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Retention Rates of Black Males at The College at Brockport

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BROCKPORT

Retention Rates of Black Males at The College at Brockport

Gabriel Marshall

The College at Brockport

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Abstract

Through documented data, this researcher conducted an archival study of the retention rates of Black males at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. Retention rates of Black males will be compared to Black females, all males, and the total population at this institution. Problems caused by lack of preparation, low socioeconomic status, elevated incarceration numbers, and an ignorance of higher education have led to a decrease of Black males applying to college. By teaming with Institutional Research and Information Technology, this researcher examined the Consortium for Institutional Exchange and Data Analysis and was able to determine the numbers of black males were declining. These results left implications that something needs to be done about this problem. Unanswered questions remained about what can be done to increase the enrollment of black males, how will this institution improve black male retention, and what programs are in place to help those Black males already enrolled.

Retention Rates of Black Males

This Master's thesis will examine the retention rates of Black males at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. Problems caused by lack of preparation, low socioeconomic status, elevated incarceration numbers have led to the decline of Black males enrolling in college (Baier, 2002). Black male retention is an important issue that deserves to be studied because these are the young men that will become future professionals. Currently, the need for black professionals is vital and without building a solid foundation these young men will not reach the professional level. A review of the literature revealed Black male retention rates are directly impacted by low enrollment numbers. The researcher believed Black male freshmen enrollment would be lower than its counterparts and wondered what programs were in place to help Black males. This study was limited because it only examined first time full time Black male freshmen. Through documented data, this researcher conducted an archival study of the retention rates of Black males compared to Black females, all males, and the total population at this institution. Retention rates of gender, ethnicity, and totals were obtained through Institutional Research in a report prepared for the Consortium for Institutional Data Exchange and Analysis. The consortium is composed of public and private 4-year degree-granting institutions throughout the United States. There are over 400 institutions who participate in the consortium, including the College at Brockport, Buffalo State College, SUNY Plattsburgh, SUNY Potsdam, University at Buffalo, Canisius College, Old Westbury, Medaille College, and Nazareth College. This researcher's purpose for conducting this study was to gather information regarding the retention rates of Black males, figure out what problems have caused this issue, and what

needs to be done to correct it. This study is significant because Black males are a population that needs to be targeted on college campuses. Individuals within this target group are more likely to obtain the high school equivalency degree in prison than graduate from a four year institution (Roach, 2001). This statistic is due to high incarceration numbers of Black males between the ages of seventeen and twenty four. In order to aid this unique group of men on college campuses changes must occur.

This Masters thesis explores retention rates of first time full time Black male freshmen as they compare to Black females, all males, and the total population. This researchers' method, results, and discussions regarding procedures will make up the content of this project. A review of the literature will also be included to support hypotheses.

Review of the Literature

Whether looking at community colleges, four year private institutions, or four year public institutions; Black male student participation in higher education is declining due to the unique challenges faced by minority students on campuses across the country (Harvey-Smith, 2005). This literature review will examine: 1. Four-Year Institutions, 2. Community Colleges, and 3. Programs in place to help Black males. This researcher decided to format the literature review in these sections to give a clearer understanding of higher education on all levels and the programs geared to the success of Black males. What are the reasons for the large differential in enrollment numbers of Black males compared to their counterparts? What are the problems that cause black men not to enroll in college at the same rate as men and women of other races? What programs are

in place to aid these black men in their quest to obtain an education? Throughout this literature review, these three questions will be investigated.

Four-Year Institutions

According to Alexander (2004), the glaring problem is that black males are disproportionately labeled as discipline and behavioral problems and fast-tracked out of high schools through expulsions and suspensions (Alexander, 2004). He also (2004), stated “there is a virtual drying up of federal aid to education grant money coupled with jacked-up tuitions, which make it necessary for low income students to assume an average of \$20,000 debt to finish a four-year curriculum. For those in the lower economic category, the availability of financial aid determines who gets to go to college and who does not” (Alexander, p.12).

Baier, Brailey, Kreuger, and Pedan (2002), sense the college achievement gap in African American men is due to lack of preparation, socio-economic status, and social support (Baier, 2002). They used SAT score gaps between white students and black students, regents diplomas conferred, and graduating from college preparatory tracks as indicators for the lack of preparation. SAT scores revealed African American students score almost 130 fewer points than white students on the SAT and every \$10,000 in household income accounts for 30 points. Regent’s diplomas conferred provided results that showed communities with higher percentages of non-white residents are less likely to confer Regents Diplomas than those with a high percentage of white residents (Baier, 2002). When examining graduation from college preparatory tracks researchers found that white students are more likely than black students to graduate from college and be “college ready”.

According to the Manhattan Institute, students who are considered “college ready” have taken four years of English, three years of math, and two years of natural science, social science, and a foreign language (Baier, 2002). Socio-economic status simply refers to financially disadvantaged students being less likely to succeed. Poor families are not in a position to purchase academic inputs of higher quality – not only good schooling, private tutoring, and extracurricular training, but comfortable housing, good nutrition, and access to intellectual stimuli. According to a survey by Sallie Mae, 69% of black students who left college said it was because of financial difficulties as opposed to 43% of white students. Social support relates directly to connections with other individuals who will be supportive of black males. Black students are at a disadvantage because they are less likely able to transmit human capital than white parents due to a legacy of racism and discrimination (Baier, 2002). Other shortcomings facing black males are that they do not have access to networks of individuals who are connected to institutions of higher education, they are less likely to form bonds with individuals of mainstream culture, and are therefore less likely to continue at the institution, and the lack of role models for black students. Black students may have a difficult time identifying a cohort due to low percentages of black students, staff, and faculty at institutions (Baier, 2002). On a more positive note, black male athletes graduate at a rate eleven percent higher than black male students not affiliated with athletics (Person & LeNoir, 1997). In order to help address these issues, researchers came up with a social action plan to increase sensitivity and awareness of students of color and issues of multiculturalism among groups of mainstream culture, increase black students cultural awareness and majority cultural immersion, increase outreach efforts to

primary and secondary school populations, and increase the number of black faculty and staff to work at this institution and become invested in the university culture.

