa et al., 2019). If institutions wish to serve students of color best, they must commit to hiring more faculty and staff of color.

Summary

In the review of the literature, it was critical to start with the history of Black students and their pursuit of higher education. The researcher felt it was important to acknowledge how far in the field we have come to help identify a path for where we need to go. A more in-depth discussion of the theoretical framework for the study, Critical Race Theory, was included. The benefits of a college degree were examined, including the financial and non-pecuniary benefits. The evolution of retention theories was discussed, in addition to the factors that contribute to the retention of students.

The goal of this study was to add to the literature that exists regarding the retention of Black students. While institutions can employ various strategies, the researcher sought to analyze the effectiveness of a particular program at the research site that could connect Black students with students, faculty, and staff of color and with resources that could help them be successful. A discussion of the methodology for this study occurred in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Purpose

The persistence of Black students at private institutions continues to be at a lower rate than all other ethnic groups. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2019), only 63.3% of Black students persist to the second year at their starting institution compared to 75.1% of White students. Some institutions have implemented retention intervention programs to increase these rates. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a retention intervention program for Black students at a private Midwestern university.

The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program began at the research site in the fall of 2018. Per the institution's website,

The mission of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program (BSEE) is to increase retention and graduation rates of Black students by promoting academic excellence and enrichment. BSEE targeted Black undergraduate students who attend the research site, however. BSEE is open to all who attend the research site regardless of their race, ethnicity, or national origin. BSEE's objectives are to:

- Increase retention and graduation rate of Black students.
- Create an environment where Black students feel welcomed and valued.
- Provide resources to assist with navigating the college experience.
- Promote student leadership and engagement.
- Promote progress towards degree completion.

Students who participate in BSEE will be:

- Provide academic monitoring.
- Provide workshops on topics such as career development, mental health, and financial aid.
- Provide networking opportunities with faculty and staff.
- Provide resources to assist with their college experience.
- Provide students with support and guidance to help them be successful at [research site] and beyond. (p. 1)

Students were invited via email to participate in the program by the program director, who received their names and email addresses from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at the research site. The names and email addresses provided were of first- and second-year students who were on record at the research site as having identified as Black. The graduate assistant for the program also hosted tables at prospective student events to recruit students.

No existing data were available, as this was a new program at the research site. This allowed the researcher to conduct an initial exploration into the program's effectiveness. The study results could help improve the program, expand upon the program, and be included in the research site's retention plan.

As the researcher was designing the study, there were several factors to consider when deciding upon a research method, including the purpose of the study, the type of questions, and available resources (Ponto, 2015). For this study, the researcher considered the three major research paradigms: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research (Johnson et al., 2007). The researcher opted to perform a mixed-method study, as mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative research

methods to provide a broader depth of understanding of the core research issue (Johnson et al., 2007; Kelle, 2006). The quantitative piece of the study assisted the researcher in understanding the actions of the entire study population (Kelle, 2006). A quantitative evaluation of the program occurred, comparing the fall-to-fall retention rates of students who participated in the program to those eligible for the program but who opted not to participate.

The qualitative piece provided potential reasons why students may have opted to return to the research site for the second year (Kelle, 2006). The qualitative part of the study also sought to investigate why students did or did not participate in the program and elicit feedback on the program's components. For the qualitative portion of the study, only sought students who were eligible for the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program to interview. Qualitative research should focus on bringing understanding to the experiences of specifically selected individuals rather than attempting to generalize from a general population; therefore, the researcher only contacted those eligible for the BSEE program (Johnson et al., 2020, p. 141).

When designing the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher sought to determine the following about the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program:

Research Question 1. How do participants in the BSEE program feel their participation impacted their decision to remain at the institution studied?

Research Question 2. What components of the BSEE program do students find most helpful?

Research Question 3. Why did those eligible for the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program but who chose not to participate opt to remain at the institution studied?

Research Question 4. For those eligible for the program who did not participate, are there any added components that would encourage them to participate in the BSEE program?

Research Question 5. Why did students choose to participate or not to participate in the BSEE program?

The researcher first collected qualitative data using interviews to answer the research questions. Interviews were the researcher's first choice, as they allowed the collection of in-depth responses (Bluman, 2015). The researcher employed a purposive sampling technique, intentionally selecting study participants who could answer the research questions (Johnson et al., 2020). Purposive sampling is nonrandom and does not require a set number of participants (Etikan et al., 2015). To answer the research questions, the researcher needed to find people who could provide answers, based on their experiences as Black students and as a participant in BSEE (Etikan et al., 2015). Focusing the research topic on participants who share similar characteristics is called homogenous purposive sampling (Etikan et al., 2015, p 3).

Null Hypotheses

The researcher used quantitative data provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at the research site. The provided data listed the fall 2019 enrollment status of students invited to participate in BSEE for the fall of 2018. The researcher sought to determine the proportion of students that returned to the institution in the fall of 2019 that

participated in BSEE compared to those that did not. The researcher also sought to determine whether there was a difference in the proportion of female to male students that returned to the institution in the fall of 2019 that participated in BSEE compared to those that did not.

This study used a z -test for difference in proportions to compare the difference between proportions. Researchers use a z -test for difference in proportions to determine if there is a significant difference between two populations in studying a single element. The researcher utilized a z -test for difference in proportions as the samples were random samples independent of one another, and both sample sizes were greater than five (Bluman, 2015).

The researcher sorted the quantitative data into three different spreadsheets. One contained all students eligible for BSEE for 2018-2019, a second listed the females eligible for BSEE in 2018-2019, and for the third listed males eligible for BSEE in 2018-2019. The spreadsheets contained a random ID assigned to the student, their gender, whether they participated in BSEE or not, and whether they returned for the 2019-2020 academic year. The researcher then totaled the following to test the null hypotheses:

- Overall, how many students that participated in BSEE returned for the 2019-2020 academic year, and how many did not.
- How many females that participated in BSEE returned for the 2019-2020 academic year, and how many did not.
- How many males that participated in BSEE returned for the 2019-2020 academic year, and how many did not.

Null Hypothesis 1. There is no increase in the retention rates of students participating in The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program and those students eligible for the program who do not participate.

The researcher tested Null Hypothesis 1 using a z-test of proportions, comparing the proportion of those who participated in BSEE that returned to the institution for fall 2019 to those who did not participate in BSEE that returned for fall 2019.

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no increase in the retention rates of female students participating in The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program and those female students eligible for the program who do not participate.

The researcher tested Null Hypothesis 2 using a z-test of proportions, comparing the proportion of females that participated in BSEE that returned to the institution for fall 2019 to eligible females who did not participate in BSEE that returned for fall 2019.

Null Hypothesis 3. There is no increase in the retention rates of male students participating in The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program and those male students eligible for the program who do not participate.

The researcher tested Null Hypothesis 3 using a z-test of proportions, comparing the proportion of males that participated in BSEE that returned to the institution for fall 2019 to eligible males who did not participate in BSEE that returned for fall 2019.

Research Site

The research study occurred at a small private liberal arts university in the Midwest. The researcher selected the research site due to the location of the BSEE program. Per the research site's website, the institution offered over 125 degree programs with a 12 to 1 student-to-faculty ratio. Students came to this institution from all 50 states

and 75 countries. There was a fall 2019 undergraduate enrollment of 4,163 undergraduate students. Per the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at the research site, 61% of students are White, 10% are Black or African American, 4.5% are Hispanic, 1% are Asian, 0.5% are American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 0.5% are Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Three and one-half percent identified as being of two or more races, and 4.7% of the students' race or ethnicity is unknown. Fifty-four percent are female, compared to 46% male.

Participants

The population targeted for this study was the 139 students eligible for the BSEE program during the 2018-2019 academic year. These students were first- and second-year students who listed Black as their race on university records. They were contacted by the program administrator in the fall of 2018 and invited to participate. The researcher utilized several methods to secure participants. The researcher spoke at multiple BSEE and Black Student Union meetings requesting participants. The researcher emailed the students initially invited to participate in BSEE, utilizing a list provided by the BSEE program administrator (see Appendix B). The researcher also included information about the study in a weekly email sent out to all students at the research site (see Appendix B).

Data Collection & Instrumentation

The researcher first sought and received permission from the program administrator to study the BSEE program. The researcher then submitted and received approval from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at the research site. Upon receiving IRB approval, the researcher began the process of collecting data. The data collection occurred through interviews, surveys, and retention data provided by the research site.

Interviews. Interviews were essential to this study, as stories are a critical tenet of Critical Race Theory (Aguirre, 2000). Storytelling gives a voice to those marginalized populations who may not feel heard (Aguirre, 2000). To establish interview questions, the researcher met with the BSEE program administrator to determine the types of information they should gather to assist them in evaluating their program. The interview questions sought to explore the BSEE program's components further, determine why students did or did not opt to participate, and see whether participants felt that their involvement with the program influenced their decision to remain enrolled at the research site. The researcher used open-ended questions to gather more in-depth information about the program and its components. The researcher also consulted with their dissertation committee to receive feedback on the questions.

Six students participated in interviews, which consisted of 11 open-ended questions for BSEE participants and nine open-ended questions for non-participants. Interviews occurred over a period of five months and occurred in the researcher's office at the research site. Participants were sent the informed consent document before arriving at the interview. When participants came for the interview, the researcher again provided the informed consent document for them to read (see Appendix A). The interviewer gave participants ample time to review the informed consent document before beginning the interview. Upon receiving the signed informed consent document, the researcher began the interview.

The researcher utilized a script to interview participants to ensure that each participant was asked the same questions and followed the same protocols. The researcher recorded the interviews. The researcher did take notes on participants'

responses while interviewing them in case there were any issues with the recording. Immediately upon ensuring that it was a quality recording, the researcher destroyed the notes. The researcher utilized TranscribeMe! to transcribe the interviews. The researcher saved the transcribed interviews in a password-protected document on the researcher's computer, a flash drive and in the researcher's OneDrive account, which utilized a two-factor authentication to access the account. The researcher checked the transcripts against the recordings to better familiarize themselves with the data for thematic analysis and check for accuracy (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher removed any identifying information after interview transcription.

