

Focus Group Project:
The Experiences of Undergraduate
African-American Males
at The Ohio State University

Summary Report

August 2004

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- **Darrick Tovar-Murray**, Counseling & Consultation Services, Intern 02-03 (now at Illinois State University)

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Focus Group Project Summary Report The Experiences of African-American Males at The Ohio State University

Executive Summary The Office of Student Affairs Assessment August 2004

This project stems from the Student Affairs strategic priority to partner in creating and implementing an undergraduate African-American male retention plan. The focus group project was designed to provide data to inform strategies to support the success of undergraduate African-American men at OSU. The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of African-American males enrolled at The Ohio State University, as students perceive their own experiences.

The population from which to draw was limited to undergraduate African-American males enrolled at Ohio State University as of autumn quarter, 2002 (P = 1227). A stratified sampling strategy was organized around "intact" groups or affiliations. Many of the intact groups were identified because of their predominantly African-American membership. A total of 14 focus groups were conducted February through June 2003. Students were initially identified via snowball sampling. A combination of convenience sampling and sampling for information rich cases was used to guide participant selection (n = 57, 2-8 participants per group, average of 4 participants per group),

The focus group questions were open-ended and designed to explore classroom experiences, cocurricular experiences, challenges and opportunities, as well as questions aligned with a particular focus group "affiliation. Two OSU staff members, who are African-American males, provided leadership in facilitating the two-hour focus groups. All focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using a grounded theory approach (constant comparative method). Findings were shared with research participants as a "member check."

In this summary, key findings are highlighted. For further detail, a complete report is available.

FINDINGS

Students' **general impressions** included that the research participants had high expectations for how OSU would prepare them for the future and that their overall experience had been good or at least acceptable. However, many also felt that OSU should and could provide a better environment for African-Americans in general and African-American men in particular.

- **Academic Experiences**

- Participants discussed feeling a sense of isolation in the *classroom* combined with confronting stereotypes about their academic ability (or lack there of) by both faculty and fellow students.
- Their *interactions* with faculty was limited as was their interaction in the classroom with their peers
- Some felt that they did not have the experiences and exposure that prepared them for the rigors of the college classroom and others found that they were not challenged in the classroom.

- **Social Networking and Life Outside the Classroom**
 - Many of the participants were involved in various ways in the campus community including athletic participation, living learning programs, employment, clubs and organizations and others. Such *involvement*, especially with minority-focused programs and organizations, provided a sense of community and connection.
 - While most participants lived on campus at least one year, the men talked of feeling isolated in the *residence halls* and having to face stereotypes and tensions with roommates and in a predominantly white environment. In addition, the men talked of the differences between living on north or south campus with references to south campus as the “ghetto” and to north campus as the place where the “brains” lived.
 - The *African American Heritage Festival* was cited as one of, if not the most important events for African Americans on campus. However, issues surrounding the event were described as a major source of frustration in terms of perceived differential treatment by OSU and the neighboring community.

- **Best Practices**
 - *Programs* most frequently mentioned included OMA funding/scholarships, orientation/early arrival programs, tutoring, minority-focused residence hall programming (including the Afrikan American LLP, and the Minority Engineering Program.
 - The importance of *Mentoring*, either by a faculty member or an older student, was discussed by almost every participant.
 - Involvement in *minority-focused student organizations* were important to most, often providing important relationships with staff members.

- **Challenges as an African American Male and Synthesis**
 - A majority talked of the overall OSU culture as being an unwelcoming environment.
 - Most experienced a sense of being marginalized and having the college experience be fragmented and disconnected.
 - A strong theme emerged regarding the paradoxical nature of being an African American male undergraduate at a predominantly white institution. The men found themselves to be both visible and invisible; there were significant issues related to the stereotypes that the men face as well as unique opportunities available to them as African American males. Many participants struggled with being an individual and wanting to be viewed that way while also having a common African-American experience and cultural identity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings, 12 recommendations emerged as follows (see pages 30-40 for further detail):

1. Ensure that student support and resources are readily accessible and attuned to the specific needs of African-American male students as they progress through their college experiences.

2. Develop and implement an African-American male focused orientation/early arrival program for new students.
3. Develop a “guide to success” resource.
4. Evaluate and improve existing mentoring programs and develop a peer mentoring program.
5. Evaluate and improve tutoring services.
6. Develop and implement more social events and programs that appeal to the interests of African-American male students.
7. Explore and address inter and intra-group issues.
8. Develop effective communication tools and networks.
9. Explore, address, and resolve situations of perceived differential treatment.
10. Explore, address, and resolve residence life issues that negatively impact student experiences.
11. Develop awareness of racially insensitive behaviors and work toward breaking down prevalent stereotypes associated with African-American males.
12. Develop and implement leadership development specifically for African-American males.

REPORTS

Additional formal reports are being constructed to provide greater depth of understanding to various aspects of the participants’ experiences. In addition to the summary report, these reports will include an examination and more specific development of recommendations related to:

- **The Academic Experience (March 2004):** Specific focus on faculty and peer interaction, academic mentoring, tutoring, class environment, academic preparation, and pressure to succeed. (Recommendations 8 and 11 with academically focused connections to other recommendations)
- **Essential Transition, Adjustment, and Success Experiences (March 2004):** Specific focus on orientation/early arrival, finding resources, mentoring, tutoring, needs of different student groups/backgrounds, financial issues, and coping mechanisms. (Recommendations 1 through 5)
- **Social Networking and Engagement (April 2004):** Specific focus on University sponsored activities/environments, student organizations, relationships, intragroup issues, spirituality, residence life, needs of different students, and culturally sensitive/relevant opportunities. (Recommendations 6 through 8, and 10)
- **Leadership Development (April 2004):** Specific focus on personal responsibility and personal leadership, peer mentor leadership, organizational leaders, career and community leadership. (Recommendation 12 with connections to other recommendations)

This study was exploratory in nature and provides initial systematically derived data to inform institutional as well as program policy and practice. The data also provides grounding for future inquiry. Upon dissemination of the above reports, a **final executive briefing** will be constructed to summarize questions unanswered as well as questions emerging from the findings, thereby discussing additional research needs.

INTRODUCTION

Context

A strategic priority for Student Affairs and the Office of Minority Affairs is to improve the experiences and the success of undergraduate African-American men at The Ohio State University. Three years ago, the Office of Student Affairs Assessment was charged with the initiative to gather and analyze existing data on the experiences of undergraduate African-American males at OSU. With the assistance of various offices across campus including Institutional Research and Planning, the Registrar's Office, and Financial Aid and through the work of a committee to review the data, in 2002, the Office of Student Affairs Assessment published a report examining the incoming characteristics, outcomes, and the student experiences of African American males at OSU. The report made use of data from a variety of sources including the OSU student database, the CIRP survey, the Student Satisfaction Inventory, the Campus Climate for Diversity Survey, and others.

The retention rates for undergraduate African-American males indicate that they are at the greatest risk of not graduating from OSU. In recent years, the average six-year graduation rate for undergraduate African-American men has been 33% compared to an average of 54% for all men. The data also demonstrate that the problem is long-standing and that there has been little progress in African-American male six-year graduation rates in the last ten years. While there is reason to be optimistic based on the increasing preparedness of the aforementioned students, currently the overall university retention and graduation rates are improving at approximately the same rate as African-American men. Hence, evidence suggests that the gap in retention and graduation rates between African-American men and all students at the undergraduate level will continue until the overall university rates peak.

Based upon the analysis of existing data, it was determined that additional information was needed to inform the strategies used to increase retention and graduation rates of undergraduate African-American male students at OSU. The committee agreed, however, that the issues are too complex to be fully addressed through surveys and statistical analysis. It was decided that guided focus groups were needed to hear directly from students about their experiences at OSU, thereby facilitating greater depth of understanding. During the 2002-2003 academic year, Student Affairs Assessment, with assistance from many individuals and departments across campus (see Acknowledgments), designed a series of 14 focus groups to reach out to undergraduate African-American males in various arenas and to engage them in dialogues, while maintaining a sense of impartiality.

Literature Review

The literature on the African-American experience in higher education is rich (Daniel, 2001; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Fleming, 1984; Jones, 2001; Williamson, 2000) and reveals that research exploring the experiences of African-American males has received increased attention

in recent years. In particular, a substantive number of studies focus on a variety of issues such as resilience and persistence (Wilson-Sadberry et al., 1991), the influence of stereotypes in sport (Harrison, 2001), expressions of spirituality (Herndon, 2003), racial identity (Neville et al., 1997), and discipline focused retention strategies (Hrabowski & Pearson, 1993) specific to undergraduate African-American male experiences attending Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). The intent of this brief summary is to highlight several studies that inform this project rather than provide an exhaustive review. More comprehensive literature reviews are included in thematized reports associated with this focus group project.

There is a great deal of controversy related to the use of standardized tests in predicting academic success among African-Americans. The predictive validity of who will succeed in college is lower for the African-American population than for Whites (Fleming, 2002). Non-cognitive variables such as personality, self-responsibility, self-concept, and self-expectations have been found to be successful in improving predictions about academic performance and retention (Schwartz & Washington, 2002). Specific to African-American males, Schwartz & Washington suggest that a combination of cognitive and non-cognitive variables should be used to predict academic performance.

The literature on persistence in higher education indicates that student departure is more a function of what goes on within an institution following enrollment than the backgrounds of students prior to entry (Tinto, 1987). African-American students at PWIs often confront unwelcoming environments in which they are ignored in classroom discussions, excluded from campus social life, and ignored or harassed by police (Love, 1993). African-American students report more negative experiences related to racial-ethnic hostility, stereotyping, less equitable treatment, and other forms of racism compared with Asian Americans, Latinos, and White students (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Balcazar-Suarez et al., 2003). African-American students also report experiencing a sense of marginality or not mattering to others, thus do not fare as well as White students in persistence rates, academic achievement, post-graduate study, and overall psychosocial adjustments (Gossett et al., 1996).

Fleming (2002) suggests that individual students can perform up to and beyond their ability by choosing to focus their energies on academics but often must confront distractions such as racism and identity conflicts. African-American students at PWIs also have energy diverted from academic performance when they become the “token representatives or the “Black voice” whenever they speak, particularly about racial and cultural issues (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). In another study, African-American students believed they had to work harder to get good grade point averages because of similar obstacles (James, 1998). African-American males who are persistent students appear to possess a “prove-them-wrong” attitude or personality characteristics that enable them to cope and persist in hostile and unsupportive environments (Moore et al., 2003). Finally, College going African-American males who were achievers in high school and who became more fully integrated into the academic life of their college campus were most likely to be the most academically successful in college (Davis, 1995).