Researchers planned on measuring these outcomes over a five-year span. Their long term goals for five year benchmarking include: increase number of black faculty members to mirror the percentage of black students on campus, increase the number of black administrative staff to mirror the percentage of black students on campus, increase the number of black male undergraduate and graduate students (Baier, 2002). Roach (2001) stated, some reasons for low college enrollment of black males is due high numbers of black males entering the military; the availability of employment after high school; the disproportionately high numbers of incarceration among young Black men; and the lack of familiarity with the college environment (Roach, 2001, p.17). According to Snipe (2007), “as a society we need to take a serious look at how and where resources are spent when it comes to black males. There only appears to be two options for black males – prison or outreach programs” (Snipe, 2007, p.18). He supposed the way to correct this concern would be to begin collaborations between Black professionals regarding the flight of black men, instead of always focusing on their plight. Snipe (2007), argued “there are currently more black males in prison (840,000) than in college in this country (635,000)” (Snipe, 2007, p.5). With that being said, how do we as educators reach these black males in an attempt to get them to defy the odds and become educated contributors to their societies? Snipe (2007), alleged with the attack on affirmative action and a shortage of programs, the goal should be to empower black males, enabling them to become positive catalysts for societal change (Snipe, 2007, p.18).

Community Colleges

According to Esters and Mosby (2003), “many consider community colleges “open door” institutions, denoting their unique role of providing an affordable quality education for the masses. However, one has only to take a look behind those “open doors” to see very clearly that Black males are disappearing before they complete any meaningful goals, and those who remain lag behind other learners on almost every indicator of academic achievement” (Ester and Mosby, 2003, p. 8). Esters and Mosby (2003) believe the most alarming thing regarding the current state of the Black male on America’s community college campuses is that those who are in positions of leadership have been slow to recognize the situation as a state of emergency and have been just about reluctant to own up to their responsibility to take corrective action (Ester and Mosby, 2003, p. 8). Esters and Mosby (2003), state the achievement and college retention rate gap between Black males and other learners will not change without the strong leadership of community college presidents, the support and advocacy of community college trustees, and the active involvement of faculty (Esters & Mosby, 2003, p. 8). Overall, people in positions of power at community colleges across the nation need to take a more proactive approach with the recruitment and retention rates of Black males.

A study conducted by Hampton and Smith at the University of Southern California – Los Angeles revealed only nine percent of black males earns a degree or transfer on to a four year institution (Hampton & Smith, 1999, p.4). According to Hampton and Smith (1999) “those black males who knew what they wanted to achieve in college, and declared a defined major did much better than those who enrolled and did

not have concrete ideals about their academic goals” (Hampton & Smith, 1999, p.4). One of the key factors they noticed during the study was the unpreparedness of black male students. Hampton and Smith (1999) found that many black male students had not taken as many high school Math and English courses as students in other ethnic groups. Hampton (1999) also discovered “many black male students attended schools where the students were not exposed to the world outside of their high school campuses” (Hampton & Smith, 1999, p.5). Hampton (1999) felt these black males were “handicapped in their ability to set academic and life goals because they could not fathom the broad array of possibilities that awaited them after high school graduation” (Hampton & Smith, 1999, p.5). Hampton and Smith (1999) recognized a major factor between black male students and their counterparts was that more black students tended to have added family responsibilities at a higher level which took away from their ability to pursue higher education (Hampton & Smith, 1999). With so many factors attributing to the decision making process of black males it is easier for them to attend community colleges.

Burns and Scaggs (2004), conducted a research study examining the retention rates of black males at Mississippi Public Community and Junior Colleges in an attempt to answer four questions: 1. Which Mississippi public community/junior colleges have the highest retention rates among the Black male population?, 2. Are there discernible differences in the retention rates of Black male students in the colleges within the Mississippi system?, 3. If there are differences in the retention rates, what programs and or strategies are in place at those community colleges with high graduation rates of their Black male student population?, and 4. What lessons can be learned from the study of retention rates at Mississippi public community/junior colleges that can be applied as best

practices for retention of Black male students? (Burns & Scaggs, 2004). The purpose of this research was to identify Mississippi community colleges that graduate a high number of Black male students from their graduating student populations while describing any programs, services, or strategies in place at those schools with high Black graduation rates (Burns & Scaggs, 2004). The problems facing Burns and Scaggs were the number of Black males missing from the ranks of graduating students in at least one community college in Mississippi and whether or not the research would reveal if this low graduation rate is universal to the Mississippi Community/Junior College system (Burns & Scaggs, 2004, p. 5).

Glenn (2003) conducted a research study to determine which Texas public community colleges have been able to graduate the highest percentage of black males and analyze the factors contributing to that accomplishment (Glenn, 2003, p. 2). He developed a questionnaire designed to elicit information regarding policies and/or practices directly related to the retention of black male students and mailed the survey to every college in the top and bottom quartile (Glenn, 2003, p. 2). He conducted on site studies at one institution from the top and bottom quartile focusing on examining the setting, policies, programs and culture on each campus for clues concerning their black male retention. Data was collected through institutional artifacts, interviews, and observations. He was able to identify numerous strategies which separate institutions in the top quartile of black, male student graduation rates from institutions in the bottom quartile (Glenn, 2003, p.2). Nationwide, Black males have been disproportionately more likely to enroll at community colleges versus four-year institutions, but have tended to earn lower grade point averages and higher attrition rates (Glenn, 2003, p.3).

Whether looking at four-year institutions or community colleges, Black male college students need some type of support system to aid them with the rigors of higher education (Fischer, 2007). These support services need to be in place to help build stronger educational foundations for Black males. Without having these services in place, institutions run the risk of having student's drop out of school, student's fail out of school, student's deciding to pursue other avenues besides higher education (Fischer, 2007).