Surveys. The researcher opted to switch to surveys, due to the lack of respondents to the interview request and the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, which forced the removal of all students from campus. The open-ended questions listed in the survey were the same questions the researcher utilized in the interviews. The researcher created the survey in *Qualtrics* (see Appendices E and F) and emailed a link to the survey to 132 students identified as Black, who were informed about the BSEE program in the fall of 2018. The researcher did remove the email addresses of students who participated in the interview, so there was no duplication of data. Twelve students participated in the survey. The researcher provided the text of the informed consent (see Appendix A) before participants could access the first question in the survey. Participation in the survey was optional, and respondents remained anonymous.

Survey questions. The first question sought to identify what year in school the student was in during 2018-2019. Initially, the intention with this question was that if respondents selected junior or senior, the survey would end, as they were not eligible for

BSEE. However, the researcher did decide to allow them to complete the survey as well, as they could still provide valuable feedback on what the program should include. The second question asked whether they participated in BSEE during the 2018-2019 academic year.

If they answered yes to Question 2, they then answered a series of questions about their participation in BSEE. The survey asked participants to disclose the length of the involvement and why they chose to participate. The survey also asked how BSEE impacted their success, the challenges they faced, what they found most helpful about the program, and their mentors from BSEE. Participants also provided feedback on whether the program should have any additional components and the frequency of meetings. Finally, the survey asked whether they feel that BSEE participation has influenced their decision to remain enrolled at the research site and if they would recommend participation in the BSEE program to future students.

If they answered no to Question 2, the survey asked about the challenges they have faced at the research site and whether they have been able to identify faculty or staff mentors to assist them in overcoming these challenges. Study participants were asked if they were familiar with BSEE, were they contacted about participating in BSEE, and why they chose not to participate. The survey then described the BSEE program. The survey asked study participants if there were components they felt should be added to BSEE, whether they felt that participation in BSEE could have positively impacted their experience at the research site, and if they would recommend participation in the BSEE program to future students.

The researcher downloaded survey data from *Qualtrics*. The researcher saved data from the interviews and surveys in a Microsoft Excel workbook. The researcher organized the workbook into two different spreadsheets: one for those that participated in BSEE and one for non-participants.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized thematic analysis to best interpret the qualitative data. The thematic analysis provided a mechanism for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Applying a thematic analysis to this study's critical race theoretical framework allowed the researcher to examine patterns within participants' personal experiences and identify the meaning and implications of these experiences (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Researchers can use thematic analysis with various research paradigms and theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis

can be used to identify patterns within and *across* data in relation to participants' lived experience, views and perspectives, and behavior and practices;

'experiential' research which seeks to understand what participants think, feel, and do. (Clarke & Braun, 2017, 297)

Researchers can use thematic analysis to analyze various data types, including interviews and qualitative surveys, like in this study (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method involves six steps. It is important to note that these steps are not linear, but more fluid in nature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1. Familiarizing yourself with the data. The researcher transcribes, reads, and rereads the data to become more familiar with the data (Scharp & Sanders,

- 2019). While doing so, the researcher systematically marks interesting features to generate codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017; Scharp & Sanders, 2019).
2. Creating code categories. Codes are smaller data bits that systematically identify information relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017; Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Codes are shared ideas or patterns that build the foundation for themes (Clarke & Braun, 2017). It is critical to code for as many themes as possible, as the researcher never knows what they may need later (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
 3. Finding themes. After identifying the codes, sort codes into broader themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Themes assist the researcher in organizing and reporting their observations (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Classify codes into main themes and sub-themes, and some codes may fall into a miscellaneous category (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
 4. Reviewing those themes. In this step, the researcher reevaluates and refines themes to ensure that they reflect the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Scharp & Sanders, 2019). Reviewing themes also allows the researcher to code any additional missed themes from the prior stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Researchers should continue with this step until they are satisfied with their thematic map (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
 5. Naming and defining themes. In this step, the researcher further defines and refines the themes to identify "the 'essence' of what each theme is about" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 92). Defining and refining can help ensure that the

themes are not too complex (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is essential that researchers not only clearly define what their themes are but what they are not (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Scharp & Sanders, 2019). If the researcher cannot, they may need to refine further (Braun & Clarke, 2006). When naming the themes, make sure the names are concise so that the reader understands what the theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

6. Producing the report. In this final step, the researcher tells the story of the data to convince the reader of its validity in a concise, logical format (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For this study, the researcher printed out the interview and survey responses and read the qualitative data numerous times to better familiarize themselves with the data. They then used a highlighter to highlight key terms in the responses to generate codes. After generating codes, the researcher began grouping the codes to identify themes. The researcher reviewed the data and codes again to ensure that the codes and themes best represented the data. In Chapter Four, the researcher will tell the story of the data.

Reflexivity

Who the researcher is can make a difference in a study's findings (Berger, 2015; Dodgson, 2019, p. 220). The researchers' experiences and biases can insert themselves into the study (Berger, 2015; Dodgson, 2019). Reflexivity is the:

turning of the researcher's lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected, and its interpretation. (Berger, 2015, p. 220)

Who the researcher is can impact the study in multiple ways. It can give the researcher more access to participants who may feel more comfortable participating in a study hosted by someone they feel can empathize with their situation (Berger, 2015). The researchers' experiences may shape the relationship with the participants in the study, making them feel more comfortable sharing (Berger, 2015). For instance, the researcher's involvement in the BSEE program may have made participants feel more comfortable participating in the interview and survey. They may have feared that the researcher would use the information to impact the BSEE program negatively. Finally, the researcher's background can affect the language used, and questions asked, impacting the findings (Berger, 2015). Clearly identifying the intersection between the researcher's personal characteristics, such as race, gender, socio-economic status, age, and more, can enhance the credibility of the findings and give a deeper understanding of the researcher's work (Berger, 2015; Dodgson, 2019).

Summary

The focus of this study was the impact of the BSEE program on the retention of Black students at a small private university in the Midwest. The participants utilized in the study were students invited to be a part of BSEE. These students included first and second-year students who identified as Black on their admission applications. The researcher utilized a mixed-methods study to determine if involvement in the BSEE program positively impacted retention rates, what components of the program participants found helpful, and why students did or did not opt to participate in BSEE. The researcher gathered quantitative data to compare the retention rates of those who participated in the BSEE program to those who did not. Qualitative data were collected

via interviews and a survey to determine which components of the program students found helpful, how they found out about the program, what features could be added, and why they opted to participate or not. The quantitative data were analyzed using a z -test for difference in proportions. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to determine themes. The researcher discussed the results of this study in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

Overview of Study

This study focused on the impact of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program during its first year on the retention of Black students at the research site, including the components of the program that students found most helpful. This mixed-methods study utilized interviews and surveys to collect qualitative data and analyzed retention data for the quantitative piece of the study. The participants included first- or second-year students the program administrator invited to participate in BSEE during the 2018-2019 academic year.

Quantitative Study Results

The researcher collected data to determine if there was an increase in the retention rate of students who participated in the BSEE program compared to those eligible for the program but who chose not to participate. The researcher analyzed this data using a one-tailed z -test for difference in proportions to determine if program participation positively impacted retention at the research site. The researcher also utilized this data to determine if there were any differences in retention rates based on the gender of those participating in the program compared to those who did not participate.

Table 1

Number and Gender of BSEE Participants Compared to Non-Participants

<u>Gender</u>	<u>BSEE Participant</u>	<u>Non-BSEE Participant</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Female	10	60	70
Male	2	67	69
Overall	12	127	139

As displayed in Table 1, the gender breakdown of those eligible for BSEE in 2018-2019 was almost equal. Only 8.6% of students eligible for the program participated. Of

program participants, 83.3% were female, and 16.7% were male. Of those that chose not to participate, 47.2% were female, and 52.8% were male.

Table 2

Number of Students that Returned for 2019-2020 Academic Year

<u>Gender</u>	<u>BSEE Returned 2019-2020</u>	<u>Non-BSEE Returned 2019-2020</u>
Female	9	43
Male	2	45
Overall	11	88

As displayed in Table 2, 71.2% of the 139 Black students returned to the research site for the 2019-2020 academic year. Of the 12 that participated in BSEE, 91.6% returned to the research site for the 2019-2020 academic year. Of the 127 that did not participate in BSEE, 69.3% returned to the research site for the 2019-2020 academic year. Of the 10 females that participated in BSEE, 90% returned the following year. Of the two males that participated in BSEE, 100% returned the following year. Of the 60 females that did not participate in BSEE, 71.7% returned. Of the 67 males that did not participate in BSEE, 67.2% returned.

The quantitative data was important for the institution to determine whether it was worthwhile to invest resources in the program and for future students to decide whether they felt the program could positively impact their chances of being retained for the next academic year. The researcher further analyzed data using a right-tailed z-test for difference in proportions to see if there was a statistically significant increase in the retention of those who participated in the program compared to those who did not.

Null Hypothesis 1. The researcher first analyzed the retention rates of the entire population of students eligible for the BSSE program. The researcher compared the

proportion of those in the BSEE program who returned to the research site the following year to those who returned to the research site but did not participate in BSEE. The researcher conducted a two-sample z -test of proportions to determine if there was a statistically significant increase in the retention rates of program participants compared to those eligible but who did not participate in BSEE. The researcher ran the test with an alpha of .05. The analysis revealed that the overall retention rate of those who participated in BSEE ($n=12$, 91.7%) showed a strong tendency toward being significantly higher than those who did not ($n=88$, 68.5%); $z=1.638$, $p=.051$. Because the p -value of .051 was so close to the alpha of .05, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there is moderate evidence of a statistically significant increase in the retention rate of those that participated in the BSEE program compared to those eligible for the program that did not participate.

Null Hypothesis 2. Next, the researcher analyzed the retention rates of females eligible for the BSEE program. The researcher compared the proportion of females in the BSEE program who returned to the research site the following year to the proportion of those who returned to the research site but did not participate in BSEE. The researcher conducted a two-sample z -test of proportions to determine if there was a statistically significant increase in the retention rates of program participants compared to those eligible but who did not participate in BSEE. The researcher ran the test with an alpha of .05. The analysis revealed that the retention rate of female participants in BSEE ($n=10$, 90%) was not significantly higher than the overall retention rate of those that did not ($n=60$, 71.7%); $z=1.226$, $p=.110$. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no statistically significant increase in the retention rate of

females that participated in the BSEE program compared to females eligible for the program that did not participate.