Interpersonal relationships are crucial in determining how individual and institutional characteristics influence Black student experiences in higher education (Allen, 1988). African-American males indicate that contact with other Black male students provides them with a

primary support network and connection to the university although in this particular study, they did not identify strong mentoring relationships (Hood, 1992). African-American male students overall learning and their self-development of an Afrocentric identity is enhanced through involvement in a fraternity or other extracurricular activity (Taylor & Howard Hamilton, 1995). Despite incidents of racial and cultural insensitivity at many PWIs, African-American students serve socially and have been involved with multicultural and traditional campus organizations (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). Minority-focused support groups often provide African-American men with their initial leadership experience at PWIs (Sutton & Terrell, 1997).

Much of the literature on the African-American experience in higher education has focused on quantitative indicators of enrollment and attrition (Davis, 1995; Sedlacek, 1987). While such data offers important insights to inform recruitment and retention strategies, it does not fully address the complex array of student experiences. Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) suggest that we need to listen to what African-American students tell us about what happens to them at PWIs and how these students feel, act, and think. Recent research reveals that there is continued need to understand the experiences of undergraduate African-American males at traditionally White campuses (Constantine & Greer, 2004; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Greer, 1999 & 2003; Moore et al., 2003; Roach, 2001). The authors recommend use of qualitative inquiry designed with consideration for various institutional contexts and cultures. This investigation builds upon existing quantitative research on Black students at PWIs and is designed as a qualitative inquiry to hear directly from undergraduate African-American males about their experiences at OSU, thereby facilitating greater depth of understanding.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of undergraduate African-American males enrolled at The Ohio State University, as students perceive their own experiences. The focus of this study was on undergraduate African-American males at a predominantly White institution who were connected in some way with a specified student group or demographic affiliation. A stratification of focus groups was purposefully designed to ensure diverse variation of students. Several themes emerged from the data gathered through the focus groups. A series of reports, one for each of the major themes, work together to describe what it means to be an undergraduate African-American male at OSU. The underlying intent of these reports is to inform policies and practices that contribute to improving the experiences and success of undergraduate African-American Males at The Ohio State University.

Study Methodology

The exploratory nature of this research led to a qualitative research design, specifically a constructivist approach informed by phenomenology. The constructivist approach guiding the research design assumed that there are multiple social realities, recognized the mutual creation of knowledge and understanding by the researchers and research participants, and aimed toward interpretive understanding by the investigators and research participants' experiences through dialogue (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The phenomenological perspective is aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of the research participant's everyday experiences

(Patton, 2002). The focus was on understanding the essence or structure of a shared experience, hence, their experiences as undergraduate African-American males at OSU.

The primary method for data collection was in-depth, semi-structured focus groups. A focus group is a method of collecting qualitative data in a group interview, with emphasis on facilitating group interaction to produce data and insights that otherwise would be less accessible without the dialogue established in the group (Morgan, 1997). Questions focused closely on the specified phenomena or common topic, discussion of different points of view were encouraged, and participants listened to others' understandings of personal experience, thereby clarifying their own understanding of personal experience. The focus groups also provided an opportunity to gather concentrated amounts of data in an efficient manner.

Sampling

The population from which to sample was comprised of undergraduate African-American males enrolled at Ohio State University as of autumn quarter, 2002 (n = 1227). Several sampling approaches were implemented. Purposeful stratified sampling (Patton, 2002) was the primary strategy for identifying research participants and was organized around "intact" groups or affiliations. Many of the intact groups were identified because of their predominantly African-American membership. Researchers identified other groupings of students, as well, in order to ensure a wide variation of students, thereby supporting information rich cases. The focus group categories identified include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Scholars | 8. Honors |
| 2. Minority Scholars | 9. Student Athletes – Football |
| 3. Fraternities | 10. Student Athletes – Other than football |
| 4. Off-Campus Students | 11. Afrikan American Living Learning Program |
| 5. Academic Student Organizations | 12. Residence Hall Students – 1 st & 2 nd year |
| 6. Social Student Organizations | 13. Students 26+ years of age |
| 7. Gay/Bisexual | 14. Ad Hoc |

Snowball sampling was the secondary strategy for participant identification (Patton, 2002). OSU staff affiliated with "intact" groups or working with students representing different types of focus groups, served as key contacts for identifying prospective participants. In situations where identification of specific students could not be completed via snowball sampling, a combination of random sampling and sampling for information rich cases was implemented using enrollment data provided by the Registrar's Office.

The number of students identified per stratified focus group ranged from four to 51. Letters of invitation (see Appendix A) outlining the purpose of the focus groups and prospective meeting times were sent to a total of 442 students. If a student was interested in participating in a focus group, they were asked to confirm the dates and times in which they could participate. Affirmative responses were received from 95 students. Final selection of research participants was based on their schedules. Thirty-eight of the 95 initial respondents had scheduling conflicts, thus could not participate in a specified focus group. Every effort was made to accommodate

student participation. The Ad Hoc group was formed to facilitate the participation of students who desired to participate in another focus group but were unable to attend at a previously scheduled time. Overall, the goal was to schedule an average of four to six students per group, with a minimum of two and maximum of eight participants.

Participants

A total of 57 students participated in the 14 focus groups, with each group ranging between two and eight participants. The average group size was four participants. An outline of pseudonyms by focus group may be found in Appendix B. Because the institutional site is known and the number of undergraduate African-American males is relatively small, issues of confidentiality prevent the inclusion of specific descriptions of the research participants. Instead, a general description of the group as a whole is provided, utilizing aggregated data from personal information forms. The general description may be found in the Findings section.

Data Collection

The focus group study received IRB approval and the interview protocol was piloted in February 2003 with a group of African-American women associated with a Scholars Program. The focus group protocol was semi-structured working from pre-established, open-ended questions. Questions focused on their classroom experiences, co-curricular experiences, challenges and opportunities, as well as questions aligned with their particular group “affiliation.” (see Appendix C)

A total of 14 focus groups were conducted February through June 2003. Each focus group was scheduled for two hours. Participants completed a participant information form (see Appendix D) and signed an informed consent form (see Appendix E). Participants also selected pseudonyms and were informed that all information would be treated confidentially (see Appendix B). The focus groups were recorded on audiotape. We provided food and beverages at each focus group and each participant received a \$10.00 BuckID card.

The two Student Affairs Assessment staff who worked on this project are White women. Thus, it was of particular importance that two OSU staff members, who are African-American males, provided leadership in facilitating the focus groups. Each was highly effective in establishing rapport with research participants, thereby encouraging free flowing discussion and candor.

Data Analysis

Data analysis employed a grounded theory approach in which a general interplay between analysis and data collection is known as the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The strategy was to constantly compare the different data sources, then these comparisons led to construction of tentative categories that were compared to each other through different levels of conceptualization. The process began with breaking down transcript text into distinct parts or codes. Organizing the codes into categories followed the breaking down of text. Lastly, the categories were integrated and concepts refined in such a way as to present a set of interrelated concepts. The goal was to identify a core or central category, considered to be the

main theme or story of the research, and was complemented with key thematic categories. NUD*IST, a qualitative research software program, was utilized in the data analysis process.

Trustworthiness

Several strategies were utilized to assure the trustworthiness of findings. Trustworthiness refers to criteria for judging the quality or rigor of qualitative inquiry. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation entailed repeated interactions with research participants over a period of time. Triangulation consisted of multiple sources of data (focus groups and questionnaires) and perspectives (researchers) as a means of establishing credibility. Field notes and journaling were employed to clarify assumptions and biases throughout the process. A detailed narrative serving as a summary of findings was sent to all participants for member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, inquiry auditors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with specific expertise related to the experiences of African-American males and qualitative inquiry read the transcripts and contributed to the analytic and interpretive work of the Student Affairs Assessment Office.

Limitations

The findings of this research project must be considered in relationship to limitations associated with study design. This study draws on the perspectives of a select group of undergraduate African-American males. The limited number of students from which the data is drawn cannot contribute to exhaustive and fully generalizable conclusions. Students who were excluded from participation in this study because of the sampling strategies, or because they chose not to participate, may have offered different perspectives. Because a relatively limited number of students were interviewed, they may not represent the full range of undergraduate African-American male experiences at OSU.

Within the sample, it is possible that participants were not always forthcoming with their perspectives. They may not have been comfortable revealing negative information about the university as a whole, specific departments or persons, or themselves. Multiple data sources and data collection methods assisted in reducing this bias. Researcher subjectivity was also a limitation of the study. The Student Affairs Assessment staff persons working on this project were two White women who do not experience life in ways similar to males and persons of color. Through collaboration with key persons across campus, the inquiry auditors, and the two African-American male facilitators, we attempted to minimize this limitation.

Finally, the range of topics that could have been explored in this qualitative study are unlimited and some potential questions of interest did not receive attention. Many themes in the data could be expanded and covered more fully if time and resources were unlimited. However, this study does begin to illuminate the experiences of undergraduate African-American males at OSU. Therefore, new understanding from systematically derived data provides valuable insights to inform policy and practice as well as future research needs.

Definition of Terms

African-American or Black: It is not our intention to essentialize the racial, ethnic, or cultural identity of research participants, in particular, or any person of African-American heritage, in general. We acknowledge that how individuals conceptualize identity is largely fluid and a personal process. However, African-American or Black will be utilized to simplify descriptive language when referring to the racial, ethnic, or cultural background of research participants.

Focus Group: A method of collecting qualitative data in a group interview, with emphasis on facilitating group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the dialogue established in the group.

Participants: In most instances, the 57 students who participated in the focus group research project will be referred to as participants, thereby distinguishing them from the student population at large.

FINDINGS

A generalized summary of findings from this study are organized in the following sections: Participant Information; Core Story; Campus Environment & Culture; Academic Experiences; Social Networking/Life Outside the Classroom; Challenges as an African-American Male; and Best Practices.

NOTE: Most of the findings are written in narrative form as is the custom with qualitative inquiry. In this summary report, the intention is to convey a cohesive story of the many experiences shared by the men participating in the 14 focus groups. Future reports will also employ a narrative form but will be organized around analytic categories specific to the report focus and participant quotes will be integrated directly into the narrative. In this summary report, quotes from all of the participants are inserted only in the recommendations section in order to illustrate various aspects of a theme or point. The bracketed quotes are identifiable by pseudonym and group designation along with a smaller font size. Recommendations will be elaborated in greater depth and specificity in forthcoming reports.

Participant Information

Based on the Participant Information Form (see Appendix D) the 57 participants completed at the beginning of their respective focus group session:

- Only three participants described themselves as multi-racial.
- 16 were freshman, 9 were sophomores, 13 were juniors, 18 were seniors, and 1 had just graduated.
- All but three participants were enrolled as full-time students.