Programs in Place to Help Black Males

Throughout the country, there are several programs in place to help Black male students in higher education. These programs provide academic and tutoring support, personal, social, financial, career counseling, and give these young men a place where they can come together with others facing the same issues as themselves. Different states may have different programs, although many states will share the same programs. Lack of these programs at many institutions may be due to a lack of funding. However, it is up to institution administrators to see that these monies are properly disbursed throughout the college for the needs of the students. It is essential that institutions make an effort to further aid this population because many of these young men will need that helping hand as a guide when venturing into unfamiliar territory.

Educational Opportunity Program

One of The College at Brockport's oldest program associated with enrolling Black males is the Educational Opportunity Program. Although the program is not limited to Black males, EOP provides a highly structured freshmen year program designed maximize every student's opportunity for success, free tutoring services to all

students, full time and graduate counselors who are committed to student success, and a family atmosphere that emphasizes personal growth and professional development. The EOP also conducts a mandatory summer program for all first time full time freshmen enrolling at the College to get them better acquainted with the institution, to get them familiarized with other students who share some of their same struggles, and to sharpen their academic skills in English, Math, History, and computers.

History of the Educational Opportunity Program

The Educational Opportunity Program combines access, academic support and supplemental financial assistance to make higher education possible for students who have the potential to succeed, despite poor preparation and limited financial resources (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). The ultimate plan of the Educational Opportunity Program was to make a commitment that every student capable of completing a program of higher education shall have the opportunity to do so (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007).

It was in 1967, that first year assemblyman, Arthur O. Eve, of the 141st Assembly District, advocated for access and opportunity by developing the bill that began the Educational Opportunity Program (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). Modeled after the SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) program, originated by Percy Sutton in the City University in 1966, Eve initiated the first part of what would become a university wide program enrolling 249 students at SUNY Buffalo (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). Due to the success of the program, Eve received enough financial assistance by the next year to expand the program to ten campuses (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). By the 1970-1971 academic

year, more than 4,600 opportunity students on 30 campuses were enrolled. It was 1971 when New York State Law S6452 formally recognized the necessities of SEEK at the City University of New York, Educational Opportunity Program in the State University of New York, and the Higher Educational Opportunity Program at the independent colleges in New York (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007).

Currently, the Educational Opportunity Program or self help programs exist on campuses in over forty states in the United States. Institutions in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and California have adopted similar programs to offer opportunities in higher education (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007).

Pioneers of the Educational Opportunity Program

There would not be an Educational Opportunity Program had it not been for the awareness and efforts of Arthur O. Eve. Elected in 1966, Assemblyman Eve wasted no time making necessary improvements for higher education. During his first term in 1967, Eve was the point man of an effort that led to an initial \$500,000 in funding to establish the Educational Opportunity Program within the State University of New York system (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007).

Assemblyman Eve is best known for his willingness to get involved and make the necessary changes for the better of the people. Eves' efforts reach far beyond higher education, with him leaving his positive mark on every endeavor he was involved in. In 1968, Eve discontinued construction on the University of Buffalo Amherst Campus until state and union officials arranged an agreement to create a program that would provide minority construction workers with the same access as their counterparts. As a product of his efforts, the Buffalo Hometown Plan and the Build Skills Assessment Center trained

hundreds of qualified minorities in the construction crafts (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). In 1975 and 1976, Assemblyman Eve chaired the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus. In 1979, during a legislative session, Assemblyman Eve was selected Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. As Deputy Speaker he was in charge of developing strategies with regard to the problems of declining urban youth centers and overseeing state agencies to ensure resources are being properly used in relation to the troubles of urban areas (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). During Deputy Speaker Eve's legislation he has supported and sponsored an extensive variety of issues including job training and development, education, economic development, crime prevention and parole reform, social services, housing, and day care (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007).

During the 1980's, Deputy Speaker Eve approved legislation regarding: numerous laws to oblige affirmative action on state funded projects; funding of the African American Institute of the State University of New York (SUNY); access to test information; and the passage of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday bill (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007).

When it comes to education, Deputy Speaker Eve initiated legislative projects which were intended to aid economically disadvantaged minority students reach their educational objectives. These legislative projects include the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), Health care Professional Scholarships, the Regents professional Opportunity Scholarships, and the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP). He is also responsible for passing one of the most progressive bills in the country to set up nurse practitioners law in New York State (SUNY office of opportunity

programs, 2007). In 1986, he backed statewide hearings to make others aware of the minority dropout rate which resulted in publishing of the report, *Dropping Out of School in New York State, The Invisible People of Color*, arranged by individuals from the African American Institute. This project commemorated the first time African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American educators as well as community leaders collaborated to examine the problem and come up with a resolution (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). In 1993, Eve engineered the statewide Leadership Summit on Behalf of Children of African Descent, sponsored by the Legislative Task Force on African American Issues. More than 750 youth and adults made the trip to Albany to converse and analyze the troubles facing African American children in New York State. The work groups at this Leadership Summit concentrated on youth employment, substance abuse and criminal justice, health care, and education. This leadership summit was perhaps the most victorious summit in New York State history and is accredited with securing \$145 million for current and future programs for youth in Governor Cuomo's budget (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007).

With regard to the community, Deputy Speaker Eve not only advocated for youth, but was very involved in dealing with the elderly. Eve serves as a member of the Committee on Aging, Senior Member of the committee on Rules, Ways and Means as well as resides on the Corporations Committee. Eve's Community Service Act legislation is responsible for generating millions of dollars throughout the state for increased services to senior citizens (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007).

Throughout his career, Deputy Speaker Eve has sponsored legislation in a variety of areas in hopes to improve state and national benefits for individuals of all ages. Eve

has supported legislation to restrict alcohol and tobacco advertisements near schools and playgrounds, increased penalties for acts of violence motivated by religion, race, gender, color, disability or sexual orientation, alternatives to incarceration, appropriate funding for day care services, increased tax on cigarettes, and increased personal income tax (PIT) for New York State's wealthiest populations (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). Eve's latest ventures include developing New York State's most complete lead legislation that requires screening of pregnant women and their children along with necessities for lead treatment and abatement, and securing funding for the revitalization of the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, New York State's oldest cancer treatment hospital (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007).