Null Hypothesis 3. Finally, the researcher analyzed the retention rates of male students eligible for the BSEE program. The researcher compared the proportion of males in the BSEE program who returned to the research site the following year to the proportion of those who returned to the research site but did not participate in BSEE. The researcher conducted a two-sample z -test of proportions to determine if there was an increase in the retention rates of male program participants compared to those males who did not participate in BSEE. The test was run with an alpha of .05. The analysis revealed that the retention rate of males that participated in BSEE ($n=2$, 100%) was not significantly higher than those that did not ($n=67$, 67.2%); $z=.981$, $p=.163$. The researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no statistically significant increase in the retention rate of males that participated in the BSEE program compared to males eligible for the program that did not participate.

Qualitative Results

The researcher conducted interviews and surveys for the qualitative piece of the study. Six students participated in interviews. The researcher held interviews at the research site in the researcher's office. The researcher recorded audio of the interviews. After completing the interviews, the researcher utilized TranscribeMe! to transcribe the interviews. They then analyzed the interview data.

The researcher created a survey using *Qualtrics* once they determined that they needed a different method to collect qualitative data. Twenty-nine students accessed the survey. Of the 29, the researcher removed two students who accessed the study but did

not consent, and 12 completed the survey. The researcher analyzed a qualitative data set that included the six interview participants' responses and the 12 survey participants' responses.

Interview and survey participants included four reported as freshmen, 12 as sophomores, and two as juniors during the 2018-2019 academic year. Six participated in the BSEE program, and 12 did not. The class levels of BSEE participants included five sophomores and one freshman. Non-participants included three freshmen, seven sophomores, and two juniors.

The researcher constructed the survey and interview questions to identify the challenges Black students have faced at the research site, determine why students chose whether to participate in BSEE or not, what components of the program were beneficial or lacking, and whether participation contributed to their success and decision to remain enrolled at the research site. The researcher also sought to determine whether students would recommend the BSEE program to others.

Research Question 1. How do participants in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program feel their participation impacted their decision to remain at the institution studied?

All six students who participated in BSEE responded that participation in BSEE positively impacted their decision to continue enrollment at the research site. In addition to the program providing students with the resources they need to be successful throughout their college career, the researcher found two common themes in how participation in BSEE has contributed to their decision to remain enrolled: feeling wanted and mentors.

Theme one: *Feeling wanted.* Being a Black student at a predominantly White institution can make students feel like outsiders. Study participants mentioned feeling out of place or not welcome, when discussing the challenges they faced at the institution. It can be critical to a student's success to find a place where they feel accepted. Three of the six respondents mentioned that feeling wanted or finding their niche with BSEE contributed to their decision to remain enrolled at the research site. One respondent discussed how participating in BSEE made them feel more a part of the campus community. Another respondent shared that BSEE gives students a place to go with people like them where they feel wanted, making them want to return. Another respondent seemed to agree and simply stated that BSEE "makes me feel more wanted at the school." The support system that BSEE provided encouraged students to remain at the institution.

Theme two: *Mentors.* Mentors can have a significant impact on the success of students. Three of the six respondents mentioned mentors who offered help and kept them focused and on track as contributing factors to remaining enrolled at the research site. When comparing BSEE to Black Student Union, one respondent stated, "it's grownups that know what they're talking about . . . here to help." Another respondent specifically mentioned the importance of having mentors of color to make them feel safe, stating

sometimes, it's easier for Black people to talk to someone that looks like them because . . . you don't have to go through the backstory because . . . we all understand certain things that you wouldn't have to explain to a non-Black person.

Faculty and staff of color provided one participant with what they described as a “safe haven” because the mentors knew precisely how it felt to be a Black student pursuing a college degree. While all respondents in the BSEE program could name mentors they had connected with on campus, for those who did not participate in BSEE, one-third stated that they had not been able to identify faculty and staff mentors to connect with.

Research Question 2. What components of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program do students find most helpful?

The researcher found two themes from the interview and survey responses when they explored what components of BSEE were most helpful: resources and mentors. Study participants expressed that the resources and mentors they connected with through BSEE gave them the tools and the confidence to “stay on top of your academic game and to not let failure be an option.”

Theme one: Resources. For many students, not knowing where or how to access resources when they need assistance can be a barrier to their success. Four of the six respondents that participated in BSEE stated resources as the most helpful components of BSEE. One participant stated:

My favorite thing is look at the resources. Last year, I know I was juggling a lot with books and everything. And so, the administrative assistant that was over BSEE last year, she sat down with me and helped me. She called different libraries to help me get a book. She gave me so much information and provided me with so many resources throughout the whole entire academic school year. To know they can give you a start is so appreciated.

Knowing and accessing resources gives students ownership over their success. One respondent stated, “they give you so many resources . . . if you’re not performing well, that’s on you.” This feeling of empowerment and holding the keys to their success in their own hands could be the boost of self-confidence they need to persevere and achieve their degree.

Theme two: Mentors. The previous research question discussed the impact of mentors on BSEE participants’ decision to remain enrolled at the research site. However, when determining what factors of the program were most helpful, three of the six respondents that participated in BSEE mentioned the mentors who have assisted them through BSEE as the most valuable components. One respondent stated that having people to speak to was helpful. Another found it valuable that these were “grownups that know what they’re talking about” when needing guidance on what to do. A non-BSEE respondent stated that they felt, “BSEE could positively impact my experience because having someone monitoring my academic progress would keep me on track.” For students of color, having faculty and staff that look like them and can identify with their experiences is essential. One participant noted that their participation in BSEE opened their eyes to other faculty and staff of color on campus that they could seek out when they needed help.

Those who participated in the program spoke highly of the program and seemed pleased with the components. When asked if there were any missing components, one recommendation was to host group trips. Another participant recommended more one-on-one help regarding students’ majors by partnering BSEE participants with people in the field so students could have a resource to ask questions. A participant also recommended

that BSEE meetings occur more than once a month so that more students could take advantage of the program. Four of the six respondents that participated in BSEE recommended that BSEE should meet twice a month. One respondent stated that having a more frequent check-in could help keep students more socially and academically connected.

Research Question 3. Why did those eligible for the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program but who chose not to participate opt to remain at the institution studied?

The study instrumentation did not provide any themes for this question; however, after an additional review of the data, the researcher found some comments that pertained to this question. For those eligible to participate in BSEE but who did not choose to participate, their own grit and determination and their ability to find mentors have contributed to them continuing to pursue their degree. One respondent stated, “As a Black woman in academia, I already have to be twice as good as everyone in the room to even get an ounce of recognition for the things that I do.” Another respondent mentioned being “very content with my experience thus far” at the research site and felt that their experience would be unaffected by participating in BSEE. One respondent mentioned two mentors they have utilized to answer questions and for general support. These mentors have helped them overcome challenges they have faced, assisting them in remaining at the institution.

Research Question 4. For those eligible for the program who did not participate, are there any added components that would encourage them to participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program?

Before answering this question, the researcher provided those who did not participate in BSEE with a list of BSEE components. The researcher provided these components so that participants understood what BSEE offered to members. When asked if there were any missing components, seven of the 12 respondents stated that they were either unsure or did not believe that anything else would entice them to participate. One theme emerged for those who identified a component that could be changed: meeting time.

Theme: Meeting Time. Multiple commitments with classes, work, student organization involvement, internships, athletics, and for some, even family commitments pull college students in many different directions. In 2018-2019, BSEE met once a month at 4 p.m., usually on Thursdays. Of the 12 respondents in the interview and survey, two mentioned the meeting time being an issue. One respondent stated that being more flexible with the meeting time could have encouraged them to participate. Another respondent said, “The only thing I would consider is changing the meeting time to accommodate more students or having multiple meetings at different times for those who can’t make it to one.”

Research Question 5. Why did students choose to or not to participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program?

After analyzing interview and survey data, the researcher noted two emerging themes that addressed why students chose to participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program. Students opted to join BSEE because of connections with the BSEE staff and a desire to participate in organizations specifically for Black students.

Theme one: Connection with BSEE staff. Of the six BSEE participants that responded, two mentioned the contact that a graduate assistant in the program had with them as a reason for deciding to participate. One survey respondent shared that the meeting held with the graduate assistant during new student orientation included “conversations that needed to be discussed as far as life, me being an African-American female at a PWI, academically, and even my major. I ended up growing very close to her and enjoying BSEE meetings.”

Theme two: Participation in Black student-oriented organizations. Of the BSEE participants that responded, five stated that they joined BSEE to be a part of an organization explicitly geared for Black students. Three mentioned wanting an organization that was not just for Black students but focused on academics, not just social matters. One respondent said that BSEE would be good for them because “sometimes your academics can fall off and BSEE really holds me accountable for that, because I know they’re going to be looking at my four-week and mid-term grades.”

It is critical to consider why students chose not to participate when considering the program’s components. Students opted not to participate for a variety of reasons. One student mentioned that they felt like programs, such as BSEE gave the impression that the institution was showing preferential treatment to Black students since other ethnic groups did not receive this level of support which made them appear to be “charity cases.” Two themes emerged regarding why students chose not to participate. The majority chose not to participate because they were not aware of the program or they did not have time for it.

Theme one: Unaware of Program. Of the 12 respondents who chose not to participate in BSEE, four mentioned not being aware of the program. One mentioned not receiving an invitation, but the others simply stated that they were unaware of the program. One respondent said, “I was not aware of it, but even if I was, I don’t think I would have attended due to being shy in a sense. Had I known someone to go with . . . it wouldn’t have been so awkward for me.”