- Over half (37) of the participants applied to three or more colleges in addition to OSU. For a majority of the participants (45) OSU was their first or second choice.
- Nearly all (50) of the participants lived in the residence halls during their 1st year of enrollment.
- Less than half of the participants (24) of the students did not work and of the 33 students who did work, the majority (25) worked on campus.
- A majority (47) of the participants received financial aid.
- For 32 of the participants, parent income was \$50,000 or less, and for 22 of the students, parent income was \$50,000 or more.
- For a majority of students, their father/guardian (36) and mother/guardian (41) have at least some college or post secondary schooling.
- 37 participants are from Ohio and 19 are from out of state.
- The majority of participants (43) attended public high schools. In describing their high schools, 17 were predominantly white, 14 were predominantly African-American, and 26 represented many ethnicities/races.
- Nearly all of the participants (50) were either somewhat satisfied (31) or very satisfied (19) with their experience at OSU.
- Over half (33) indicated that OSU met their expectations better than expected (27) or much better than expected (6).
- When asked if they would enroll at OSU again, 42 indicated yes, 2 no, and 12 were unsure.

Aggregated data from the participant information forms are fully detailed in tables located in Appendix F. Students were also asked to indicate college of declared or intended major and intended career path. Thematized summaries of responses are provided in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 (n=57).

Table 1.1: College of Declared or Intended Major

Response Categories Respondents = 57	Number of Responses
Business	15
Social & Behavioral Sciences	14
Engineering	11
Humanities	4
Biological Sciences	4
Education	3
Human Ecology	2
Undecided	2
Nursing	1
Pharmacy	1

Table 1.2: Intended Career Path

Response Categories Respondents = 57	Number of Responses
Law	7
Medicine/Health Care	6
Business	5
Engineering	5
Finance/Accounting	5
Sports/Recreation	5
Psychology	3
Design	3
Don't Know	3
Military Service	3
Education (higher and K-12)	3
Sales	2
Marketing	2
Clinical Research	1
Information Technology	1
Ministry	1
Public Safety	1
Graduate School	1

Students were also asked to complete a series of four questions regarding their involvement, challenges/problems, helpful resources, and persons of support. The following questions were asked:

- What activities/organizations are you currently involved in as a student at OSU? (write in responses)
- Please list the three greatest challenges or problems you have confronted as a student at OSU.
- Please list the three most helpful resources or methods of support you have utilized as a student at OSU
- If you were to have any academic or personal problems while at OSU, to whom would you turn?

Thematized summaries of responses to the four questions are provided in Tables 1.3 through 1.6. Please note that research participants (n=57) provided multiple responses.

Table 1.3: Activities/Organizations involvement as a Student at OSU

Response Themes Responses = 149 (multiple responses from participants)	Number of Responses
Residence hall organizations & activities: (most multiculturally or ethnically focused) SABSA, BANCS, OBSA, Resident Assistant, Hall Council, Allies for Diversity, SAIL, CAARCH	31
Academic organizations: (most multiculturally or ethnically focused) NSBE, ABLE, Air Force ROTC, tutor, academic mentor, research assistant, AMA, PASS, NABA, MEP, Undergraduate Finance Association, Minority Psychology Students	27
Scholars/Honors/Living-Learning Programs: Minority Scholars, honor societies, honors programs, scholars and other living-learning programs	20
Sports & Recreation activities: Intercollegiate sports, intramurals, Majority of One	18
Multicultural/Ethnically Focused Organizations: Coalition for Equal Opportunity in Education, student media organizations, NCBI, PHC, Heritage Festival,	16
General Student Organizations: USG, CBSA, dance, poetry, book club, forensics	12
Service: Mentoring, NAACP, Boys & Girls Club, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, African American Youth League, ESL conversation partner	9
Religious: Men of Vizion, Impact, choir, youth groups, Real Life	9
Fraternities: All but 2 indicated membership in Historically Black Fraternal Organizations	7

Table 1.4: Greatest Challenges or Problems Confronted as a Student at OSU

Response Themes Responses = 140 (multiple responses from participants)	Number of Responses
Adjustment to College Academics: Developing study skills, being successful in coursework, large classes, getting to know instructors, academic planning & scheduling, underprepared for courses, switching major, professors don't care, GEC requirements, tests/exams, teaching styles, working with advisors, finding a good tutor	43
Adjustment to OSU Culture: Adjusting to residence halls/roommates, living in a predominantly White culture, lack of diversity, not respected, not welcoming environment, adjusting to size, isolation as an African-American male in classes/programs, being a minority, dealing with stereotypes, double standards	35
Time Management, Organization, & Finding Balance	24
Developing Social Life: Meeting other African-American students, having a social life, getting involved, meeting people in general, long distance relationship, integration of Christian faith, networking, relationships	18
Financial Aid, Budget, Debt Load	11
Miscellaneous: Parking, gaining citizenship, finding self, family issues, coming out, peer pressure, bureaucracy, consistency among staff	9

Table 1.5: Most Helpful Resources or Methods of Support Utilized at OSU

Response Themes Responses = 122 (multiple responses from participants)	Number of Responses
Minority-focused Programs and Organizations: Office of Minority Affairs, Minority Engineering Program, NSBE, BANCS, Coordinators of programs, Hale Center, Young Scholars Program, Chosen Generation, AALLP, Multicultural Center, SABSA, GLBTSS	34
Friends, Peers, and Older Students: Roommates, resident assistant, fraternity brothers, as well as friends/older students	22
Miscellaneous: Instructor office hours, Mount Leadership Society, work supervisor, faith, honors program, writing center, OSU website, libraries, computer lab, counseling & consultation services, study lounge, myself, career services, professor	22
Tutoring/Study Groups	17
Mentors or Mentoring Programs	17
Family	10

Table 1.6: Who Students Would Turn to for Assistance with an Academic or Social Problem While at OSU

Response Themes Responses = 93 (multiple responses from participants)	Number of Responses
Parent or Other Family Member	25
Academic Advisor	24
Friends/Peers	20
OSU Administrator or Program Coordinator	10
Residence Hall Director or Assistant	8
Miscellaneous: Mentor, work supervisor, professors, God, Fraternity chapter advisor, tutor	6

Core Story

The core story emerging from the focus groups was that most participants experienced a sense of marginalization and isolation, thereby affecting their overall experience at OSU. Their sense of marginalization is best characterized as a feeling of dissonance and not being entirely comfortable. As a result, many participants felt that their classroom and social experiences were fragmented and disconnected. At the same time, participants conveyed a very strong desire to be respected and accepted for who they are as individuals, to develop a sense of belonging, and ultimately, to not have anyone question the legitimacy of their being a student at OSU. Based on participant conversations, being an African-American male at OSU is paradoxical in nature. One's identity as a Black male is always present, visible, and often imposed by others particularly with respect to stereotypes and assumptions participants confront. However, the paradox is that because of one's identity as a Black male, participants were afforded many unique opportunities for engagement, learning, and having their voices heard. Many participants suggested that undergraduate African-American males must figure out how to identify and capitalize on these many opportunities while also recognizing that there is a balance point needed

in terms of time and energy. The “bottom line” articulated by most participants was the need for finding ways to graduate so that one could be successful in their chosen career path, and ultimately then be able to give back to their community and take care of their families. Despite the many challenges that these men confront, most participants were generally satisfied with their choice to attend OSU and felt that their experiences, both positive and negative, would make them stronger and ready for the real world.

Campus Environment & Culture

The reasons the focus group participants chose to enroll at OSU included affordability/scholarship support, choice of major, prestige or reputation of institution, location in proximity to home, and for the many opportunities presented by a large institution. All participants talked about the high expectations they held for how OSU would prepare them for the future and the “real world.” Given the large size of Ohio State, participants wanted to experience the full diversity of experiences that college offered while expecting campus to be a place they would be comfortable. While many participants indicated that their overall experience had been good or acceptable, OSU did not always live up to their expectations. Many of the participants felt that OSU should and could be a better environment for African-Americans in general, and African-American males in particular.

Evidence of these perspectives became clear at the beginning of each focus group when participants discussed a recent *Black Enterprise* article, which rated Ohio State as one of the top or “best” 50 colleges for African-American students. Reactions ranged from disbelief of inclusion in the top 50 to assertions that Ohio State should have been higher on the list. Many participants questioned the rating criteria and several acknowledged that certain aspects of campus were progressive in terms of minority focused programs and services. These conversations unfolded in a number of directions but several themes related to campus environment and culture emerged.

Participants generally articulated that the “reality doesn’t match the rhetoric.” Many students discussed how Ohio State prides itself in being a diverse campus when referencing population demographics, academic programs, and opportunities for involvement. Notably, such characteristics were emphasized in the “campus sell” during the recruitment process. While these aspects of the campus environment were evident, many students indicated that reality fell short of their preconceived expectations. Participants described OSU as a microcosm of society, geared more toward the students who are White and from middle class or rural backgrounds. Participants also labeled OSU as a “typical football school,” in which students enroll to be a part of a school with a prestigious athletic program, with life centered on parties and having fun rather than education. A number of participants talked about how they did not feel the “Buckeye welcome” that their White counterparts often depict.

Most participants expected a more integrated campus, often citing the “melting pot” with everyone interacting and getting along. In contrast, participants spoke about how segregated and sometimes polarized social interaction is on campus. Many participants felt that most White students on campus had never interacted with a person of color before attending OSU.

Consequently, participants encountered naïve questions and assumptions, as well as, articulated resentments regarding minority focused services and programs such as affirmative action from fellow students. A number of the participants indicated their formative experiences were based in predominantly Black communities and schools, thus culture shock was a common experience during their first year of school. With regard to residence hall roommate assignments, some participants indicated that they felt they were “forced” to mix with other students outside their race. In terms of informal social interactions, many participants indicated that it almost seemed abnormal if there was mixing between different racial and ethnic groups. Several students also discussed the expectation within Black culture that you only interact with your own race, otherwise a Black male may be talked about as suspect and not being a true brother.

Given the large overall student population, participants did not feel any form of critical mass relative to the African-American student population. Many participants held the perception that there were only a few hundred African-American males on campus, when in reality enrollment numbers are more than 1200. A number of participants also observed that there is a widely held perception that nearly all OSU African-American males are athletes, where in fact they number a small percentage. Overall, the OSU environment can be characterized as a chilly climate for undergraduate African-American males in which they must confront isolation and significant cultural transitions. Only a few participants cited experiencing overt incidents of racism. However, given the range of discussion in all the focus groups, subtle examples of individual and institutional racism were evident. Notably, student-athletes did not recognize racism as an aspect of their experience and several participants noted that their designation as a honors/scholars student seemed to alleviate the “stigma” associated with being a Black male.