During Deputy Speaker Eve's career of public service, it has been said that he has done more to open doors for minorities and those economically and financially disadvantaged in the arenas of educational opportunity, medical degrees, undergraduate and graduate education, pre-natal, and day care and infant care than any other state legislator in the country (SUNY opportunity programs, 2007).

Deputy Speaker Eve has been recognized for his efforts and received various awards from local, state, and national organizations. Eve has been acknowledged as the founder and former Chairman of the Board of the Northern Region Black Political Caucus whose principle function is promoting political education and involvement in the African American community; former Chairman of the New York Chapter of the National Rainbow Coalition; a life member of the NAACP; and a graduate of West Virginia State University (SUNY opportunity programs, 2007).

Norman McConney Jr, cultured a respectable reputation as a community activist for African and Latino American concerns. From 1971 through 1975, McConney served as the Assistant Dean for special programs at the State University of New York, before moving on to become the Executive Director of the Office of the Deputy Speaker of the New York State Assembly (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). While serving as Executive Director, McConney effectively negotiated legislation to address the needs of economically disadvantaged and underrepresented populations of New York State. He has been recognized for various achievements in the arenas of state statutes, policies, and budgets regarding economic development, education, corrections, youth programs, and health care (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). McConney is credited as being the chief designer of the New York State Science and Technology Education Program (STEP), which happens to be one of the most successful programs in the country. The STEP program was implemented to better prepare minority high school students for careers in science and medicine (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). He is responsible for drafting legislation, presently in place for the Regents Professional Opportunity Scholarship Programs, which offers scholarships to underrepresented minorities in licensed professions. McConney developed and was the lead delegate for the passage of the bill to create Nurse Practitioners in New York State (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). He is also one of the primary authors of the People's Budget and the New York State Budget Equity Document, which analyzes the state's fiscal budget and the impact it has on minorities and other poor individuals in the state of New York. Mr. McConney has been recognized for his efforts through various awards including the Martin Luther King Commission and the Legislative Leadership Award;

Greater New York Mental Retardation Community Service Award; and the New York State Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus Man of the Year Award (SUNY office of opportunity programs, 2007). McConney is a graduate of the State University of New York at Albany and the “Revson Program” at Columbia University in New York City.

History of the Educational Opportunity Program at The College at Brockport

In order to gain a better understanding of the Educational Opportunity Program at The College at Brockport, I conducted an interview with Gary Owens, member of the first EOP class in SUNY Brockport history and current EOP Director. His recollections of being an EOP student at The College at Brockport in the 1970’s versus the changes he has implemented as the Director has had immeasurable impact on the students enrolled in the program. The researcher chose to include this interview because it provides a direct connection to the impact of the Educational Opportunity Program.

Prior to hearing of the Educational Opportunity Program at SUNY College at Brockport, Owens made up his mind that college was not the place for him after high school. Once Owens was informed he would have the opportunity to play college basketball if he attended a Pre College Summer Program he figured it could not hurt to give it a try. On the other hand, it was the degree he would be receiving and the financial assistance provided by the Educational Opportunity Program that had a lasting effect on his mother. Owens and his mother agreed that Brockport was the best place for him to succeed academically as well as scholastically. Being a member of the first ever EOP class at SUNY College at Brockport, Owens did not fully understand the significance of the situation he was in. Owens stated “To me it was all about basketball, school was a way for me to play basketball. I was not focused on the educational aspect of Brockport

until I saw my mother's reaction to my first semester report card" (G.Owens, personal communication, February 12, 2008). It was at that time that Owens began to take his studies more serious and get involved with campus activities other than basketball.

"When I started out in the Educational Opportunity Program, we had one counselor for everybody in the program. He was the only person who honestly cared about how we were doing. If we had questions, concerns, or were even home sick, he was the person for us to turn to" (G. Owens, personal communication, February 21, 2008). With the lack of support for minority students on Brockport's campus it was Owens who spearheaded the campaign for a Black/Minority student union. "Being in a predominately white environment for the first time in my life, I experienced the harsh realities of racism and could not understand why some people did not like me solely because of the color of my skin. With racism being an issue and the lack of support from those involved at the college, Owens took it upon himself to give minority students a voice on Brockport's campus. "My most memorable moment at Brockport was being the President of the Black Student Union, because it gave me a sense of responsibility and provided all minority students, not just the students in the Educational Opportunity Program, a place to come together" (G. Owens, personal communication, February 21, 2008). "Being the President of the union changed the way I viewed college life, I now had to lead by example, therefore I learned how to be a good student through studying, reading, asking questions, and not being afraid to explore education outside of my comfort zone".

Thirty-five years later Owens finds himself as the Director of the Educational Opportunity Program at SUNY College at Brockport. The program has evolved tremendously since he was a student. The Educational Opportunity Program offers free

tutoring services, sponsors monthly events to bring the students together, and has an experienced staff of counselors to aid the students. “As the Director of the EOP I expect every student to take full advantage of the services and opportunities available to them because they are in place to help the students be successful. When I was a student the services we have today did not exist. It is my responsibility to make sure my staff does everything in their power to help these students be successful” (G. Owens, personal communication, February 21, 2008). Since becoming the Director of the EOP at SUNY College at Brockport student retention and graduation rates have increased. “I could be in a higher position on this campus or at another institution, but I have an extreme love for the Educational Opportunity Program at SUNY College at Brockport and the students we serve. I get more enjoyment from seeing EOP students come to Brockport and walk across the stage to receive their degrees than almost anything else. That enjoyment combined with students coming back to share their positive experiences and memories with other students lets me know that I have made the right decision from a career standpoint” (G. Owens, personal communication, February 21, 2008).

This literature review was added to this thesis to give supporting facts and information about the retention rates of Black males. The literature review was formatted in this manner to demonstrate differences and similarities among community colleges and four-year institutions. The researcher felt it would be significant to include a section about programs in place to aid Black males because there are several programs geared towards helping Black males. This researcher believed it was essential to focus on the Educational Opportunity Program at The College at Brockport because it is the longest running program at the institution. By including the interview with Owens the researcher

attempted to give a past and present perspective of the evolution of the Educational Opportunity Program. Overall, this literature was set up to enhance the knowledge of others who may be unaware of the state of Black males on college campuses. This research wondered how to incorporate a method of researching Black male retention rates that would provide the best results pertaining to the study.