Theme two: Time. Of the 12 respondents who chose not to participate in BSEE, six mentioned not having time to participate. Five of the six mentioned work as contributing to their lack of time to participate. One respondent stated, “Full time job overrides BSEE. I’d love to join, but my time is limited.” Another said, “My work schedule and already full daily schedule would have made it hard for me to engage with the program and attend meetings.” One respondent mentioned being overwhelmed with school and life, which led to them forgetting to respond to the email invitation. A lack of time could also cause them not to respond.

Additional Results

Respondents of the survey and interview participants cited many challenges they faced while enrolled in college. One challenge that many BSEE and non-BSEE participants listed was feeling out of place and struggling to meet people who looked like them. One respondent stated that “People often think that I am only on this campus because I play a sport really well or because there is some magic quota of Black students that need to be on this campus.” Twelve of the 18 participants mentioned making friends and meeting people as a challenge. One participant stated, “at the end of the day, there were times I would go back to my dorm room very sad and cry myself to sleep because I

really felt like I didn't have anyone." Another described their struggles as, "feeling like no one understands what it is to be a Black student at a PWI." Multiple participants expressed feelings of being alone.

Another challenge mentioned which could potentially negatively impact the ability to meet people and be successful was the need to work full-time. Students who work full-time have less time to devote to their classes and participate in student engagement opportunities like student organizations and social activities. One respondent stated, "Full time work does not allow me to attend any social events," while another acknowledged the challenge of managing the workload for their classes while working full-time. Other challenges listed included struggles with mental health and interacting with offices on campus.

On a positive note, 16 of the 18 study participants stated that they would recommend participation in BSEE to other students. One BSEE participant noted that participating in the program gives students "great opportunities to challenge yourself and build your profile so you can be ready for the real world once you graduate." Another BSEE participant noted that BSEE staff care for the entire students—academically, financially, and personally. They take the time to get to know program participants to recognize when students are struggling and offer a helping hand before the student even must ask for it. Despite not participating in the program, after learning more about BSEE, a survey respondent recognized the benefits and stated, "I would (recommend the program) because many students may not have resources that could help them stay on track academically and provide them with the opportunity to network while addressing topics that may stress them out." Another non-participant stated that being a part of

BSEE could be an opportunity for Black students to come together. They felt like there were not many opportunities for Black students to come together in one space on campus.

Two respondents stated that they would not recommend participation in BSEE. One simply answered, "N/A," with no explanation. The other indicated that they felt that participation in programs, such as BSEE could carry a negative stigma. The survey respondent said, "While I know this program could benefit my fellow Black students, I would not recommend this program to them. I would rather tell them to seek private tutoring and other resources, because in those instances, there is less stigma." The respondent went on to state that the only way for Black students to gain any success or recognition at the research site was to avoid the negative stigma attached to groups like this. Addressing this negative stigma is important to note, as it could assist program staff when recruiting students to BSEE.

Summary

This mixed-method study examined the impact of an intervention program on the retention rate of Black students at a small private university in the Midwest. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provided quantitative data on retention rates at the research site. The quantitative data were analyzed using a one-sided z -test of proportions to determine if participation in the BSEE program had a statistically significant impact on the retention of students. There was no rejection of the null hypotheses; therefore, there was no statistically significant increase in the retention of students that participated in the program compared to those that did not, regardless of gender.

The researcher utilized interviews and surveys to gather qualitative data. The researcher conducted interviews with six students, and 12 students completed the survey.

The interview and survey respondents provided valuable insight into why students chose to participate in the BSEE program, what components they found most helpful, and whether they felt that program participation impacted their decision to remain enrolled at the research site. The qualitative data indicated that those who participated in BSEE felt wanted at the institution. The mentors they secured through the program positively impacted their decision to remain at the institution. The components they found most helpful in the program were learning about resources and the mentors. Students who chose to join did so because of their connection with BSEE staff promoting the program and their desire to participate in Black-student orientated programs and organizations. Those who opted not to participate in BSEE were still able to find mentors but attributed their decision to remain at the institution to their own grit and determination to be successful. They acknowledged that they did not participate because they were simply unaware of the program or the meeting time did not fit their schedule. Whether they participated in the program or not, almost all interview and survey participants stated that they would recommend the BSEE program to future students.

The study appears to have produced mixed results when comparing the qualitative findings to the quantitative data. Most of the quantitative data did not show a statistically significant increase in the retention of students who participated in the program. However, the qualitative data spoke to how important the program was to participants' decision to remain at the institution. The researcher's most telling piece of qualitative data was that 16 of 18 interview and survey participants felt that Black students should participate in the BSEE program. In Chapter Five, further observations and recommendations are discussed.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Overview

This study aimed to investigate whether the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program had any effect on the fall-to-fall retention rates of first- and second-year Black students at a small Midwestern private liberal arts institution and to analyze the components of the program. The researcher conducted a mixed-methods study to examine the impact of the BSEE program on student retention, the reasons students did or did not participate, the features they found helpful, and whether they would recommend the program to other eligible students. The researcher utilized interviews and surveys to gather qualitative data, then examined the data to identify themes. The researcher also collected retention data on students eligible for the BSEE program in 2018-2019 from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at the research site. The quantitative data were analyzed using a z-test of proportions to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the retention of program participants versus non-participants. The study was successful in that it demonstrated the impact on participants' retention at the research site and identified the components students found most helpful.

Hypotheses

For the quantitative piece of the study, the researcher hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant increase in the retention rate of BSEE program participants compared to those eligible for the program who did not participate. The researcher theorized that program participation, regardless of gender, would result in a statistically significant increase in retention. When analyzing the overall participation

rates, the study results showed moderate evidence of a statistically significant difference in the retention rates of BSEE participants compared to non-participants. Therefore, the researcher rejected the below hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no increase in the retention rates of students participating in The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program and those students eligible for the program who do not participate.

The study results did not support the researcher's hypothesis when gender was considered; therefore, the researcher could not reject the following null hypotheses:

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no increase in the retention rates of female students participating in The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program and those female students eligible for the program who do not participate.

Null Hypothesis 3. There is no increase in the retention rates of male students participating in The Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program and those male students eligible for the program who do not participate.

Research Questions

For the qualitative piece of the study, the researcher sought to gather more information on the reasons students did or did not participate in BSEE, what components of the program were most helpful, if there were missing components to the program, and whether participants and non-participants would recommend a program like BSEE to future students. The researcher gathered this information by addressing the research questions below.

Research Question 1. How do participants in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program feel their participation impacted their decision to remain at the institution studied?

Research Question 2. What components of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program do students find most helpful?

Research Question 3. Why did those eligible for the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program but who chose not to participate opt to remain at the institution studied?

Research Question 4. For those eligible for the program who did not participate, are there any added components that would encourage them to participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program?

Research Question 5. Why did students choose to, or not to, participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program?

Discussion

Null Hypothesis 1. The researcher conducted a right-tailed z -test of proportions to determine if there was a statistically significant increase in the retention rate of all students that participated in the BSEE program compared to those eligible for the program that did not participate. Institutional Effectiveness at the research site provided the data. The researcher looked at all students eligible for BSEE, whether they participated in the program, and if they returned to the research site in fall 2019. The z -test of proportions revealed a strong tendency toward a statistically significant increase in the retention of those who participated in BSEE compared to those who did not suggesting that participation in the program could positively impact retention.

Null Hypothesis 2. The researcher conducted a right-tailed z -test of proportions to determine if there was a statistically significant increase in the retention rate of females that participated in the BSEE program compared to females eligible for the program that did not participate. Institutional Effectiveness at the research site also provided this data. The researcher looked at female students eligible for BSEE, whether they participated in the program, and if they returned to the research site in fall 2019. The z -score of 1.226 fell into the noncritical region, indicating that the difference in retention was likely due to chance, and thus, the researcher did not reject the null hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis 3. The researcher conducted a right-tailed z -test of proportions to determine if there was a statistically significant increase in the retention rate of males that participated in the BSEE program compared to males eligible for the program that did not participate. Institutional Effectiveness at the research site also provided this data. The researcher looked at male students eligible for BSEE, whether they participated in the program, and if they returned to the research site in fall 2019. The z -score of .981 fell into the noncritical region, which meant that the researcher could not reject the null hypothesis.

A factor that may have contributed to the z -scores falling outside of the critical region was the small number of students participating in the BSEE program compared to those eligible but who did not participate. There were only 12 students that participated in the program of the 139 students eligible. There were not enough participants compared to non-participants to demonstrate strong statistical power when examining the difference between participant and non-participants' retention rates.

For the qualitative piece of the study, the researcher conducted interviews and utilized surveys to gather information. The researcher used TranscribeMe to transcribe the interviews. *Qualtrics* was the instrument used for the surveys. Survey responses were downloaded into a spreadsheet. The researcher then created a spreadsheet that compiled all interview and survey responses in one document. The researcher read and re-read responses multiple times, highlighting keywords to search for themes to help answer the research questions below.

Research Question 1. When examining how program participation impacted students' decision to remain at the institution, the themes that emerged were that the program made students feel wanted and provided them with mentors to help guide them along the path to completing a degree. All six students who participated in the interview and survey stated that becoming involved in the BSEE program positively impacted their decision to remain enrolled at the research site. They felt that the BSEE program gave them a place to feel at home and not like outsiders. Participants also expressed the importance of mentors that looked like them, who had experienced the same struggles, and were there to be a support as being critical to their decision to remain enrolled at the research site.

Research Question 2. When examining the components of the program participants found most helpful, the two common themes that occurred were resources and mentors. Some felt they would not have known about the many resources available on campus to help them succeed without the program. They stated that they felt more comfortable seeking out resources and assistance recommended by mentors of color who understood their experiences.

Research Question 3. Those eligible for the BSEE program that chose not to participate seemed to be content with their experience at the research site. However, like BSEE participants, they also identified mentors as reasons for staying at the institution. Finding others they could ask questions and go to for support positively influenced their decision to remain at the institution. They also acknowledged that while sometimes they struggled, their own will to succeed motivated them to stay at the institution.

Research Question 4. After being informed of the components of the BSEE program, the researcher asked non-participants if any additional components would have encouraged them to participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program. The majority were satisfied with the program components and could not identify anything different that would have enticed them to participate. Some non-participants recommended offering more flexibility in the meeting time.