Academic Experiences

Overall, participants described a sense of isolation in the classroom in terms of often being the only or one of a few African-American males in a classroom and their majors. In general, participants had to grapple with being both highly visible and invisible as a Black male. Often this meant confronting stereotypes or assumptions about their academic preparedness and achievement, the reason participants were accepted to OSU, and what it means to be a Black male in a predominantly White society and at a predominantly White campus. Common stereotypes cited were, as a Black male student participants were assumed to be a student athlete, and for athletes, their academic competencies were of question. Many of the participants talked about how these stereotypes were motivating factors in that they were driven to succeed and disprove such stereotypes and assumptions. This drive carries with it elevated pressures and stress, and for some an underlying fear of failure. Participants’ visibility, or perception of being under the microscope, often meant that they were “called upon” to represent their race in terms of academic performance as well as in discussions, especially when focused on controversial topics such as slavery, the civil rights movement, and affirmative action. Several of the participants also talked about not wanting to draw attention to themselves. The classroom was about getting down to business.

Generally participants’ interactions with faculty were limited, although most indicated they felt comfortable in seeking out a professor or instructor for help when needed. Some of the

participants were intentional about making their presence known to course instructors, letting instructors know they wanted to learn the course material. Several participants also talked about the importance of relationships developed with faculty in their majors. Very few of the participants had interaction with African-American faculty, and for those who had, it was largely limited to courses in African and African-American Studies. Additionally, most of these faculty were African-American women. In many ways, the participants' invisibility and isolation in the classroom was underscored in their interactions (or lack of) with other students. Large classroom settings largely did not encourage interaction between students. Some of the participants talked about their perceptions of how White students avoided working with them in group efforts because such students were intimidated, hadn't ever interacted with a Black person, or possibly discounted their abilities. However, some of the participants also talked about how they may not be learning from other students but felt it was their duty to educate other students to the realities of their experience as an African-American with particular attention directed to dispelling myths and stereotypes.

A number of participants discussed that they were not challenged academically as much as they could be and that the high expectations they held for their instructors and peers were not fulfilled. A number of participants also discussed confronting academic culture shock. In particular, participants thought they were prepared for the rigors of college but found that there was subject matter and experiences of which they were unfamiliar, in comparison to other students. This situation often had a negative impact on academic performance resulting in the need to seek out additional help and spend more time on trying to catch up to other students.

Social Networking/Life Outside the Classroom

As would be expected, participants' time was largely filled with going to class, studying, working if they held a job, and involvement in various student organizations, sports teams, or recreational activities ranging from working out to playing video games. Student-athletes' schedules (and lives) were highly structured, particularly during the season, and left little time for "hanging out" or involvement in any type of activity beyond some weekend socializing. Student athletes tended to spend most of their time with other athletes. In some cases, non-athlete students impinged upon student athletes' privacy because of their high profile status. Students who worked significant numbers of hours typically were not involved on campus beyond attending classes. For most of the participants, students in their classes were generally acquaintances but they didn't necessarily spend time socializing together. Many of the participants would "hang out" with roommates or friends made in the residence halls or other activities they were involved in. A number of participants indicated that their friends were limited mostly to other African-American students while other participants indicated they enjoyed a wide mix of friends representing diverse backgrounds.

Many participants sought out involvement in living-learning programs and various student organizations as a way to enlarge their social networks while being involved in activities of interest. Students involved in academically focused organizations were particularly interested in career preparation activities and networking beyond the campus environment. Many participants were involved in more than one minority-focused student organization and the relationships

developed through that involvement contributed to their feeling a sense of connection and community. The Black fraternities were discussed frequently in terms of the high profile they held on campus for sponsoring many of the African-American social functions. Yet, many of the participants had mixed feelings about the Black fraternities indicating that the fraternities could do more to reach out to men on campus and do more than sponsor parties.

Most participants lived in the residence halls at least during the first year of enrollment. The majority of participants were assigned White roommates and participants often talked about tensions or “ignorant” behaviors they confronted. Again, there was a sense of isolation in terms of being the only or one of a few African-Americans on their floor. While some of the participants confronted culture shock in terms of living in a predominantly White setting, more students discussed transitional issues with living in a group setting and small room. Participants who were not involved in on-campus activities indicated they had to spend much of their time on academic pursuits and adjusting to their new living environment. Many participants also indicated that it was difficult to find out about resources and activities as well as how to get involved. Members of the Afrikan American Living Learning floor’s experience were somewhat different in terms of the focus being on Africentric culture. These participants noted that while they regularly ventured out to the predominantly White campus, very few White students ever spent time on the living-learning floor unless they were friends from home or invited guests.

The notions of segregation and stereotypes were discussed frequently in relation to living on different areas of campus, e.g. the north versus the south. South campus was referred to as “the hood” and the north was “the nice side of town” where the “brains” lived. Consequently, south campus was identified as the place to go to socialize, north campus as a clean, quiet place to study, and west campus was lost in the shuffle and referred to as the “suburbs.” Several participants mentioned the Hale Center and the Multicultural Center as places to attend programs and events specifically organized for African-Americans, although participants didn’t talk about specific programs that were particularly important beyond the Heritage Festival. Participants also recognized that the Hale Center was one of a few college cultural centers specifically designed for African-American students. However, a number of participants noted that they didn’t always feel comfortable when going to the Hale Center or that they had to have a specific purpose to go there. Again, many of the participants discussed the difficulty of finding out about all the resources that may be available to them and how to take advantage of resources and programs.

The Heritage Festival was cited as one of the most important annual events organized to celebrate African-American culture on this campus. However, all the positive experiences participants associated with participation in the Heritage Festival were countered with feelings of frustration and anger derived from perceived differential treatment by the University, the city of Columbus, and public at large. In general, many participants talked about situations in which they had no choice but to live in the dominant culture but activities and programs that celebrated or featured African-American culture were not given consideration as part of mainstream programming. Many participants also indicated that there was nothing to do on campus (and off) on the weekends beyond going to parties or clubs.

In terms of relationships, several of the participants were married, engaged, or in significant long-term relationships (often long distance). However, most participants were “single” and

found it difficult to carry on a relationship or date for a number of reasons. For many, getting the degree was their primary focus so they did not want to have a relationship at this point. A number of participants also talked about the frustration they had with identifying desirable women to date or women who wanted to date them in terms of having similar values, goals, and interests. Participants who identified as gay also talked about similar relationship challenges but also about the tensions and isolation encountered with the African-American community because of the “double jeopardy” associated with race and sexual orientation.

Challenges as an African-American Male

Many participants talked about development of study skills, success in the classroom, time management, and debt load as challenges but didn't necessarily attribute these challenges to their identity as a Black male or different from those faced by the general student population. Conversations regarding what makes it harder being an African-American male student at OSU largely mirrored the greatest challenges or problems identified in the participant information questionnaire. A majority of participants talked about the overall OSU culture as an unwelcoming environment in which they confront stereotypes, lack of respect, and, most often, limited knowledge regarding race/ethnicity issues by the dominant White culture. Again, many participants indicated that they felt a sense of isolation and noted that campus was more or less racially segregated when it comes to their day-to-day social interactions. However, it should be noted that a number of participants did not experience such phenomena and described their campus experiences as being largely void of challenges associated with individual or institutional racism.

Best Practices

Interventions participants talked about as being most helpful were the recruitment process and funding/scholarships provided by OMA or athletics when applicable, orientation or early arrival programs offered as part of the Scholars Program, tutoring, minority-focused programming in the residence halls, the Afrikan American Living Learning Program, the Minority Engineering Program, along with mentoring programs. These programs and services facilitated connection points for finding answers to questions and provided support, encouragement, a sense of belonging, reassurance, and having one's presence on campus acknowledged. A point referenced by almost every participant was the importance of mentoring relationships, whether it was with an adult or older student. Given the importance of mentoring, many participants discussed disappointment with assigned mentoring relationships generated by OMA or other campus programs citing that they didn't have much in common with the individual. Some participants also talked about important relationships formed with staff associated with campus programs, Residence Life, and academic advising, many of whom were African-American women. Many participants also talked about involvement in minority-focused student organizations - such as Majority of One, BANCS, SABSA, Men of Vizion, Black fraternities - as opportunities to meet other students with similar interests, enlarge one's social network, develop a sense of belonging, and be involved in activities directed at making a difference on campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations for action have been identified:

NOTE: Selected quotes are not intended to be all-inclusive in terms of recommendation content and participant experiences. However, they do provide a brief illustration of findings on which recommendations are based via the voices of all 57 focus group participants. Recommendations will be elaborated in greater depth and specificity in forthcoming topical reports.

- 1) **Ensure that student support and resources are readily accessible and attuned to the specific needs of African-American male students as they progress through their college experiences** – Many participants indicated that the university, Office of Minority Affairs in particular, is highly effective in its recruitment efforts and provision of financial support. However, many of the participants noted that once they arrived on campus, the high degree of attention and communication received during the recruitment process stopped. In essence, there was a sentiment of “we’ll help you get to Ohio State, but you’re on your own when you get here.” The most notable exception was among student athletes whose lives were highly structured and had regular access to a variety of support resources. Additionally, older students, gay/bisexual students, student athletes, commuter/working students encounter special circumstances that differ from the “traditional” undergraduate student.

26+/Lorenzo: I think a lot times because there’s a limited number of us who are supposed to be exceptional, whether it’s athletically, academically, socially, whatever, we are kinda held to higher standards. Like when you are in a class, people are looking at you like what is your viewpoint from an African-American perspective and things like that, so you are under the microscope a lot more. So I think that is very stressful at times.

Ad Hoc Group/Deuce: It’s not really funny because a lot of people are in that situation where they come here and their first year, or just when they come here, they don’t know what to do or if they missed a class, they don’t know who they should talk to. They need something that can be set aside saying you can come here and we can address this, we can help you, guide you through this process, because it is an adjustment. Because when you’re in high school your teachers argue, “why didn’t you turn this in, why didn’t you come see me?” When you get here, you’re lucky if sometimes the professor knows your name. So I think there does need to be something. A lot of our friends are in that boat, like I think I need ten hours and I will be a junior, and some of them are talking about “I’m about to freshman forgive this course” and I’m like “but you’ve been here three years, what are you doing?” It’s just, I don’t know, I think they focus on getting you in here, but they need to focus on getting you out of here. That’s where they need to start paying attention.

26+/Eric: But I think the age thing, you continue to take it so much more seriously that you know, it really kinda guides how your experience is, totally. It’s not like I’m sitting in the dorms and like man I can hear music outside and I can hear this and that and I wanna go out there and just be runnin down the halls. I wanna study. I don’t live in the dorms, you know? I’m thinking about my career totally. I’m here thinking about my career. That’s what it’s about and that’s why I got out of the service and that’s my purpose for being here and all of that kinda comes out of my age I think. You know, maturity... I don’t hear too much about em, but there’s absolutely none as far as undergraduate nontraditional activities that are African-American male or you don’t see nothing that says 25 and up.