Method

This researcher believed conducting an archival study of previously documented data would be the best method of research because it would provide individuals with no prior knowledge of this topic with factual data which indicates Black male retention is an issue that should be closely examined. Key elements included within the methods section will be the research design and approach, setting and sample, instrumentation and materials, and data analysis. The combined elements should provide answers to all questions related to research. These components that complete the method section are very important because they allow the researcher to explore all possible options for collecting data. It is necessary for the researcher to provide the best method possible to achieve the greatest results because others trust that this data is accurate.

Research Design and Approach

This researcher conducted an archival study of previously documented data regarding the retention rates of Black males at The College at Brockport. The researcher felt an archival study would be the best method because in order to gain a full understanding of Black male retention, previous statistics and data would provide the best information. Using others methods other than archival studies would be less effective because it is essential to understand the problems or the past before something can be

done in the present or future. Therefore, the researcher believed conducting an archival study would be the best way to get to the root of this problem.

The data sources for the CSRDE report are respective Student Data File and Automated Degree File. Both are official databases submitted to the SUNY system administration. The figures on CSRDE report should be considered as campus official information for graduation rate by race. With this information the researcher was able to determine the number of black males in every incoming freshmen cohort, the percentages of minorities in every cohort, the retention rates of black males, the percentage of black males versus black females, the percentage of black males versus the total population, the percentage of black males compared to all males, and the retention rates of black males versus all males, all blacks, and the total population. (more needed) In an attempt to gain clearer results, the researcher also looked at how black males were admitted into the institution. Being admitted as a regular student based on high school performance and high SAT scores can have a different impact than being accepted through the Educational Opportunity Program, because of an exceptional talent, or as a transition student. After looking at the raw numbers researchers were able to calculate black male retention rates, percentages of minorities in every cohort, percentages of black males as first time full time freshman, enrollment by gender, percentages of black males compared to the total population, percentages of black male freshmen, one year retention rates, black male retention rates by admit type, and the correlation between the percentage of black males in the Educational Opportunity Program and retention rates.

By studying documented data as the design and approach the researcher was provided with exact numbers and percentages relating to retention, ethnicity, gender, and total population. Teaming with the department of Institutional Research and the Director of Student Retention supplied the researcher with immaculate results pertaining to the retention rates of black males over this twelve year period. The research design of this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do retention rates of Black males compare to all males, all blacks, and the total population?
2. What support programs are in place to help improve retention rates among Black male students enrolled at the institution?

By gathering exact numbers relating to the black male population, total black population, the total male population, and the total population those question would be answered. The reason this design was chosen to be used for the study was because it allowed researchers to find correct numbers and precise percentages when looking at retention rates. The main reason for conducting this research study was to expose to the public eye that black male retention and black male enrollment should be a major priority for many institutions in the United States. By providing exact numbers this study reveals black male retention rates are not based on how students were admitted to the institution, but rather on low enrollment numbers of black males. These results pose questions related to the number of Black males applying, the number of Black males being accepted, and the number of Black males accepted who choose to attend other institutions.

Setting and Sample

The sample population used for this study was all first time full time Black male freshmen within the yearly cohort over a twelve year span. Using freshmen cohorts to determine the number of black males enrolled on a yearly basis provided the researcher with accurate numbers for their data. With precise data, the process of collecting research figures from the sample population and calculating percentages was made quicker and easier. Previous research has shown that young black men, this sample group, are not retained nearly as high as their counterparts. Documented history has provided America with factual information and statistics that prove the young men in this sample group are becoming an endangered species. Most men in this sample set will range between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two. More black men between those ages are more likely to be arrested at least once in their lifetime, spend time in prison, or be the victim of homicide, than they are to graduate from college. Too often these young men will grow up in fatherless households and be forced to take on the responsibilities of being the man of the house at a time before they are ready. In many instances, these young men turn to gangs and street life as a way of being accepted into a family they do not have at home.