Research Question 5. The final area the researcher examined was why people chose or chose not to participate in the BSEE program. Connections students made with BSEE staff during the recruitment process were crucial. Their relationship with those staff made participating in the program a more attractive option. They also felt a draw toward programs geared explicitly toward Black students' academic success. They acknowledged the importance of organizations like the Black Student Union to assist with their social adjustment. Still, they were also looking for programs that provided them with the tools to complete their degrees successfully.

Two themes emerged when analyzing the reasons students chose not to participate. One-third of interview and survey respondents that did not participate in BSEE did not do so by choice but by simply not being aware of the program. The

majority of students that chose not to participate did so because they felt they did not have the time to commit to the program. Many cited outside commitments like work and family as barriers to participation.

Implications

The findings from this study have several implications for institutions of higher education. Research has indicated that Black students are more at risk than any other ethnic group not to complete their degree (Digest of Education Statistics, 2018). While institutions must focus retention efforts on all students, Black students must be paid specific attention to. They must have access to people, organizations, and resources that will help increase their likelihood of success and to make them feel welcomed and a valued member of the campus community.

Black students need access to Black mentors. First, institutions must provide Black students avenues to connect with Black faculty and staff to serve as mentors. Both BSEE and non-BSEE participants stated the importance of mentors in their decision to remain enrolled in college. Connecting with people who look like them on a campus where they are surrounded by those who look different from them provides Black students with role models they can better identify with. Seeing other Black people serving in faculty and staff roles can also inspire and motivate students to achieve their career goals. Without these mentors who have shared experiences to look up to, Black students may feel out of place and hopeless, increasing their likelihood of withdrawing.

Black students need access to information and resources. Students who do not know where or how to access resources when they need assistance may give up and eventually drop out. While many students may know what they need to do to be

successful, some may not know precisely how or when they need to do things like register for classes, access tutors, apply for financial aid, and more. Black students may not feel comfortable asking for help, especially if the offices do not have people who look like them employed there. Therefore, having a program that can bring this information to them in an environment that they are comfortable with can be extremely helpful.

Black students need Black student-focused organizations. Black students often feel out of place on predominantly White campuses. Over 60% of study participants stated feeling alone or out of place as a challenge. Black student-focused organizations like Black Student Union and BSEE can provide Black students with a space to meet others and feel a part of the campus community. One participant mentioned that when they do not see many other people like them, simply being in a space with other Black students “brings a little bit of happiness to your spirit,” even if they do not actually make friends or hang out with them. Organizations like BSU and BSEE can provide students with a space to feel like they belong.

Retention programs for Black students can positively impact retention. Over 80% of study participants that participated in BSEE affirmed that participation in BSEE did impact their success as a student. Most importantly, all six study participants that participated in BSEE stated that their involvement in BSEE did contribute to their decision to remain at the institution. Participation in BSEE made them feel more wanted at the institution and provided them with a program to keep them on track throughout their college career. Even those that did not participate in BSEE stated that they would recommend participation in BSEE to future students. Of the 12 study participants who did not participate in BSEE, 10 said they would recommend BSEE to other Black

students. One participant stated that they would recommend it “because it would help students connect with people who look like them. And help them get to graduation!”

Time constraints. When considering programs or organizations for Black students, it is critical to remember that many students feel they do not have the time to commit to these organizations. Many students have schedules already filled with academic commitments and responsibilities outside of class, such as work, family, athletics and other organizational involvement. It is critical to demonstrate to students the value of these programs and how they can fit into their schedules to encourage participation.

Study Limitations

There were some limitations identified in this study. The first limitation was the decision only to study the program’s first year of participants. The researcher opted only to study the first year because the country was in the middle of a pandemic during the second year. COVID-19 forced students to leave campuses around the world. The institution only offered classes and other services in an online format. The online nature of all courses and services could have impacted students’ decisions to leave the institution. Therefore, the researcher only opted to study the program in a pre-COVID environment.

Another limitation of the study may have been the use of interviews. Participants may not have been comfortable being completely honest about their experiences in a face-to-face setting. While the researcher reminded the students that this was a completely anonymous conversation and that what they shared could help improve the experience of Black students at the research site, some still may not have been entirely

forthcoming with information. The location of the interviews could also be considered a limitation. If students could not travel to campus for the interview, they may have felt they could not participate. While the researcher was willing to complete the interviews over the phone or via Zoom, the emails sent to recruit students did not mention that, so students may have opted out if they did not know they could participate from off-site. BSEE participants and BSU members were made aware of the option to participate via Zoom or phone. If they did not attend the meetings the researcher spoke at, they might not have known this was an option. The final limitation with interviews was that the researcher may have received different results if the students had been willing to participate in focus groups instead of one-on-one interviews, as the responses of others in the focus group may have encouraged additional conversations.

The use of surveys could also be a limitation of the study. Surveys do not allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions if they need additional information. Even if the researcher asked participants to explain an answer, they could still simply answer yes or no to questions. Another limitation to a survey is that if a participant does not understand the question, surveys do not allow the researcher the opportunity to explain further what they were asking. Students were given contact information for the researcher at the beginning of the study if they had questions, but none contacted the researcher.

The size of the program was another limitation. The number of participants in the program was small, which resulted in a reduced sample size. While the researcher asked questions to better understand Black students' experiences as college students at the research site, the findings from this study may not apply to a majority of Black students. Should the program grow, the data shared by program participants may be more

representative of the experience of Black students. The small sample size of program participants compared to non-participants also impacted the quantitative piece of the study. If more students eligible for the program participated, this could potentially help correct the imbalance in sample sizes, showing that program participation has a statistically significant impact on retention.

Another limitation of the study was that the instrumentation did not fully answer Research Question #3. This question sought to determine why those who did not participate in BSEE remained enrolled at the research site. The researcher reviewed the qualitative data extensively and was able to identify comments in responses to other questions that did pertain to this particular question, however.

The final limitation of the study was the complexity of student retention. Many variables impact a student's decision to remain enrolled at an institution. In this study, the researcher did not have access to information on why students chose not to return. Therefore, the researcher opted to focus on why students decided to stay.

Recommendations for Study Replication and Future Research

The researcher explored the research questions by gathering data through interviews and surveys. They analyzed the hypotheses by comparing the retention data of BSEE participants to those eligible but who did not participate. The researcher proposed the following changes to make after reviewing the study.

Research site. Hosting this study in a setting other than where the researcher was employed could have potentially impacted student participation or their answers. Students may have been less likely to participate in the interview or be completely forthcoming with information, because the researcher was someone that most students

knew due to their role on campus. For example, if the researcher's professional role involved campus activities, would the participants be comfortable stating that a challenge was finding things to do on campus in an interview? They may not wish to offend or insult the researcher, so they may have withheld or adapted their responses.

Recruiting study participants. While the researcher did utilize sending emails and attending BSEE and Black Student Union meetings, there were additional means by which they could have recruited members. One such method would be to host a table outside the dining halls to recruit students to participate. Hosting a raffle for a giveaway or giving participants a small gift, such as a gift card, could have also enticed students to participate.

Interviews/survey. In the interviews and surveys administered to non-participants, the researcher should have specifically asked, "Why do you choose to remain enrolled at (research site)," instead of pulling that information from other questions and responses within the interview and surveys. The researcher may have missed specific reasons non-participants remained enrolled by failing to ask the question directly. The interview/survey should have also included the question, "Do you plan to complete your degree at (research site)?" While the students who participated in the study currently may still be enrolled, it would be helpful to know if any were still planning to leave the institution before completing their degree.

The researcher should have utilized a multiple-choice question for questions where the answer could simply be yes or no. They then should have had a follow-up short answer question that required the respondent to explain their response. The required short-answer question would have allowed the researcher to gather a further explanation

of their answer. While participants still could have found ways to avoid giving a more in-depth answer, this could have limited that possibility or highlighted the need for an explanation of their answer.

If replicating this study, the researcher recommended the use of focus groups instead of interviews and surveys, if possible. Focus groups allow the researcher to capitalize on communication between the research participants as they answer questions (Morgan, 1996). Hearing the perspective of others may have encouraged participants to share more information than they did individually in the survey or interview. Focus groups are particularly helpful when exploring people's experiences, especially when the researcher may have a different perspective or experiences than the participants (Morgan, 1996).

Quantitative study. The final recommendation, should someone wish to replicate the study, would be to compare the retention data of BSEE participants to non-participants after the program has been functioning in a non-COVID environment and has grown its participation numbers so that there is not such a significant difference between the number of participants versus non-participants. In this study, there were 12 participants compared to 127 non-participants. While proportionally, there was a difference in the retention rates of those that participated in BSEE compared to those that did not, because of the significant difference in sample sizes, it was just .007 from showing a statistically significant increase in retention rates.

Based on an analysis of the data in this study, the researcher recommended conducting future studies on the following: reasons for Black student departure, barriers to Black student success, and hiring diverse faculty and staff.

Reasons for Black students' departure. The researcher focused on why Black students stayed at the institution in this study. However, it is equally as important to find out why Black students left. Retention is a complex issue. Nevertheless, if there are factors that the institution can control, adjustments could be made to retain students at higher rates. For example, if Black students left for academic reasons, were they aware of tutoring resources? Did they utilize those resources? Did they notify their faculty or meet with faculty during office hours to discuss their struggles and identify strategies they could employ to be successful? If they left for financial reasons, did they work with financial aid to identify all funding resources, including student work? If they were struggling socially to adjust, were they attending events and joining organizations? And if not, why? Finding the answers to these questions could help the institution identify areas for improvement.

Barriers to Black student success. In this study, participants mentioned that a valuable component of the BSEE program was learning about the resources they need to succeed. A further study could survey Black students on their perceptions of the approachability and helpfulness of various offices on campus. Students are less likely to seek assistance if they do not feel welcomed or are intimidated. Are there offices on campus that do not provide an environment where Black students feel safe asking for help? And if so, why?

Hiring and retaining diverse faculty and staff. If the institution is struggling to hire and retain diverse faculty and staff, a further study could help determine why. An investigation of hiring practices could determine any biases in any piece of the

application and selection process. A study of the cultural climate on campus could help identify issues that may encourage faculty and staff of color to leave the institution.