Football/Jerry: I think a lot of students are jealous of me, I dunno. They're like "after school I have to go to work" and I'm like "we gotta go to work too." Let me see you get up at five in the morning for work or whatever. At the end of the summer, we gotta go to summer school and spend more time over here conditioning, working out and practicing and watching a lot of films and meet, have team meetings and all that, constantly all year round... You know with football, there is not much life.

Minority Scholar/John: I think that is one of the biggest benefits I have had for being an athlete, there is a program called Majority of One, and it is basically just minority student athletes from all different sports and, basically just looking out, if you will, for incoming freshman, sophomores, juniors, all the way up until seniors. There are actually mentors who are former student-athletes or just former students period that act as mentors to whomever is in the organization if you will, but that is a very good, good program that they do have. It has essentially helped me to stay focused. And a major theme of it is just life beyond your specific field, whether it be whatever sport, that it is. It is trying to push graduation rates of student athlete minorities, and it's not just for African-Americans because there are, I think a lot of times when you hear minorities you automatically think Black, but I think it's all we hear but there are so many more minorities that are part of the Majority of One, and it is just, basically, just gives encouragement, and support that the members need and can get. That's helped a lot.

- 2) **Develop and implement an African-American male focused orientation/early arrival program for new students** – The majority of participants indicated that these types of specialized programs would greatly help transition and adjustment to college in general, and the OSU culture in particular. Students who had experiences with these types of programs indicated they felt an immediate sense of belonging because of peer relationships developed and were more confident/resourceful as they began their college experience.

Academic Organizations/Richard: I think it would be neat to have an African-American male orientation, run by African-American male students. I just think that...freshmen in particular need to see positive influences early and often. It's like people talking about the retention rates, and things like that for African-American males, and for me-it's hard for me to see it, because all the guys that I know are still here and are going to graduate. Because that's kind of been the group that I came with. We kind of all gravitated towards one another, and-I know some people who dropped out, or maybe-might not make it through, but the numbers that I hear just sound ridiculous compared to when I look at my community. And the way that I see it is, there has got to be a way to facilitate branching out a little bit more. You know? There is a lot that I think I could tell somebody who's a freshman, coming straight in. You know. Like I did this, this didn't work. You don't want to do that. Even if it's just as simple as that. Or just like-hey man, here's a phone number for a barber that I go to.

Scholars/James: What really influenced me was, I was involved in Mount Scholars so I arrived early before everyone else moved in. And I was just walking through the building and all the way from Atlanta, didn't know anybody and there was a group of African-American young ladies, they were sophomores at the time and they invited me into their room and started talking to me. They really befriended me and to this day those are my really core of people that I'm with all the time...upperclassmen that really took me in and showed me the ropes of how to get around and that kind of thing.

Scholars/Frank: Mount Leadership Society, its networking, that's basically what it's all about, it's about networking. I arrived here early my freshman year and I helped the Mount Scholars this year move in and I helped them with their orientation program. I got to me some fantastic people...

- 3) **Develop a “guide to success” resource** – Building upon findings from this study and continued exploration of student success strategies, issues such as study skills, time and financial management, importance of campus involvement, developing social networks, adjustment to a predominantly white institution, finding helpful resources on campus and Columbus, etc. should be compiled and published in print and electronic formats. These topics could also be the basis for a guide to success educational/skill building series. Peer leadership would be highly effective in an educational series.

Scholars/Jay: If I have to say anything for us as a people, I'd say that as Black American, African-American males, you should just like seize the opportunities that come our way. Whether that be through like various activities around campus. I understand being the way it is and things like that, that's kind of hard. But if you're on the north end of campus, like join the BANCS program, that's a very good program, and if you are on south end, you're right by the Hale Center, things like that. Just seize the opportunities that come your way because people are looking out for you and people wanna -I wanna see my own people succeed, personally. So I have to say like seize the opportunities that you have here.

Social Organizations/Goliath: As much as we need to know our community we also need to know how to succeed in America, you have to be able to work with the majority. So it is all fun and good that you feel that your Black organizations, which is what you are supposed to do, it is like a house, you gotta take care of your home, you got to take care of your community, but you got to go out in the world and bring stuff home. So you need to have a strong foundation within your self and your culture, and you have to also go out there and bring it back, and also bring your home to the forefront. So I think that my advantage in being in an organization is that, basically networking. There will be boys that talk about this double veil, which we do face, but that guy, when you are in an organization you don't want to be that token Black guy. You need to be representative of the African-American community, not just the one, that Black guy. Basically it just teaches you networking and values and you become more focused and more confident within yourself as Africans and African-Americans, a person of African decent living in America. You have to get along with the majority in order to adapt and succeed; you have to get a long with the majority. You cannot be separate because you won't succeed in the corporate world.

AALLP/Fo-Shizzle: I try to talk to my teacher and my TA or whatever and try and get them to really know me. I think I do better in classes when I let them know I'm putting in a lot of work and stuff.

Other Athletes/John: I've taken advantage of it (Student Athlete Support Services). Right now I'm in this awareness seminar, the mental toughness academy. It's a good seminar. It's like a confidence builder I guess and helps you deal with different situations. They have a whole bunch of different seminars that are available to student athletes to go to... adjusting to campus life and stuff like that.

Other Athletes/Micah: To have a place like the Younkin, which you can go get access to the computers, you can meet with advisors, a place where you can group with other people to help you out if you need help. That's also good to have. Personally, I really haven't taken full advantage of all the services but I really haven't needed to take advantage of them. But I will recommend it to those who do need it though. It's there for you so be sure to take advantage of it if you need it.

- 4) **Evaluate and improve existing mentoring programs and develop a peer mentoring program** – The importance of mentoring was a consistent topic of discussion from group to group. The quality of experience varies widely from program to program. The best mentors were those individuals who were accessible and demonstrated a real sense of interest in the student. Students recommended that more African-American male mentors who are knowledgeable about OSU are needed. A number of students suggested that peer

mentoring would be particularly helpful. Attention also needs to be directed toward academic/career focused mentoring.

1st/2ndyear Residence Hall/Relly: Get us a mentor. I never had any, like OMA, how do I say, wasn't too good. I think they really need to improve it. Personally this year, I don't know how anyone else feels, being an African-American male, you kinda need some maybe, like an older male to take you under, just on campus or someone that can kind of help you out. I got paired with a female, a lady that never attended The Ohio State University, and I just moved to Columbus. She helped me as far as trying to get me a job at her place of business but as far as my experience on campus, I didn't have any. And I think, like you said, you were the only guy who came from Detroit who came here. I think if we had mentors who really checked up on us, like personal, you didn't have to be a dad but just a friend or are kinda just there to hang out with like during my freshman year, if I needed any help I'm here for you. It's kinda gonna work out for you and I think that's what they need to improve and a big thing as far as what The Ohio State University can do.

Minority Scholars/Chuck: I sound a little idealistic in general, but I feel people just have to care. I was actually assigned a mentor by OMA, but the guy never contacted me. I don't know, you probably have to have some courage to keep on trying to push and reach out to people. It really helps.

1st/2ndyear Residence Hall/Detroit: I am in the mentor program right now, but I really do plan on helping somebody. I feel like if I make it to my junior year, God permit, I will definitely try my best to help someone else make it to their junior year, and then have them help someone else make it to junior year. So it becomes like a chain effect, so we keep each other up.

Fraternities/Mr. White: I think a big thing that needs to be established is maybe a mentoring program. Not necessarily for incoming freshman but for those juniors and sophomores who are looking past that freshman stage.

Billy: And you know what? We always have some sort of mentoring program, or some tutoring program. We have it but nobody participates in it.

Mr. White: Use somebody real because you know what I am saying? The Afrodimension Program, I got matched up with somebody who was nothing like me man.

Billy: We need some real brothers in here (not) guys sitting in there with bow ties. You need some guy who is going to come in there with some jeans on. You know what I am saying? You need someone to keep it real with you.

Mr. White: Right and then they keep coming back. And you know that is what happens though cause that happens indirectly. Because I know that all of us have been in a situation when somebody has come to you who is younger and they just look to you with questions. Yo, you take this class yet? But it is just not a set thing. You know what I am saying?

Honors/Steve: A person that's really helped me out, he's like a role model but (name of person), he's uh, in InRoads. I'm not in InRoads but my roommate was, and he's been able to help me with resumes, interviews and stuff like that and he's a good guy. I don't think he is like a student or anything but he just worked with InRoads and he's got a lot of experience.

26+/Jacion: My advisor here, I have known him for 14 years know, when I first started he gave me advice... He really encouraged me to come back to school. And when I was in the Marine Corp he always kept in touch, he would always send me books to read, he would always just use communication, so pretty much, I know him. He had an interest in me.

Academic Organizations/Richard: I think it's time that...African-American male students-African-American students in general-take responsibility for ourselves. How long are we going to sit around and wait on Ohio State to be able to solve our problems. You know, we see it too. You know, we're here. I've kind of taken-I have several informal mentees. You know what I mean? Guys that I didn't know. I pulled to the side, you can call me whenever you want to. You know what I mean? Let me know what's going on. Talk to me about what's up. You ever want some advice or just someone to talk to, let me know. Because I know that I'm not here all by accident. God hasn't blessed me to be here, and with the powers that I have, just for me. It's for the next guy so that he doesn't have to struggle or go through the same stuff. It would be beautiful, if you ask me, to see African-American males helping other African-American male freshmen.

- 5) **Evaluate and improve tutoring services** – Many students utilized tutoring services offered through various programs with mixed results. A number of students indicated having difficulty with timely scheduling, limitations in tutor knowledge of subject matter, and tutor “teaching” competency.

Off-Campus/Beau: I remember a calculus course that I had to take and I just couldn't make any sense out of what I was doing. So the Minority Scholars Program, they also had a group of tutors within that session so they assigned me to that and I thought that that was helpful until I met my tutor who didn't understand what was going on in the math course either. It was like wow, this is amazing, I signed up for a tutor, and I'm trying to show you that I really am making an effort to pass this course, not just to pass it but understand it. And the help I got doesn't understand either. So I ended up having to drop the course. They said they were gonna reassign me with another tutor but that took too long. I had to drop the course and like a week or so after the course, they sent me an email to me saying “well we found a tutor for you.” And I'm like, “that's not helping me right now.” I think that they make efforts but I don't think they are as organized as they should be.

Minority Scholars/Dee-bo: I have had a mixed relationship, like a mixed feeling on OMA, cause I am suppose to get tutoring for math 151 right now. I am trying to get individual attention, but that fell through and then the group, the session or whatever fell through, or something.

Social Organizations/Chuck: Sometimes you have to do math and when they like, try to explain the problem a certain way, it confuses me then. I go to the same tutor room for the same class, with like the tutor people, there are eight students doing the same problem, different ways. Totally confusing me. I just try to find other people that are in class and try to see if they can help me too.