Table I: 1995 – 2006 Black Population Totals

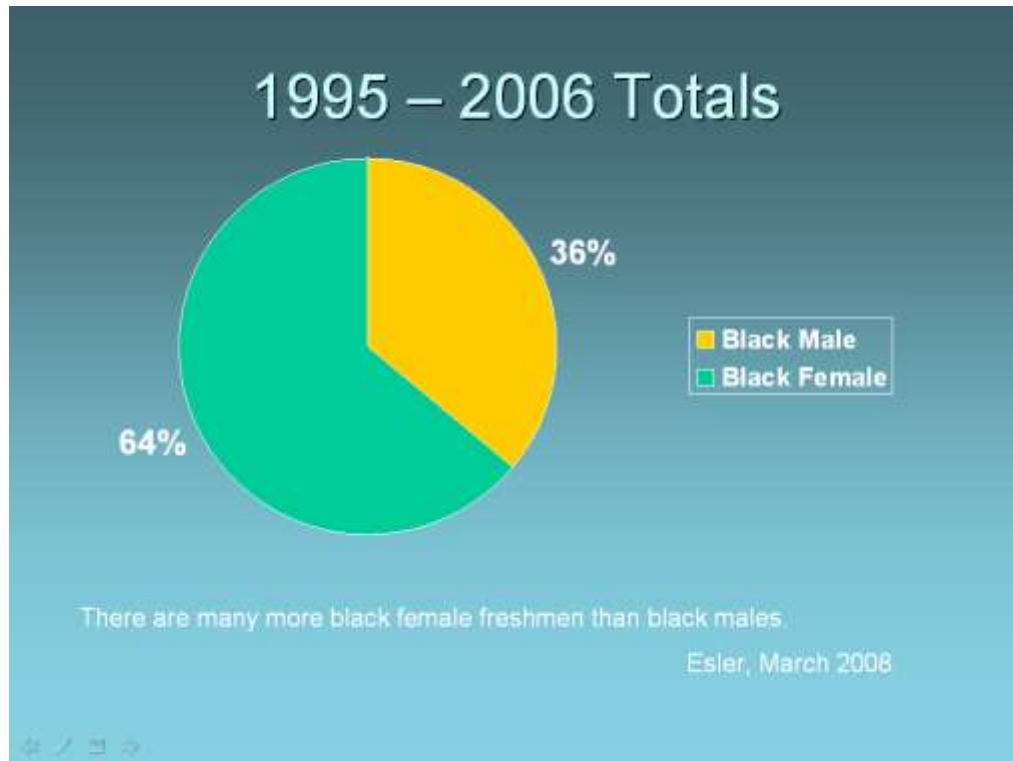


Table I represents the percentages of first time full time Black freshmen males compared to first time full time Black freshmen females between the years 1995 and 2006. There were 337 black females and 191 black males as first-time full time freshman during cohorts 1995 – 2006 (Esler, 2008). Over this twelve year span that is an average of twenty eight first time full time Black females and sixteen first time full time Black males being enrolled on a yearly basis. Although these numbers are somewhat decent, questions can still be raised regarding the number of qualified Black male applicants and the number of Black males accepted. It turns out that the entire freshman class is more balanced, but there are typically more females than males.

Table II: Total Population 1995 - 2006

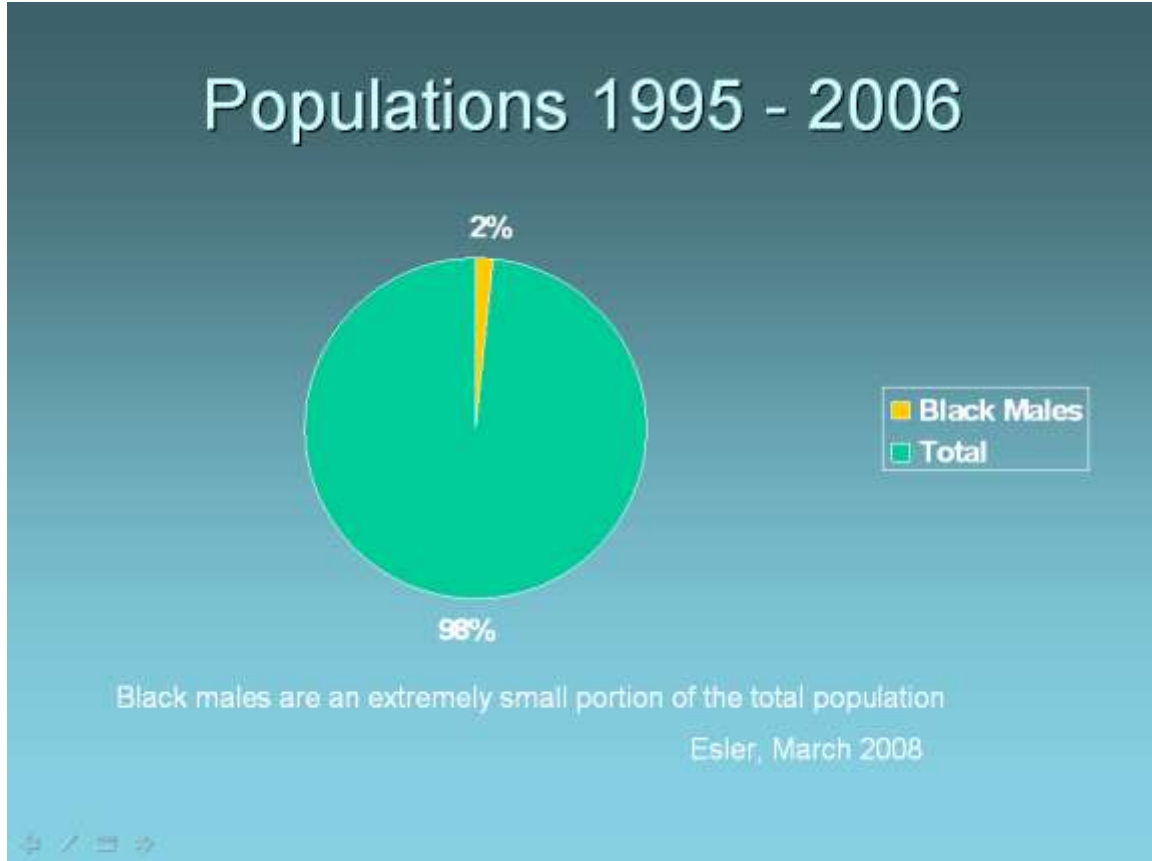


Table II compares first time full time Black freshmen males to the total population between the years 1995 and 2006. Black males only consist of two percent of the total population over twelve years. The research felt a pie graph was the best way of relaying this information because it clearly illustrates how small of a percentage Black males make up. These statistics are surprising considering the number of qualified Black males living in the surrounding areas. These finding made the researcher wonder what techniques were being used by admissions to recruit black males (Esler, 2008).