Recommendations to the Field of Study and Practitioners in the Field

Based on the results of this study, the researcher identified several recommendations for institutions of higher education and practitioners in the field. The researcher further discussed the recommendations below.

Institutions should provide retention programs for Black students.

Overwhelmingly, whether they participated in BSEE or not, study participants stated that they would recommend participating in BSEE to Black students. Many institutions have organizations like Black Student Union on their campus. However, these organizations tend to be purely social in nature. While fostering social connections, programs like BSEE are focused on both the curricular and co-curricular, providing students with the building blocks needed to complete their degrees successfully. These programs offer students the opportunity to have someone monitor their academics and provide resources that will help them succeed in an environment surrounded by people who look like them and can identify with the challenges they face.

Institutions should create mentor programs for Black students involving Black faculty and staff. When on a campus filled with people who do not look like them, Black students can feel like no one can identify with what they experience. Black students can perceive White faculty as culturally insensitive (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Having mentors who look like them and can keep them on track to graduate is desired by students of color. The chance for persistence increases when Black students can connect with Black faculty (Simmons, 2013). Faculty and staff of color can make students feel

safer because they have been through the experience of being a student of color on a college campus and can identify with the challenges students face. The advice mentors can give students and the feeling that someone understands what they are going through can keep students motivated to persist to their degree.

Institutions should commit to hiring more Black faculty and staff. In this study, students that participated in BSEE and those who did not both spoke about the importance of having faculty and staff mentors that look like them. The institution should strive to hire more Black faculty and staff. The hiring of Black faculty does present a challenge, however. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics' Fast Facts (n.d.), in the fall of 2018, only 3% of full-time faculty included Black males and females. Human Resources should analyze their hiring practices to ensure they do all they can to attract and retain faculty and staff of color. Institutions should also consider using programs like BSEE to expose Black students to the possibility and benefits of attaining higher degrees, specifically doctorate degrees. According to the National Science Foundation (n.d.), Black students only earned 5.5% of doctorates awarded in 2019. More Black students with doctorates could mean more Black faculty for college campuses.

Connect Black students with organizations specifically for students of color. Both BSEE and non-BSEE participants struggled to meet people who looked like them. In this study, two-thirds of participants mentioned meeting people and making friends as a challenge. Students who do not make social connections may leave the institution (Tinto, 2010). Astin's theory of involvement affirms that the more students get involved at the institution in things like student organizations, the more likely they are to graduate (1999). Institutions who wish to retain Black students should make sure they do all that

they can to connect Black students with organizations, specifically organizations for students of color. Involvement in Black student organizations can help Black students socially integrate at PWIs (Guiffrida, 2004). Organizations like BSEE can make students feel like they are a part of the campus community, increasing their chances of remaining at the institution.

Use Black students, faculty, and staff to recruit students to the program. As was found in this study, Black students must be aware of organizations specifically for Black students. For a program like BSEE to succeed, it must get students to join. One-third of study participants who did not participate in BSEE did not do so simply because they were unaware of the program. Targeted marketing of these organizations to students of color is critical. Send a brochure or flyer spotlighting organizations like Black Student Union or BSEE to Black students. Ensure representation of these organizations at organization fairs at the beginning of and throughout the school year. As was discovered in this study, students who make personal connections with those recruiting may be more likely to join. Encourage Black faculty and staff to reach out to students of color to join. Invite them to be present and host a table at student recruitment events like open houses and preview days. Have current members of the organization use social media and other mechanisms to send personal invites to new students. Feeling wanted and being a part of the campus community can influence students to remain and persist to their degrees.

Organizations for Black students should connect students with resources. Not knowing where or how to access resources can be a barrier to students' success. Organizations like BSEE must focus on exposing students to the resources needed to succeed. Arming these students with information can help empower them and build the

confidence required to overcome the challenges they face as they pursue their degrees. Having offices, such as Financial Aid, academic advising, tutoring, Student Life, and more speak at meetings can help inform students of processes and introduce them to staff from the office, making approaching these areas for help seem less intimidating.

Have multiple meeting offerings. If resources allow, offer multiple meeting times. College students often have a variety of commitments between classes, athletics and other organization involvement, family, and working. It can be difficult to be available if there is only one option for a meeting time. Giving students multiple options for meeting times could increase participation in the program. If staffing numerous meetings is an issue, a solution could be to record the sessions and provide the recording to members that cannot make the scheduled meeting time.

Conclusion

The retention of students, specifically students of color, remains an issue on college campuses across the country. Institutions continue to seek strategies to better support students as they persist toward a degree. This study examined a retention program created specifically for Black students at a small private liberal arts institution in the Midwest. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to investigate whether the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program had any effect on the fall-to-fall retention rates of first- and second-year Black students at the research site and to gather qualitative information regarding which components of the program participants felt most impacted them. Programs, such as BSEE can help connect Black students with other students, provide an avenue to resources that can help them succeed, and connect them with Black faculty and staff to serve as mentors. Existing research speaks to the

importance of social connections and organizations for Black students, and the need for Black students to have Black faculty and staff as mentors. The gap in research was that the research site had not identified which specific components to include in a successful retention program for Black students. The institution had also not identified specific strategies for recruiting students for these programs.

This study examined the components that drew or would draw students to this program and identified recruitment strategies for the future. The data provided in this study is important to both the research site and other higher education institutions that serve a diverse student population. It could assist institutions in creating successful retention programs or examining their current programs' effectiveness by offering insight into the components students found helpful. Student input on the frequency and format of meetings could assist institutions with planning the structure of a retention program. The study also offered strategies to employ that would increase student participation. While a program, such as BSEE may not be the solution to all institutions' issues with retaining Black students, institutions must examine what they are doing and identify successful retention strategies that will assist Black students in completing a degree.

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Appendix A

Research Study Consent Form

The Impact of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program on the Retention of Black Students

Before reading this consent form, please know:

- Your decision to participate is your choice
- You will have time to think about the study
- You will be able to withdraw from this study at any time
- You are free to ask questions about the study at any time

After reading this consent form, we hope that you will know:

- Why we are conducting this study
- What you will be required to do
- What are the possible risks and benefits of the study
- What alternatives are available, if the study involves treatment or therapy
- What to do if you have questions or concerns during the study

Basic information about this study:

- We are interested in learning about the impact of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment program on the success of Black students. For those who chose not to participate, we are interested in learning more about the decision not to participate.
- For program participants, you will answer questions about your experience in the program and whether or not you feel it has positively contributed to your success. For those who chose not to participate, you will answer questions about the decision not to participate.
- Risks of participation are very minimal. Information shared in the focus group could potentially cause emotional distress, should participants opt to share personal information that could make others uncomfortable.

Research Study Consent Form

The Impact of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program on the Retention of Black Students

You are asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Angie Royal under the guidance of Dr. Mitch Nasser at Lindenwood University. Being in a research study is voluntary, and you are free to stop at any time. Before you choose to participate, you are free to discuss this research study with family, friends, or a physician. Do not feel like you must join this study until all of your questions or concerns are answered. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form.

Why is this research being conducted?

We are doing this study to determine if the BSEE program has a positive impact on the success of Black students and why eligible students have opted not to participate. We will be asking about 20 other people to answer these questions.

What am I being asked to do?

You are being asked to participate in a focus group to discuss your experience in the BSEE or your decision not to participate. The researcher will record the audio of the interview and will destroy the recording immediately upon transcription.

How long will I be in this study?

You will participate in this study for one semester.

What are the risks of this study?

- Privacy and Confidentiality

We are collecting data that could identify you, such as student ID number. Every effort will be made to keep your information secure. Only members of the research team will be able to see any data that may identify you.

What are the benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefits for participating in the focus group and interview. We hope what we learn may benefit other people in the future.

What if I do not choose to participate in this research?

It is always your choice to participate in this study. You may withdraw at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions or perform tasks that make you uncomfortable. If you decide to withdraw, you will not receive any penalty or loss of benefits. If you would like to withdraw from a study, please use the contact information found at the end of this form.

What if new information becomes available about the study?

During the course of this study, we may find information that could be important to you and your decision to participate in this research. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

How will you keep my information private?

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data are: members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, and representatives of state or federal agencies.

How can I withdraw from this study?

Notify the research team immediately if you would like to withdraw from this research study.

Who can I contact with questions or concerns?

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board Director, Michael Leary, at (636) 949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu. You can contact the researcher, Angie Royal directly at 618-967-7021 or alr979@lindenwood.edu. You may also contact Dr. Mitch Nasser at mnasser@lindenwood.edu.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Appendix B

Email Scripts for Study Recruitment

Focus Group Email to Participants

Hello! The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in a research study I will be performing on the impact of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program on your college experience. In this study, I will be hosting a focus group where you and other members of BSEE can share your thoughts on the program. I will be recording the audio of the focus group and will destroy the recording immediately upon transcription.

I will be using this study to provide feedback to program administrators on what you have found helpful about the program, what things may need to be removed, and if there are any components that may be missing. My hope is that through this study, I can provide information which can help to improve the program and increase the number of student participating in the program. I also hope that through the feedback you provide, our institution and others can better determine what resources are needed to positively impact the college experience of Black students.

Please understand your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are in no way required to participate. I thank you for your consideration in participating in this important study. If you have any questions, you may contact me at alr979@lindenwood.edu.

Focus Group Email to Non-Participants

Hello! The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in a research study I will be performing on a program you were eligible for, but are not participating in, called the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program. In this study, I will be hosting a focus group where you and other students not participating in the program can share why you are not participating, share information about the challenges you have faced at Lindenwood, and if there are components that could be added to the program that would entice you to participate. I will be recording the audio of the focus group and will destroy the recording immediately upon transcription.

I will be using this study to provide feedback to program administrators on the program, what could encourage more eligible students to participate, and if there are any components that may be missing. My hope is that through this study, I can provide information which can help to improve the program and increase the number of students participating in the program. I also hope that through the feedback you provide, our institution and others can better determine what resources are needed to positively impact the college experience of Black students.