Social Organizations/Rightway: The tutors and people who are trying to help you definitely have to have patience and need to understand that people can learn on different levels, and learn with different methods. And you can't teach everyone the same thing the same way... Some people just don't know how to talk to people to get from them what they don't understand so they can better help them.

Ad Hoc/Bobby: And to add on, tutoring at the Hale Center only goes so far. You know what I'm saying? I think they'd be like "oh you need help with this and that, you get tutoring at the African-American Center." Man, that only goes so far. Tutoring or some sort of an advisor, you know, “oh well you know you can do this,” but they're basically telling you the exact same stuff...if they get a program, for real, like something legit.

- 6) **Develop and implement more social events and programs that appeal to the interests of African-American male students** – Many students indicated that there were not many events and programs of interest in which to participate or that much of the social scene focused on parties and “clubbing.” Consideration needs to be given by all university units to diversifying program and service offerings.

Off-Campus/Brandon: I know they offer a lot of events to sort of relax and enjoy and what not, but I dunno, like those concerts that they held last spring, last year and at the beginning of this school year, they didn't seem to be too inviting to different races. It was mostly like rock and roll and punk bands. And I really didn't see anything about hip hop acts coming on campus or just an R&B act or some kind of other act other than rock or pop culture. And it was just like, are we not invited to this too? Even when people would come to the things across the street, like I didn't see that advertised in the Lantern or anything but when these other acts would come, you would see flyers everywhere. And I'm just...do they just not care? And I know they have all these other minority groups and organizations on campus but it's like, you can talk a good game but what are they really doing? I know this such and such group and this group but what are they actually doing here to help me and my fellow classmates? I'm not seeing them in action.

Fraternities/Jr. Primetime: Tonight's Thursday and it being the beginning of the weekend, it's warm out, if we were on a different campus like a historically Black college we would have something to do. We are on Ohio State's campus and unless somebody is throwing an event, there is nothing to do.

Football/Orlando: I haven't been here that long, but I don't perceive Ohio State as being pro-Black at all. There's not many brothers here anyway. It seems a lot of activities and a lot of things that Ohio State is about, if it's not about the football team, then it is something...not many Black events, you know what I mean?

Honors/Kendre: Usually outside of class, I'm inside the lab. Outside the lab, I'm at home or out at the bars but they don't have a lot facilities here for Black people after hours. So outside class, I don't find myself associating with other Black people. I feel I can even though some Black people come to the bars or clubs I go to, I mean, that's what I do outside of class. That's my thing, besides studying and all that. I'm not really involved, I want to get involved and probably should.

- 7) **Explore and address inter and intra-group issues** – A number of tensions associated with inter and intra-group relationships were identified including African-American male-female relationships (connecting in more positive ways), living in a largely segregated environment and predominantly white culture, being African-American and gay, and less than desirable sense of connection and community among African-Americans on campus.

AALLP/Slim: It's a struggle period because women get hurt so much and then you gotta be coming up with something new for them to even be interested in you or you have to put on some big show to show that you are succeeding and all this other stuff. But these dudes just out here just keep doing some grinding stuff. And then they come at us and are like "well what makes you different?"

Honors/X: It doesn't happen, well for me it doesn't happen with too many African-American females. I think the reason that I do want, I'll put it this way, I have my own criteria of who I want, the girls that I want to be around. And there are only a few African-American females that fit that criteria. There are only a few who fit that criteria and out of the few there are few that even want me so it's kinda hard to deal with. So for the most part I don't, the African-American relationship doesn't work well with me.

Social Organizations/Akbar: I think that the lack of community amongst African-Americans on campus has made it difficult for me. Just because of the fact that, where I come from, I am just used to everyone speaking to you or at least acknowledging your presence if they are African-American. And like you come here, my first few weeks, I would walk across the oval and nobody would talk to me. I would say what's up to somebody, and they look at me like I am dumb. I thought I was doing something wrong. And I am just like "what is going on," so eventually I kind of set in my mind that if everyone is going to be mean I am just going to act the same way. Even in my business classes, I go to class, the Black people they didn't want to speak to me. I don't know, maybe it is because I am a lighter complexion.

Gay/Texacooly: I think the idea of masculinity is much more defined, much more rigid in the Black community, than it is in the White community. Maybe that is because you could see more gay White men, people on TV. I don't know where it comes from. It could have some basis in religion, you know, because Black people are very spiritual, so the Bible says the man is supposed to be this, the woman is supposed to be this, blah blah blah. You would think that a people who have been trying so hard for so many years to be equal, and be seen as equal, would treat other people equally.

AALLP/B-Nasty: White people say a lot of things that I don't understand at all. And my initial response, since I don't know anything about it, my initial thing will be to get up in their face and say what was that all about, try and be defensive or whatever. And yes, it is gonna happen when I get to know them, I won't be as offensive because they have tried to explain to me why it is that they do the things they do or say the things they say. If I live on an all Black floor then in a way it's turning me into a straight up, all Black person. Like, I don't know too many people just straight up, like all Black, pro-Black. Life is like that.

- 8) **Develop effective communication tools and networks** – A common complaint was the lack of awareness regarding campus resources and involvement opportunities. Students suggested that better communication networking was needed. Several students indicated that the OSU website was helpful and that peer networking was most effective.

Facilitator/Q: Do you think there are a lot of activities for African-Americans?

AALLP/SLAP: There are some, but they are not publicized or advertised well enough. You don't hear about it till after it has taken place.

AALLP/C-Unit: I think we have a lot of activities for Blacks but it's not publicized enough like somebody said because I go to the Hale Center a lot and there's a lot of activities over there. So how does anybody know about the Hale Center? I tell people I am going to the Hale Center and they are like "what's that?" And I'm saying it's the Black Cultural Center.

Ad Hoc/Simba: The only times I hear about anything like that is when I come to the Union because they got that African-American Activity Board up in the Union or when you go to the Hale Center. Me and my friends, we kick it, but we never know anything that's happening unless we are talking to the people who live in the dorms. None of my friends live in the dorms so it's like we don't hear about anything unless we go there and find out.

Minority Scholars/Nick: Our generation is the computer, playstation 2, X-box, television generation. So for us, reading things are fine but nothing drives the point home more than physically seeing something. We talk about being visual learners, and I think that, if you are really trying to make an impact, um, having something physical that people can touch, see, and feel, or watch in action is a better way of making a change.

- 9) **Explore, address, and resolve situations of perceived differential treatment** – Almost everyone talked about situations in which “the university” treated African-American sponsored events differently from other general university activities or happenings. The most common example was the Heritage Festival vs. football games (e.g. tailgating and rioting) and the presence of and interaction with public safety officials along with behavioral issues.

Scholars/Bubba: Another thing, I'd like to see more in terms of administration, I'd love to see them be more fair when it comes towards Black events versus White events. In the sense of this, Heritage weekend versus Michigan weekend, Chit fest, Norwich fest all this good stuff we have because let me tell you why. When it comes to Heritage Festival, cops wanna be everywhere and shut down every single street. When it comes to Chit fest and Michigan and everything, it's okay for White people to walk around with beer in their hand and wanna tip over cars and stuff. Cops don't wanna be out then, they wanna be out when Heritage Festival is out, they wanna be all out in riot gear. As my friends say, “I don't believe this, I truly don't believe this” But when it comes to like Chit fest and everything, the cops will have rubber bullets and the wooden, the wood pellets and everything but when it comes to African-American Heritage Festival, oh no, they pullin out the real stuff. I'd just like to see the administration be more fair, just take more actions when it comes to stuff that they already know that's gonna happen.

Social Organizations/David: This goes back to a double standard, is my word for The Ohio State University on a lot of issues and, in fact I think the biggest one that can be related is the Heritage Festival, for example, because you know they have their Chit Fest, they have their riots at the football games and you see three or four cops walking up the street and don't even have their cars. But then you see Heritage Festival, you know, supposed to be a Black celebration of our culture. And you see a Black officer on high street and I asked the police officer 'why you out here?' and he was like, you know this is wrapping up the end of the festivities. Why do you have your riot gear on? Why do you come here knowing that for our events but then there is supposed to be a riot up the streets? I really have problems with administration and the city of Columbus. I can't blame it all on Ohio State cuz Ohio State has individual leaders within student activities who are really fighting for the things they need.

Other Athletes/Roger: I hate the fact that they pre-think before anything happens. They just think because there is a bunch of African-American people that something is going to happen so they have like 10,000 cops around... I would say it has happened before, but if there weren't any cops, I don't think that they would be like, okay, there are no cops so we have to start a riot or something. It is not like that.

- 10) **Explore, address, and resolve living environment issues that negatively impact student experiences** – The majority of students live on-campus in residence halls at least during their first year. Many students talked about the cultural differentiation and stereotypes associated with living in various areas of campus. Living in the residence halls as an African-American male is often an isolating experience in that a student may be the only African-American male on his floor.

1st/2nd Year Residence Hall/Ricky: There is not really too many Black people that live on North Campus, Black or Asian or any minorities. Just very few and North Campus is mainly White. There's hardly any minorities and when I come over to South Campus to the Hale Center or to maybe one of the dorms Smith or Stradley or whatever, people are more friendly over there. They talk to you, they want to get to know you. They're just cool over here whereas where I'm at on North Campus, it's kinda like, people are more to themselves. So they really, their door's always closed or I'm too busy, I gotta do this or this and that. Or if you say hi then they act like they didn't even hear you. Whereas, if I

come over here people are cool and I walk down and am like "Hey how you doing man?" and it's like cool, you know they want to try to vibe or be cool with you. I really don't understand that and I really can't say anything about the towers because I really don't go over there that much so I don't know anything about the towers.

Fraternalities/Billy: And you know what else kills us? All the Black people are concentrated on South Campus. But then what about the towers, those people don't have anything to do, they're just out there. You know? So everything is just concentrated in one area of campus for African-Americans. There is nothing on North Campus, or West Campus. I don't even know what all the buildings on that side of campus are called! It is segregation, they segregate us. They put us all on this side of campus and the buildings aren't that nice over here. You know what I mean? And they put all the other people in the nice towers and stuff. I'm not saying there are not White people down here that live in these buildings but North Campus - I think North Campus is a little bit cleaner.

AALLP/UNP: I volunteered for the Step Show and just to show how different it is on West Campus, I volunteered for the Step Show and I met a lot of black people. When I came back, I'm like "man, it's a whole bunch of people down on south campus." We miss out on a whole bunch of stuff on West Campus because when I volunteered, I was separate from the Black people and I'm like "how you all know each other? " They are like "South this and this and South Campus." I was basically separated from them and then separated from the White people too and I'm like by myself with (names of friends from Living-Learning Program).