Table III: Male Freshmen Population

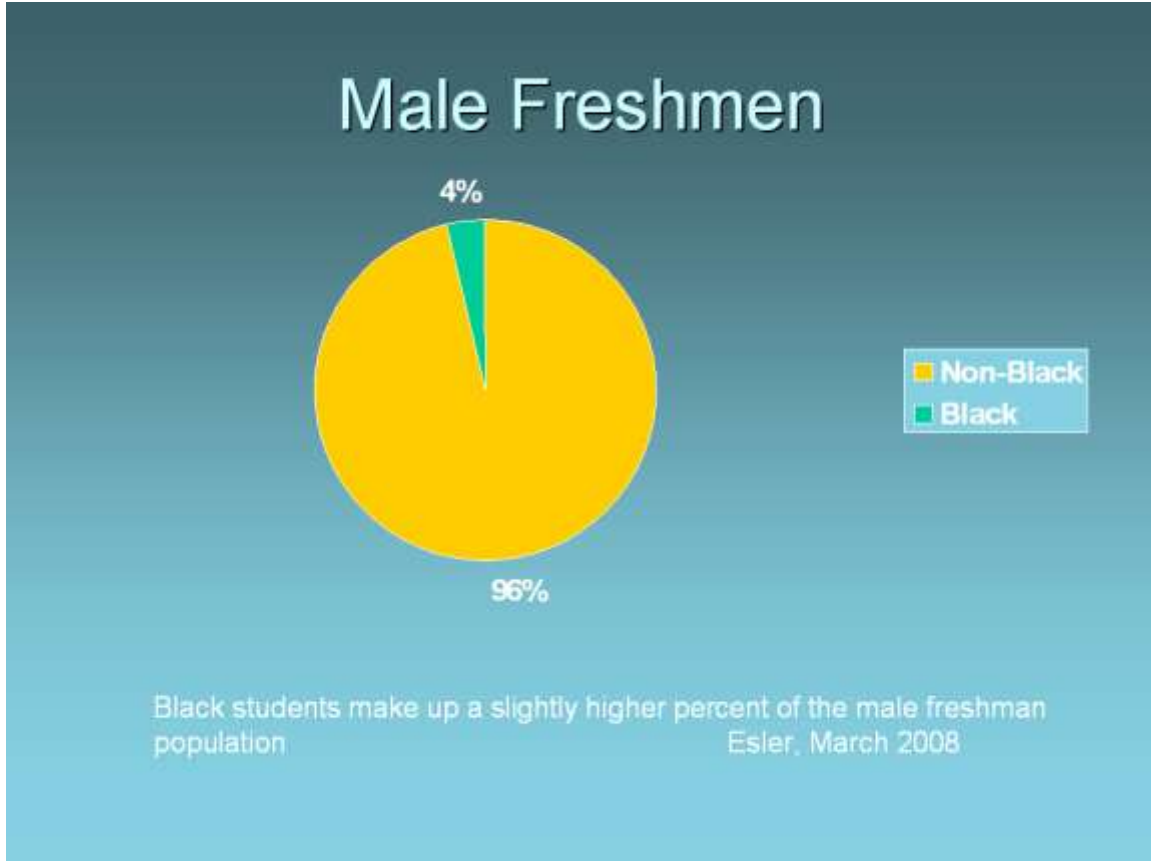


Table III illustrates the percentage of first time full time Black freshmen males in comparison to all males. Black male first time full time freshmen made up a slightly higher percentage of the male population (Esler, 2008).

Instrumentation and Materials

This researcher collaborated with the Director of Student Retention to retrieve statistical data from reports prepared for the CSRDE. She was able to provide the researcher with precise data pertaining to The College at Brockport retention rates of Black males, all males, and the total population.

Results

This researcher aimed to answer the question, how are Black male first time full time freshmen being retained in comparison to their counterparts? He believed the retention rates of Black males would not be as high as their counterpart because of lower enrollment numbers of Black males. Research revealed over a twelve year period the number of Black male students was actually declining. However, if one averages the retention rates of black males from years 1995 – 2006 the average retention rates for all freshman cohorts is 77.29% and for black male cohorts it is 76.83%, which is slightly less.

Research Tools

Retention rates of gender, ethnicity, and totals were obtained through Institutional Research in a report prepared for the Consortium for Institutional Data Exchange and Analysis. Student information was broken down by cohort years to gain a clear picture of exact numbers. The results found in this study can be somewhat misleading due the low numbers of incoming first time full time Black males in certain cohort years.

Tables and Figures

The tables and figures included in this study were chosen instead of others because the researcher felt they provided the most relevant information regarding the study. Tables of Black freshmen enrollment and enrollment by gender supplied exact numbers. The researcher believed graphs would be the best way of presenting the raw data. Retention rates of Black males versus the total population, minority as percent of cohort, percentage of first time Black males compared to the total population between 1995 and 2006, first time Black male freshmen versus all male freshmen, one year

retention, Black male retention by admit type, and the correlation between the percentage of EOP students and retention rates were also displayed through graphs because the changes in color accentuate the differences in percentages. Graphical representations of exact numbers and percentages provide the reader with visual data that make it easier to translate all results.

Table IV: Black Freshmen Enrollment Numbers by Cohort Year

Cohort	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Males	33	18	21	18	21	9	13	8	15	10	9	16
Females	36	28	28	40	28	34	22	20	19	20	35	27

Table IV provides exact numbers of Black freshmen enrollment numbers by cohort year.

The enrollment numbers of Black females stayed on the higher end for the most part while the number of Black males remained low since 2000. This table clearly illustrates the need to increase Black enrollment numbers at The College at Brockport.