Please understand your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are in no way required to participate. I thank you for your consideration in participating in this important study. If you have any questions, you may contact me at alr979@lindenwood.edu.

Interview Email to Participants

Hello! The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in a research study I will be performing on the impact of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program on your college experience. In this study, I would like to interview you so that you can share your thoughts on the BSEE program and your experiences at Lindenwood. I will be recording the audio of the interview and will destroy the recording immediately upon transcription.

I will be using this study to provide feedback to program administrators on what you have found helpful about the program, what things may need to be removed, and if there are any components that may be missing. My hope is that through this study, I can provide information which can help to improve the program and increase the number of student participating in the program. I also hope that through the feedback you provide, our institution and others can better determine what resources are needed to positively impact the college experience of Black students.

Please understand your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are in no way required to participate. I thank you for your consideration in participating in this important study. If you have any questions, you may contact me at alr979@lindenwood.edu.

Interview Email to Non-Participants

Hello! The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in a research study I will be performing on a program you were eligible for, but are not participating in, called the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program. In this study, I would like to interview you, so that you can share why you are not participating, share information about the challenges you have faced at Lindenwood, and if there are components that could be added to the program that would entice you to participate. I will be recording the audio of the interview and will destroy the recording immediately upon transcription.

I will be using this study to provide feedback to program administrators on the program, what could encourage more eligible students to participate, and if there are any components that may be missing. My hope is that through this study, I can provide information which can help to improve the program and increase the number of students participating in the program. I also hope that through the feedback you provide, our institution and others can better determine what resources are needed to positively impact the college experience of Black students.

Please understand your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are in no way required to participate. I thank you for your consideration in participating in this important study. If you have any questions, you may contact me at alr979@lindenwood.edu.

Survey Email to Participants

Hello! The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in a research study I will be performing on the impact of the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program on your college experience. I would appreciate if you could complete this brief survey, so that you can share your thoughts on the BSEE program.

I will be using this study to provide feedback to program administrators on what you have found helpful about the program, what things may need to be removed, and if

there are any components that may be missing. My hope is that through this study, I can provide information which can help to improve the program and increase the number of student participating in the program. I also hope that through the feedback you provide, our institution and others can better determine what resources are needed to positively impact the college experience of Black students.

Please understand your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are in no way required to participate. I thank you for your consideration in participating in this important study. If you have any questions, you may contact me at alr979@lindenwood.edu.

To complete the survey, [click here](#).

Survey Email to Non-Participants

Hello! The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in a research study I will be performing on a program you were eligible for, but are not participating in, called the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program. I would appreciate if you could complete this brief survey, so that you can share why you are not participating, share information about the challenges you have faced at Lindenwood, and if there are components that could be added to the program that would entice you to participate.

I will be using this study to provide feedback to program administrators on the program, what could encourage more eligible students to participate, and if there are any components that may be missing. My hope is that through this study, I can provide information which can help to improve the program and increase the number of students participating in the program. I also hope that through the feedback you provide, our institution and others can better determine what resources are needed to positively impact the college experience of Black students.

Please understand your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are in no way required to participate. I thank you for your consideration in participating in this important study. If you have any questions, you may contact me at alr979@lindenwood.edu.

To complete the survey, [click here](#).

Appendix C

BSEE Participant Interview Questions

1. What year in school are you?
2. How long have you been participating in BSEE?
3. Why did you decide to participate in BSEE?
4. What are the challenges that you have faced while enrolled at Lindenwood?
5. How has your participation in BSEE impacted your success at Lindenwood? If it has not impacted your success at Lindenwood, you can state that.
6. What do you feel has been most helpful about the BSEE program?
7. Who are the mentors you have on campus now as a result of BSEE? Have you been able to identify mentors?
8. The BSEE program currently meets once a month. Do you feel that it should meet more frequently? Less frequently?
9. Do you feel that your participation in BSEE has impacted your decision to continue as a student at Lindenwood?
10. Would you recommend participation in the BSEE program to future students?

Appendix D**BSEE Non-Participant Interview Questions**

1. What year in school are you?
2. What are the challenges that you have faced while enrolled at Lindenwood?
3. Have you been able to identify and faculty or staff to help you overcome any challenges?
4. Are you familiar with the BSEE (Black Student Excellence and Enrichment) Program? Do you recall being invited to participate in the program?
5. Why did you opt not to participate in BSEE?
6. I'm going to share information with you about BSEE. Do you feel that there are any components that could be added to the BSEE program that might entice you to participate?
7. Do you feel that participating in BSEE could potentially positively impact your decision to remain at Lindenwood?
8. What pieces do you find most helpful?
9. Would you recommend participation in the BSEE program to future students?

Appendix E**Survey Questions for BSEE Participants**

1. During the 2018-2019 academic year, were you a:
Freshman
Sophomore
Junior
Senior
2. During the 2018-2019 academic year, did you participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program?
Yes
No
3. How long have you been participating in BSEE?
4. Why did you decide to participate in BSEE?
5. What are the challenges you have faced while enrolled at Lindenwood?
6. How has participation in the BSEE program impacted your success as a student at Lindenwood?
7. What do you feel is most helpful about the BSEE program?
8. Who are the mentors you have on campus now as a result of your experience in BSEE?
9. Are there any components you would like to see added to the BSEE program?
10. The BSEE program meets once a month. Do you feel that you should meet more/less frequently? Explain.
11. Do you feel that participation in the BSEE program has impacted your decision to continue as a student at Lindenwood? Explain.
12. Would you recommend participation in the BSEE program to future students? Explain.

Appendix F**Survey Questions for BSEE Non-Participants**

1. During the 2018-2019 academic year, were you a:
Freshman
Sophomore
Junior
Senior
2. During the 2018-2019 academic year, did you participate in the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program?
Yes
No
3. What are the challenges you have faced while enrolled at Lindenwood?
4. Have you been able to find faculty and staff mentors to assist you in overcoming those challenges?
5. Are you familiar with the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment (BSEE) program?
6. Do you recall being contacted about participating in the BSEE program?
7. Why did you choose not to participate in BSEE?
8. The BSEE program meets once a month and provides the following for participants:
 - a. Academic monitoring.
 - b. Workshops on topics such as career development, mental health, and financial aid.
 - c. Networking opportunities with faculty and staff

Are there components that could be added to the BSEE program that would entice you to participate?
9. Do you feel that participation in the BSEE program could positively impact your experience as a student at Lindenwood? Explain.
10. Despite you choosing not to participate, would you recommend participation in the BSEE program to future students? Explain.

Appendix G

First & Second-Year Black Students BSEE Participation and Retention Data

Table 3

BSEE Participation and Retention of First- and Second-Year Black Students Fall 2018-Fall 2019

<u>Study Student ID</u>	<u>BSEE Member</u>	<u>Fall 18 Enrollment</u>	<u>Fall 19 Enrollment</u>	<u>Gender</u>
1187326	No	Yes	No	Female
1190104	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1190443	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1203220	Yes	Yes	Yes	Female
1206991	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1207210	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1207739	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1207928	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1208556	No	Yes	No	Male
1208606	Yes	Yes	Yes	Female
1209234	No	Yes	No	Male
1209341	No	Yes	No	Male
1210039	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1210483	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1210659	No	Yes	No	Male
1210679	No	Yes	No	Male
1210870	Yes	Yes	Yes	Female
1210880	No	Yes	No	Female
1212057	Yes	Yes	Yes	Male
1212083	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1212389	No	Yes	No	Female
1212391	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1212429	Yes	Yes	No	Female
1212496	No	Yes	No	Male
1212607	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1212753	No	Yes	No	Female
1216431	Yes	Yes	Yes	Female
1216734	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1216780	No	Yes	No	Female
1216986	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1217022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Male
1217690	No	Yes	Yes	Male

1217749	No	Yes	No	Male
1217825	No	Yes	No	Male
1218035	No	Yes	No	Male
1218048	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1218064	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1218159	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1218425	Yes	Yes	Yes	Female
1218476	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1218485	No	Yes	No	Male
1218548	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1220951	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1223115	No	Yes	No	Female
1224337	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1224513	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1224621	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1224667	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1224865	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1225034	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1225181	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1225225	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1225459	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1225589	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1225613	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1225795	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1225835	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1225973	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1226053	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226085	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226139	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226159	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1226223	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226237	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226241	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226269	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1226281	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226297	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226529	No	Yes	No	Male
1226721	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226739	No	Yes	No	Male
1226777	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1226909	No	Yes	No	Female
1226927	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1226975	No	Yes	No	Male

1227063	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1227075	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1227089	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1227113	No	Yes	No	Male
1227121	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1227203	No	Yes	No	Male
1227257	No	Yes	No	Male
1227265	No	Yes	No	Male
1227359	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1227389	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1227467	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1227493	No	Yes	No	Female
1227549	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1227593	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1227689	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1227737	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1227817	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1228031	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1228295	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1228321	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1228369	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1228449	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1228575	No	Yes	No	Female
1228643	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1228715	Yes	Yes	Yes	Female
1228725	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1237760	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1237985	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1238086	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1239170	No	Yes	No	Female
1239177	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1239221	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1239247	No	Yes	No	Male
1239534	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1239572	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1239704	No	Yes	No	Male
1239705	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1240205	Yes	Yes	Yes	Female
1243461	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1243501	No	Yes	No	Male
1243688	No	Yes	No	Female
1243740	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1243814	No	Yes	Yes	Male

1243955	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1244349	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1244472	Yes	Yes	Yes	Female
1244804	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1245075	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1246308	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1246644	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1246824	Yes	Yes	Yes	Female
1246949	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1246981	No	Yes	No	Female
1247120	No	Yes	Yes	Female
1247140	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1247187	No	Yes	No	Male
1247511	No	Yes	No	Male
1248143	No	Yes	No	Female
1248281	No	Yes	Yes	Male
1252419	No	Yes	No	Female
1252533	No	Yes	No	Female
1252627	No	Yes	No	Female
1263847	No	Yes	No	Female
1268809	No	Yes	Yes	Female