Gay/J: Okay. I can read this uniquely, because I'm in this unique situation. My freshman year, I lived in the agricultural dorm that was full of White people, small town Ohio, who never got to school with Black people. They didn't have ethnic churches, and have FFA. You know? Then I was brought in there, it was just like...what is this - thing? And you know... that feels weird. That was weird. Like you were walking down the hallways, and you see the rebel flag in somebody's dorm room, and you kind of walk quickly by it. That was really, really, really uncomfortable for me.

11) Develop awareness of racially insensitive behaviors and work toward breaking down prevalent stereotypes associated with African-American males – This is a recommendation that needs to be addressed institutionally with particular attention given to classroom environments and instructional approaches.

26+/Kevin: ...maybe cuz I'm bigger but its like half my class thinks I play football. I come in and they are like, "Do You play football?" And I'm like "no." Is that the only reason I'm allowed to be here? I don't know if they mean it but it makes me feel uncomfortable when people ask me that. It just does. I don't know why. Just because I'm Black and big. I can't take this.

AALLP/Truth: Some of it depends on the classes you take too. Like what the atmosphere will be like. I know for myself, I have taken two social work classes already and they really haven't had anything to do with my major, I just sort of took them because they were there. In those classes, that's the first class where I had three African-American males in my entire lecture and then in the second class there were two of us. Then you break up into your recitation, you are the only Black man in class so I mean, in some instances I was the only Black person there. And the fact that everyone else in the class is female, and you try to express your opinion, whether it be adamant, passionate, relaxed, conservative or whatever, you are viewed as a microcosm of what every Black man on campus feels. And sometimes it's very difficult to get people to understand that you do speak for yourself as one person and not the 22plus million African-Americans across the US. That can be difficult to deal with in some instances. Besides that, you just try to go to class everyday and just work as hard as you can. And at the end of the day sometimes you are satisfied with that and many times it might be negative in terms of feeling that classroom atmosphere.

Academic Organizations/Rashad: I know that in a lot of my classes that I've been one of very few African-Americans in there, and well take my first English 110. When I took English 110, I remember

at the end of the quarter, my teacher made a comment, and I didn't really know how to take it, she had told me that I was one of the more positive African-American males that she has ever met. I was like on the one hand, it was okay, but then on another, I'm like, where are you coming from? I really didn't understand her perspective on that point.

1st/2nd year-Residence Hall/#24: What makes it harder, I dunno. Probably what makes it hard is knowing that someone out there is betting against you. It's like they know that he ain't gonna make it. They sort of look at you like that you know? You ask questions and it's sorta intimidating to like, if you don't understand something to ask a question because for the fear of everybody else in the room. They're gonna look at you like you are some dumb guy-how dare you ask that question? And that right there is what makes my experience here worse than it already is. I'm afraid to ask questions cuz of what other people will think. I'm afraid-well I'm not afraid but you know, someone is out there against me. You know, someone has gone against me; somebody doesn't want to see me succeed. That's what makes it worse for me-especially that.

Football/Deion: Hard, I think it is hard, just being an African-American male because I think society, you know tells us we are not good enough to be, the way we want to be, we're not smart enough, we are not talented enough as somebody else, another race, you know. So I especially think the Black male, that's what they are telling us, and it is really important for us to really keep pumped up and stay focused, and stay upbeat about our goals, and what we can do. I think a lot of things in this world are telling us the things we can't do and it is easy to get off track and forget about yourself.

Fraternalities/Trey: You just have to put forth extra, extra effort. Because any class you are in, if you have to do a presentation you have to put forth like 200% rather than having 100% 'cause you already have that negative stigma towards you. Just being here and getting accepted here at Ohio State, you know going in that you are going to have to pay for that stigma. Just because so many people here have been around just sort of their own people. They go by images on TV or what somebody told them. Like if you wear a certain type of clothing they already assume that you are a thug off the top. That is just what they, they don't know, but that is just what they have been around, that is what they have seen and heard through TV. So they don't have anything to go off of, so you just have to go hard all of the time, just achieve, and graduate on time.

Academic Organizations/Michael: I would say to an extent I enjoy going to class and having people who haven't experienced African-American males and not knowing what to expect. I kind of feel like I am their window to what an African-American is. And since I feel confident in who I am, and I know that I am an innovator and the type of person who will get going and do different things, I feel like I am going to put forth an image in their minds that African-American males aren't to be played with because they're leaders. That is how I feel. I enjoy seeing people, with whatever stereotypes they have, I enjoy them seeing me and thinking, "OK, this is a little different then I thought." I run into that constantly and I find it kind of funny, and ah, it is a challenge. I feel like I am doing it for a lot of other African-Americans who get stereotyped, and a lot of other African-Americans who didn't have the opportunity that I have to go to a college and get what I feel is a prestigious education.

- 12) **Develop and implement leadership development specifically for African-American males** – Many students talked about the importance of taking responsibility for themselves and giving back by helping other students be successful at OSU along with getting involved to make things happen on campus. Numerous students talked about the need for intensive and focused leadership development opportunities. Another important aspect of leadership development includes institutional leadership. Participants felt that university leaders need to better understand individual and institutional racism and its impact on university environment and culture.

26+/Thurgood: (group was talking about making change on campus and involvement of African-American men) I just wish the movement was just more obvious. Like if the leaders-it just seems that it is spread apart cuz I think that the problems we are facing are almost as bad as they were in the 60s. Not worse like you're in jail now, at least we're free men. We don't have the same rights but we're free. Maybe I'm not strong enough to do it by myself. I don't see it but sometimes, you just have to work through that.

Honors/ Doctor: I have the feeling that a lot of minorities here, especially African-Americans, feel like they can't really compete with a majority of students at times. Like the mindset is that they are inferior in some way. I like reasons to show people more courage and just being in areas where I can try and encourage people, like you are just as good as the next person. You come here and it works in negative ways, like when I first got here, you know one out of every 10 African-Americans who goes into Engineering will actually graduate. I mean you start hearing all of these things and it's just like, you kinda get the vibe like, you can't do this, like you can't make it. I just wanted to be involved in some way and try and encourage others, (saying to them) "that's just numbers, that's things that people just say. You are the one who is responsible; you don't have to be a statistic if you don't want to." My involvements are pretty fun because I am around so many Black people but at the same time, it's also hurting cuz you can actually see it first hand those people who will start to believe those things and like struggle. You know, "I can't do this," like "yes you can." And it's just like you can't let anyone or anything discourage you from what you really want to do.

Fraternities/Mr. White: (talking about being involved on campus in minority-focused organizations) I think that is what made me change a little bit. Not to say that I have been different but just the fact that I can take on leadership roles, take on responsibilities like that. I wouldn't be here if I wasn't in an organization. What would I be doing?

Ad Hoc/EJ: I am a member of BANCS (Black Association of North Campus Students) and we do a lot with north campus in trying to get as many African-Americans involved doing cultural things, doing fun things, just hanging out, getting to know the African-Americans that are on campus so that you don't feel like you're the only one here. Then through them I went to a leadership conference in the Big 12 region - University of Oklahoma and that was really powerful because it was an African American conference so you had all these schools and they were all focused on Black issues, African-American issues. And the purpose of that conference was to come back here and let the voice be known.

Social Organizations/Wamo: I think that there should be some class that teaches, somehow we need to be told as Black males that we have made it to college, that this is not something that you need to take for granted...I think we need to be taught that this is serious. We need to take a stand that this is the last step for us to be a professional, if we don't do it then nobody will. We need to get everybody involved and work real hard and make a difference.

REPORTS

Additional formal reports are being constructed to provide greater depth of understanding to various aspects of the participants' experiences. In addition to the summary report, these reports will include an examination and more specific development of recommendations related to:

- **The Academic Experience:** Specific focus on faculty and peer interaction, academic mentoring, tutoring, class environment, academic preparation, and pressure to succeed. (Recommendations 8 and 11 with academically focused connections to other recommendations)

- **Essential Transition, Adjustment, and Success Experiences:** Specific focus on orientation/early arrival, finding resources, mentoring, tutoring, needs of different student groups/backgrounds, financial issues, and coping mechanisms. (Recommendations 1 through 5)
- **Social Networking and Engagement:** Specific focus on University sponsored activities/environments, student organizations, relationships, intragroup issues, spirituality, residence life, needs of different students, and culturally sensitive/relevant opportunities. (Recommendations 6 through 8, and 10)
- **Leadership Development:** Specific focus on personal responsibility and personal leadership, peer mentor leadership, organizational leaders, career and community leadership. (Recommendation 12 with connections to other recommendations)

Future Inquiry

This study was exploratory in nature and provides initial systematically derived data to inform institutional as well as program policy and practice. The data also provide grounding for future inquiry. However, given the limitations of time and resources, it was not possible to explore all aspects of undergraduate African-American male experiences in the scope of this project. For example, further research should examine:

- Reasons for departure from Ohio State prior to graduation,
- What characteristics distinguish persisting undergraduate African-American males from their non-persisting African-American male counterparts (what characteristics lead to success and can these characteristics be replicated/nurtured?),
- Persistence factors between low performing versus high performing undergraduate African-American male students; e.g. high school performance, pre-college characteristics, summer college orientation program, environment and adjustment, familial responsibility/first generation status, parental support, same-race peer social support, intrinsic motivation/determination, differentiation between cognitive and non-cognitive variables, etc.,
- Relationship between stages of Black identity development and persistence,
- Critical incidents during and differences between the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year experiences.

Upon dissemination of the above reports, **a final executive briefing** will be constructed to summarize questions unanswered as well as questions emerging from the findings, thereby discussing additional research needs. The study of Black males is receiving more attention, yet many scholars assert that such studies do not provide apt analysis and solutions (Jones, 2001; Love, 1993; Roach, 2001). Clearly, more research on college issues related to undergraduate African-American males is needed to inform the development and improvement of policies, programs, and services that will support student achievement and success. In order to ensure that such research efforts take place, institutional commitment from University leadership is needed. **As a final recommendation, seed funds should be provided to develop a sustainable agenda of multi and inter-disciplinary research initiatives addressing the retention and success issues of African-American males.** Through such efforts, context specific knowledge will be generated to facilitate data-driven decision-making and program development.

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Invitation to Participate

Month/Day, 2003

Name & Address

Dear (Insert student name meeting sampling criteria):

Tell your story as an African-American male student at The Ohio State University! In so doing, you will help inform the development and enhancement of strategies designed to assist African-American males be successful at OSU. You are one of a small number of African-American male students being asked to share your perceptions of your experience at OSU. Your name was identified by (staff name/title/department) as a potential participant in a focus group process exploring the experiences of African-American males at The Ohio State University. **We are contacting you now to invite you to participate in a focus group with other African-American males affiliated with (name of organization/type of focus group) and believe that you will find the experience interesting and informative.** Further, food will be provided at the focus group and research participants will receive a \$10.00 credit on a BUCK-ID.