Appendix H

Table 4

Summary of Interview Transcription-BSEE Participants

<u>Interview Participant</u>	<u>Response</u>
	Q1. What year in school were you in Fall 2018?
Participant 1	Freshman
Participant 2	Sophomore
Participant 3	Sophomore
Participant 4	Sophomore
	Q2. How long have you been participating in BSEE?
Participant 1	3 semesters
Participant 2	3 semesters
Participant 3	3 semesters
Participant 4	3 semesters
	Q3. Why did you decide to participate in BSEE?
Participant 1	Black student org; email invitation from program staff
Participant 2	Black student org focused on academics; people to keep them on track
Participant 3	Black student org
Participant 4	Call from program staff
	Q4. What are the challenges you've faced while enrolled at Lindenwood?
Participant 1	Feeling alone
Participant 2	Feeling out of place; being first-generation and not knowing what to do
Participant 3	Difficulty of classes; feeling out of place
Participant 4	Feeling out of place
	Q5. How has participation in BSEE impacted your success as a student at Lindenwood?
Participant 1	Mentors kept them on track
Participant 2	Mentors that look like them
Participant 3	It hasn't yet
Participant 4	Mentors
	Q6. What do you feel is most helpful about the BSEE program?
Participant 1	Resources
Participant 2	Mentors; resources
Participant 3	Mentors
Participant 4	Resources and mentors
	Q7. Who are the mentors you have on campus as a result of being in BSEE? If none, you can state that.
Participant 1	Dr. Williamson, Capricia Barnes

Participant 2 Dr. Williamson, Naana Wilson, Cathy Hart, Terrell (last name unknown)

Participant 3 Dr. Williamson

Participant 4 Naana Wilson

Q8. Are there any components you would like to see added to the BSEE program?

Participant 1 No

Participant 2 One-on-one help with major; bringing in people from careers

Participant 3 More opportunities for participants to just talk to each other

Participant 4 Meet more frequently

Q9. The BSEE program meets once a month. Do you feel it should meet more frequently? Explain.

Participant 1 No

Participant 2 Yes, twice a month; more frequent meetings would better help the stay on track

Participant 3 Yes; twice a month (no explanation)

Participant 4 Yes; twice a month to touch base again on concepts discussed earlier in the month

Q10. Do you feel that participation in BSEE has impacted your decision to continue as a student at Lindenwood? Explain.

Participant 1 Yes. The resources and keeping them on track.

Participant 2 Yes (no explanation)

Participant 3 Somewhat of a role; made them feel wanted; saw others like them

Participant 4 Yes; made them feel wanted

Q11. Would you recommend participation in the BSEE program to future students? Explain.

Participant 1 Yes; the resources and ability to meet other Black students; people going through the same issues

Participant 2 Yes; mentors help keep you on track; provides resources

Participant 3 Yes; the resources and ability to meet other Black students; mentors

Participant 4 Yes (no explanation)

Appendix I

Table 5

Summary of Interview Responses-BSEE Non-Participants

<u>Interview Participant</u>	<u>Response</u>
	Q1. What year in school are you?
Participant 1	Sophomore
Participant 2	Freshman
	Q2. What are the challenges you have faced while enrolled at Lindenwood?
Participant 1	Being non-binary and use of legal name
Participant 2	Meeting people; no one from country is here
	Q3. Have you been able to find faculty and staff mentors to assist you in overcoming those challenges?
Participant 1	Yes; Dr. Rollinson and Dr. Moore
Participant 2	Yes, but don't know name
	Q4. Are you familiar with the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program?
Participant 1	Have heard of it, but don't know what it is about
Participant 2	No
	Q5. Do you recall being contacted about participating in BSEE?
Participant 1	No
Participant 2	No
	Q6. Why did you decide not to participate in BSEE?
Participant 1	Does not believe they were invited
Participant 2	Was not aware of the program
	Q7. Are there components that could be added to BSEE that would entice you to participate?
Participant 1	Resources for LGBTQ+ students and others facing discrimination
Participant 2	No
	Q8. Do you feel that participation in BSEE could positively impact your experience as a student at Lindenwood? Explain.
Participant 1	Yes; could assist academically and socially; could provide sense of community with people who look like them and have similar interests
Participant 2	Yes; meeting more Black students would help them feel more comfortable on campus
	Q9. Despite choosing not to participate, would you recommend participation in BSEE to future students? Explain.
Participant 1	Yes; can provide academic and social help, as well as make students feel a sense of community and not alone
Participant 2	Yes; brings Black students together and would make them feel more comfortable on campus

Appendix J

Table 6

Summary of Survey Responses-BSEE Participants

<u>Interview Participant</u>	<u>Response</u>
	Q1. What year in school were you in 2018-2019?
Participant 1	Sophomore
Participant 2	Sophomore
	Q2. How long have you been participating in BSEE?
Participant 1	3 semesters
Participant 2	3 semesters
	Q3. Why did you decide to participate in BSEE?
Participant 1	Contact from program staff
Participant 2	Black student org
	Q4. What are the challenges you've faced while enrolled at Lindenwood?
Participant 1	Feel out of place and not welcome
Participant 2	Finding people like them to help them academically
	Q5. How has participation in BSEE impacted your success as a student at Lindenwood?
Participant 1	Resources; meeting people similar to them
Participant 2	Made them feel part of the community
	Q6. What do you feel is most helpful about the BSEE program?
Participant 1	Resources; keeps them on track
Participant 2	Mentors; resources
	Q7. Who are the mentors you have on campus as a result of being in BSEE? If none, you can state that.
Participant 1	Naana Wilson and Caprecia Barnes
Participant 2	Dr. Williamson
	Q8. Are there any components you would like to see added to the BSEE program?
Participant 1	Group trip; more meetings per month
Participant 2	No
	Q9. The BSEE program meets once a month. Do you feel it should meet more frequently? Explain.
Participant 1	More (no explanation)
Participant 2	Yes; twice a month
	Q10. Do you feel that participation in BSEE has impacted your decision to continue as a student at Lindenwood? Explain.
Participant 1	Yes (no explanation)
Participant 2	Yes; makes them feel more wanted

Q11. Would you recommend participation in the BSEE program to future students?

Explain.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Participant 1 | Yes; academic-based group for Black students; provides opportunities to prepare them for graduation and life after graduation |
| Participant 2 | Yes; resources and meeting other Black students |

Appendix K

Table 7

Summary of Survey Responses-BSEE Non-Participants

<u>Interview Participant</u>	<u>Response</u>
	Q1. What year in school were you in 2018-2019?
Participant 1	Sophomore
Participant 2	Sophomore
Participant 3	Sophomore
Participant 4	Freshman
Participant 5	Sophomore
Participant 6	Sophomore
Participant 7	Junior
Participant 8	Sophomore
Participant 9	Freshman
Participant 10	Junior
	Q2. What are the challenges you have faced while enrolled at Lindenwood?
Participant 1	Work prevents them from getting involved
Participant 2	People assuming because they are Black, they are here as an athlete or part of a quota, and overlooking intelligence and talents
Participant 3	Making friends
Participant 4	Mental illness; lack of friends; trouble adjusting
Participant 5	Managing workload of classes while working full-time; maintaining grades while having role in organizations; first-gen student
Participant 6	Disconnected; issues with contacting offices
Participant 7	Financial aid
Participant 8	Make friends that look like them; finding place at school; having time for mental health
Participant 9	None
Participant 10	Feel alone; only one that looks like them
	Q3. Have you been able to find faculty and staff mentors to assist you in overcoming those challenges?
Participant 1	Yes
Participant 2	No
Participant 3	Yes
Participant 4	Yes
Participant 5	Yes
	Q4. Are you familiar with the Black Student Excellence and Enrichment Program?
Participant 1	Yes
Participant 2	Yes

Participant 3	Yes
Participant 4	No
Participant 5	Yes
Participant 6	No
Participant 7	Yes
Participant 8	Yes
Participant 9	Yes
Participant 10	No

Q5. Do you recall being contacted about participating in BSEE?

Participant 1	Yes
Participant 2	Yes
Participant 3	Yes
Participant 4	No
Participant 5	Yes
Participant 6	Yes
Participant 7	No
Participant 8	Yes
Participant 9	No
Participant 10	Yes

Q6. Why did you decide not to participate in BSEE?

Participant 1	Full-time job
Participant 2	Felt program stigmatized Black students
Participant 3	Too busy
Participant 4	Not aware of program; but if had known may not have participated due to anxiety
Participant 5	Too busy
Participant 6	Forgot to respond; overwhelmed with school
Participant 7	Unaware of program
Participant 8	No time; work conflict
Participant 9	Too young
Participant 10	No time; was not sure about group but did not seek out information

Q7. Are there components that could be added to BSEE that would entice you to participate?

Participant 1	Be more flexible with meeting time
Participant 2	No response
Participant 3	No
Participant 4	More outreach to Black community to get more to participate
Participant 5	Change meeting time; have multiple meetings
Participant 6	Unsure
Participant 7	No
Participant 8	No
Participant 9	More open events

- Participant 10 No
- Q8. Do you feel that participation in BSEE could positively impact your experience as a student at Lindenwood? Explain.
- Participant 1 Yes (no explanation)
- Participant 2 No; program would just affirm idea they are inferior
- Participant 3 No; satisfied with experience
- Participant 4 Yes, if they could find someone to participate with them
- Participant 5 Yes; having people to keep them on track and to meet people
- Participant 6 Yes; feel they are missing out
- Participant 7 Yes (no explanation)
- Participant 8 Yes; would help
- Participant 9 Yes (no explanation)
- Participant 10 Yes; students need the resources BSEE provides
- Q9. Despite choosing not to participate, would you recommend participation in BSEE to future students? Explain.
- Participant 1 No response
- Participant 2 No; program stigmatizes Black students
- Participant 3 Yes; to help them adjust socially and academically and to find future direction
- Participant 4 Yes; brings people together and makes people feel more comfortable
- Participant 5 Yes; resources to help them stay on track
- Participant 6 Yes (no explanation)
- Participant 7 Yes (no explanation)
- Participant 8 Yes; helps connects students with people who look like them and helps them graduate
- Participant 9 Interacting with people who face the same struggles as you
- Participant 10 Yes; provides much-needed information