By participating in this focus group, you will have an opportunity to talk about your experience at The Ohio State University with other students similar to you and with a non-judgmental facilitator. Sharing your experience will entail involvement in one focus group at a mutually agreed upon location on campus that should take no more than two hours. Interviews will be audiotaped, tapes will be stored in a locked space in our office, and destroyed one year after the completion of the assessment process. **Please be assured that your participation in this project is strictly voluntary, that you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty, and that information will be treated confidentially.** Your name will not be connected with any materials produced for this study.

If you are interested in participating, please let us know by telephone (614/247-6220) or e-mail (hill.358@osu.edu or dowhower.1@osu.edu). If you have further questions about the focus group process or your possible involvement in it, please feel free to contact either one of us directly. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Andrea Dowhower, Ph.D.
Director

Kathy Hill
Research Assistant

APPENDIX B

Pseudonyms

Scholars

James
Jay
A-One
Bubba
Frank

Minority Scholarships

Nick
Chuck
Deebo
John

Honors

X
Steve
Doctor
Kendre'

Football

Deion
Orlando
Jerry

26+

Eric
Kevin
Lorenzo
Jacien
Thurgood

Residence Hall

Ricky
Relly
Detroit
#24

Off Campus

Beau
Brandon

Gay/Bisexual

J
Texocooly

Afrikan American Living-Learning Program

C-Unit
Slimm
Truth
Fo-Shizzle
UNP
B-Nasty
Anthony
SLAP

Fraternities

Mr. White
Trey
JR Primetime
Billy

Student Athletes - Other

Micah
Roger
John G.

Social Organizations

Goliath
Akbar
David
Wamo
Rightway
Chuck A.

Ad Hoc

Simba
Bobby
EJ
Deuce

Academic Organizations

Richard
Michael
Rashad

APPENDIX C

The Experiences of African-American males at The Ohio State University Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Preparation Points:

- Introduce purpose of research, facilitator, and Student Affairs Assessment Staff member
- Statement of informed consent
- Questionnaire
- Confidentiality and pseudonyms
- Overview of focus group “ground rules” and process
- Respond to any questions from participants

NOTE: Follow-up questions or prompts will be generated for the following questions during the course each focus group to encourage full participation, explore emergent topics, build depth of understanding, and bring clarity to the questions.

Questions for (Specify) Focus Group:

- **Introduction:** Introduce yourself using your chosen pseudonym, year in school, major, hometown, and why you chose OSU.
- **Ice Breaker: Black Enterprise Article** – (have you heard about the article...explain main point) What is your reaction to the article? How do you perceive Ohio State?
- Describe what it has been like for you to attend classes at OSU?...to interact with faculty at OSU?...to interact with other students in your classes?
- How do you spend your time outside of the classroom and with whom do you hang out with?
- What has made being an African-American male student at OSU harder for you?...easier for you?
- How has your involvement in (name of group or descriptive affiliation) shaped your experience at Ohio State?
- **Concluding Question:** Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience as an African-American male at OSU?

APPENDIX D

Exploring the Experiences of African-American Males At The Ohio State University Focus Group Participant Information

All information on this form will be treated confidentially and not shared with anyone other than the Student Affairs Assessment staff on this project. Your name will not be connected with any materials produced for this study.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Current Address: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Circle the number that corresponds to the correct choice under each item or fill in appropriate information as requested – Thank you!

- ◆ Age?
[write in _____]
- ◆ How would you describe your race/ethnicity?
[write in _____]
- ◆ College Rank: 1) freshman 2) sophomore 3) junior 4) senior
- ◆ Enrollment Status: 1) full-time 2) part-time
- ◆ To how many colleges other than The Ohio State University did you apply for admission?
[write in _____]
- ◆ In deciding to enroll here, was OSU your...?
1) 1st choice 2) 2nd choice 3) 3rd choice 4) Other [write in _____]
- ◆ When did you begin your enrollment at OSU?
[write in quarter & year _____]
- ◆ When do you expect to graduate?
[write in quarter & year _____]
- ◆ What is your declared or intended college major?
[write in _____]
- ◆ What career do you plan to pursue when you graduate?
[write in _____]
- ◆ Did you live in the residence halls during your first year of enrollment at OSU?
1) yes 2) no
- ◆ How many hours a week do you work for pay while you are in college?

1) none 2) 1-5 3) 6-10 4) 11-15 5) 16-20 6) 21-25 7) 26-30 8) 31-40 9) 41+

- ◆ If you work, where do you work?
 - 1) on campus
 - 2) off campus
 - 3) both on and off campus

- ◆ Do you receive financial aid?
 - 1) yes
 - 2) no

- ◆ What is your best estimate of you parents’/guardians’ total income last year? Consider income from all sources:
 - 1) \$20,000 or less
 - 2) \$20,001-30,000
 - 3) \$30,001-50,000
 - 4) \$50,001-75,000
 - 5) \$75,001 or more

- ◆ What is the highest level of education reached by your father/guardian?
 - 1) some high school
 - 2) high school graduate
 - 3) some college or other postsecondary schooling
 - 4) college graduate
 - 5) graduate degree
 - 6) not applicable

- ◆ What is the highest level of education reached by your mother/guardian?
 - 1) some high school
 - 2) high school graduate
 - 3) some college or other postsecondary schooling
 - 4) college graduate
 - 5) graduate degree
 - 6) not applicable

- ◆ What is your hometown/state?
 [write in _____]

- ◆ What type of high school did you attend (circle all that apply)?

1) public	4) urban
2) private - religious affiliation	5) suburban
3) private - college preparatory	6) rural

- ◆ My high school could be described as:
 - 1) a high school where students were predominantly White
 - 2) a high school where students were predominantly African-American
 - 3) a diverse high school where students represented many different races/ethnicities

- ◆ What activities/organizations are you currently involved in as a student at OSU?

[write in _____

_____]

◆ Please list the three greatest challenges or problems you have confronted as a student at OSU:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

◆ Please list the three most helpful resources or methods of support (i.e. mentors or other people, specific programs or organizations, tutoring, etc.) you have utilized as a student at OSU:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

◆ If you were to have any academic or personal problems while at OSU, to whom would you turn? Please provide the relationship of the person (i.e. Advisor, R.A., roommate, friend, family member, etc.) and your connection with them: _____

◆ Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience at OSU?

- 1) Very satisfied
- 2) Somewhat satisfied
- 3) Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
- 4) Somewhat unsatisfied
- 5) Very Unsatisfied

◆ So far, how well has OSU met your expectations?

- 1) Much better than expected
- 2) Better than expected
- 3) About what expected
- 4) Worse than expected
- 5) Much worse than expected

◆ If you had to do it over again, would you enroll at OSU?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 3) Unsure

[write in why or why not: _____]

Thank you!

APPENDIX E

Statement of Informed Consent

I agree to participate in the research project entitled, “Experiences of African-American males at The Ohio State University” being conducted by the Office of Student Affairs Assessment, The Ohio State University. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of undergraduate African-American males enrolled at The Ohio State University, as students perceive their own experience.

I understand that my participation in this project – which is expected to take no more than two hours – will involve participating in a focus group with 6-10 African-American males enrolled at OSU. The focus group interviews will be recorded on audiotape.

I am aware that some people are uncomfortable talking about themselves, and that any discomfort I might experience should be no more than that normally experienced during a small group discussion. If I am not comfortable with the discussion and wish to discontinue my participation in the study, I will be free to leave without penalty.

The potential benefits of participation include the opportunity to reflect on personal perceptions and tell my story of how I experience OSU along with other African American males. My participation will also provide additional information needed to inform the strategies used to increase retention and graduation rates of African-American males at OSU. Further, I will receive a \$10.00 credit on a BUCK-ID.

I understand that my participation in this project is strictly voluntary and that information will be treated confidentially. My name will not be connected with any materials produced for this study. Only Dr. Andrea Dowhower, Director, and Kathy Hill, Research Assistant, for the Office of Student Affairs Assessment will have access to individual data. Tapes will be kept in a locked file then destroyed one year after completion of the study.

I am aware that if I have any questions about my participation in this project I may contact Dr. Andrea Dowhower (dowhower.1@osu.edu) or Kathy Hill (hill.358@osu.edu) at 247-6220.

Participant Name (please print)

Signature

Date

Investigator’s Signature

Date

Study Protocol #: 02E0439

APPENDIX F
Focus Group Participant Information Summary, n = 57

Participant Age	Number
18	5
19	14
20	13
21	10
22	6
23	4
24+	5

Description of Race/Ethnicity	Number
African-American	34
Black	14
African-American/Black	6
Multi-Racial	3

College Rank	Number
Freshman	16
Sophomore	9
Junior	13
Senior	18
Graduated	1

Enrollment Status	Number
Full-Time	54
Part-Time	3

How many colleges did you apply to other than OSU?	Number
0	6
1	7
2	5
3	12
4	12
5	13

OSU was your Choice.	Number
1 st	30
2 nd	15
3 rd	9
Other	3

Quarter of Enrollment	Number
Autumn	53
Winter	2
Spring	2

Year of Enrollment	Number
1988	1
1998	5
1999	8
2000	15
2001	13
2002	15

Planned Graduation Year	Number
2002	1
2003	9
2004	16
2005	13
2006	15
2007	3

Lived in Residence Halls during 1st Year	Number
Yes	50
No	7

# of Hours Work per Week	Number
None	24
1-5	2
6-10	6
11-15	8
16-20	9
21+	8

Where do you work	Number
On Campus	25
Off Campus	9
Missing	3

Do you receive Financial Aid?	Number
Yes	47
No	9

Parents Income	Number
\$20,000 or Less	7
\$20,001-\$30,000	6
\$30,001-\$50,000	19
\$50,001-\$75,000	8
\$75,000 +	14
Missing	3

Highest education of father/guardian	Number
Some high school	5
High school graduate	14
Some college or post secondary schooling	12
College Grad	13
Graduate Degree	11
Not applicable	2

Highest education of mother/guardian	Number
Some high school	1
High school graduate	13
Some college or post secondary schooling	17
College Grad	11
Graduate Degree	13
Not applicable	2

Residency	Number
Ohio	37
Out of State	19
Missing	1

Type of high school	Number
Public	43
Private-Religious affiliation	5
Private-College Prep	4
Multiple	2
Missing	3

High School Description	Number
Predominantly white	17
Predominantly African-American	14
Representation of many ethnicities/races	26

Satisfaction with Experience at OSU	Number
Very Satisfied	19
Somewhat Satisfied	31
Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied	4
Somewhat Unsatisfied	2
Missing	1

How has OSU met your expectations?	Number
Much better than expected	6
Better than expected	27
About what expected	18
Worse than expected	5
Missing	1

Would enroll in OSU again	Number
Yes	42
No	2
Unsure	12
Missing	1

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