Table V: Black Freshman Enrollment

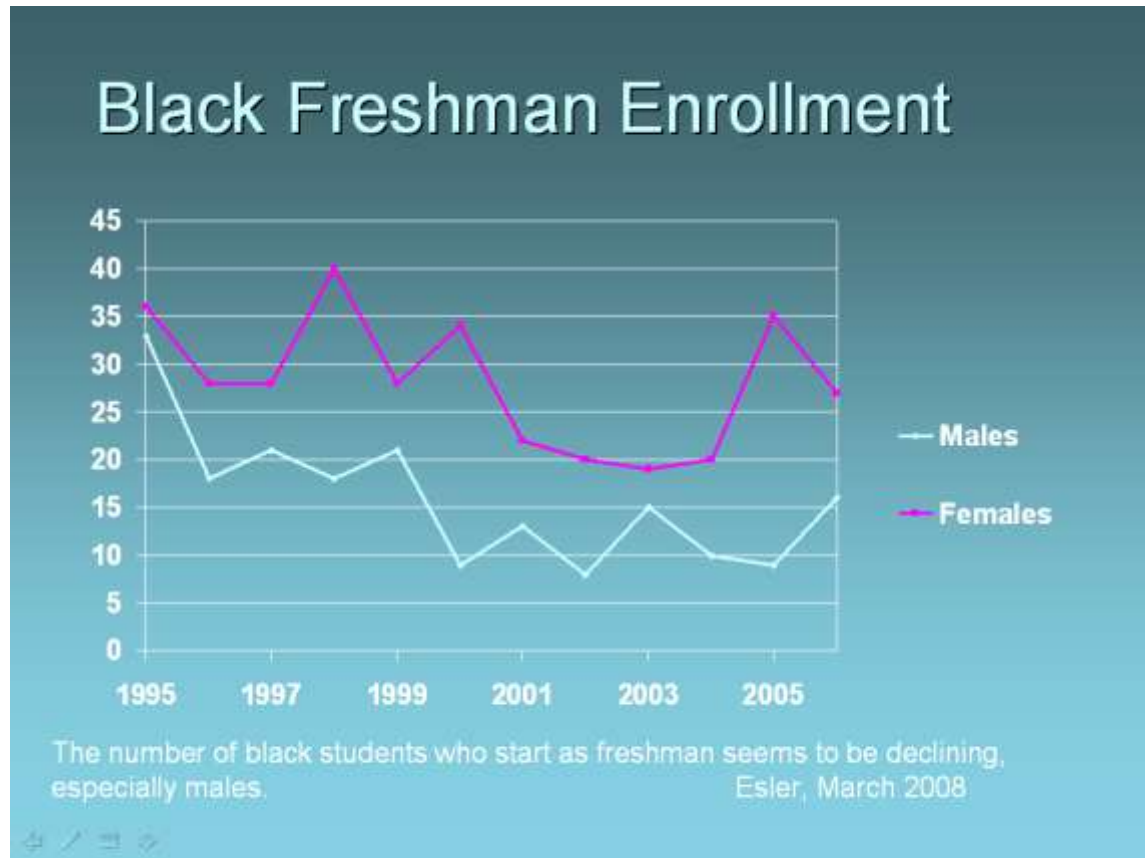


Table V shows enrollment of first time full time Black freshmen males and females from 1995 – 2006. Overall, enrollment numbers are on the decline, especially Black males. This graph is very beneficial because it reveals exact numbers of enrollment. Enrollment numbers decreased significantly in years 1995, 1999, 2001, and 2003. These considerable drops in enrollment raised questions as to why Black males were not being enrolled at the same rates as they were in the past. Since 2000, Black male first time full time freshmen enrolled have not exceeded 15 students. Is that simply because the number of applicants declined or it is due to the colleges attempt to increase the “quality” of accepted students in 1998.

Table VI: Minority as Percent of Cohort

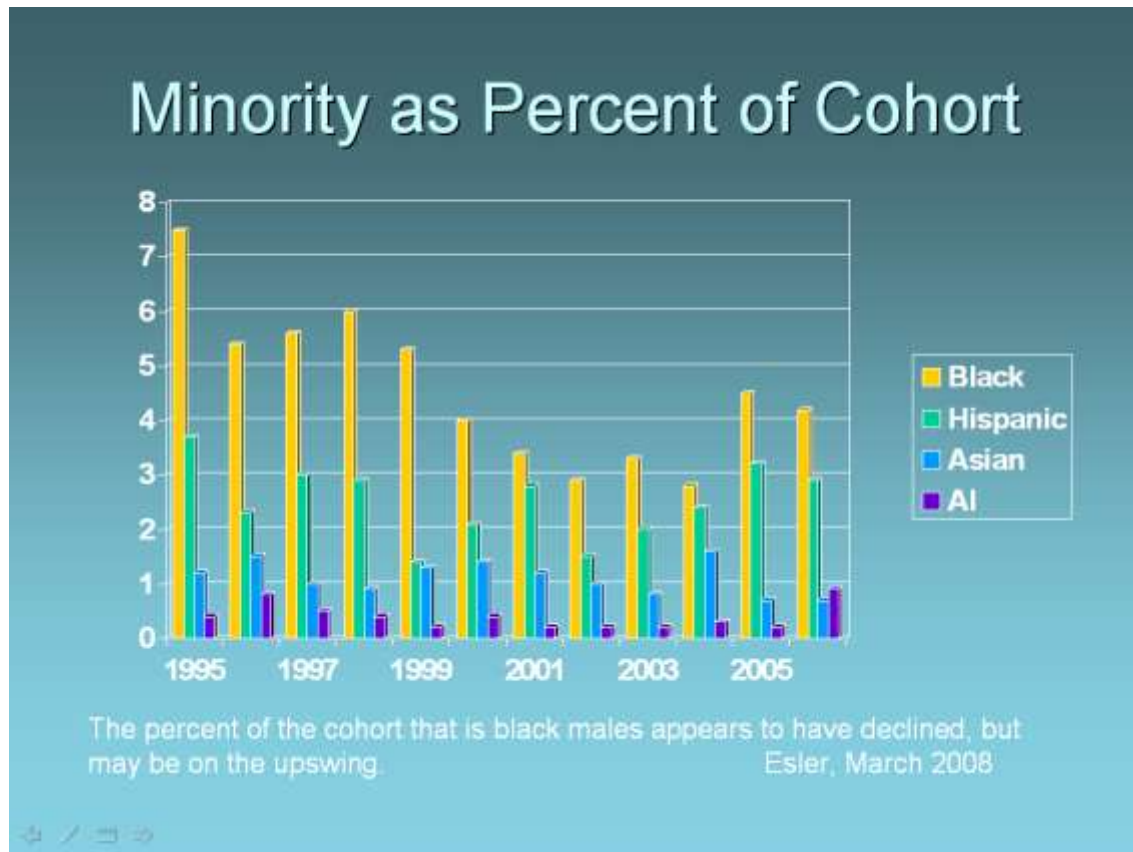


Table VI represents the percentage of minority enrollment in every cohort between the years 1995 – 2006. This table is important because it reflects Black males are not the only minority group on campus with low enrollment numbers. This table speaks volumes to the need to enroll more minorities at The College at Brockport. According to the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, from fall 1997 to fall 2003, only the Hispanic sub cohort increased as a percentage of the total freshman cohort among the underrepresented minority cohort. Nationally, black freshmen make up 9.3 percent of the freshman cohort. In 1998, The College at Brockport began a deliberate effort to improve the “quality” of the new freshman cohort, mainly by offering significant scholarships.

Unfortunately, this is around the time the percent of black males began to decrease (Esler, 2008).

Table VII: Retention of Black Males

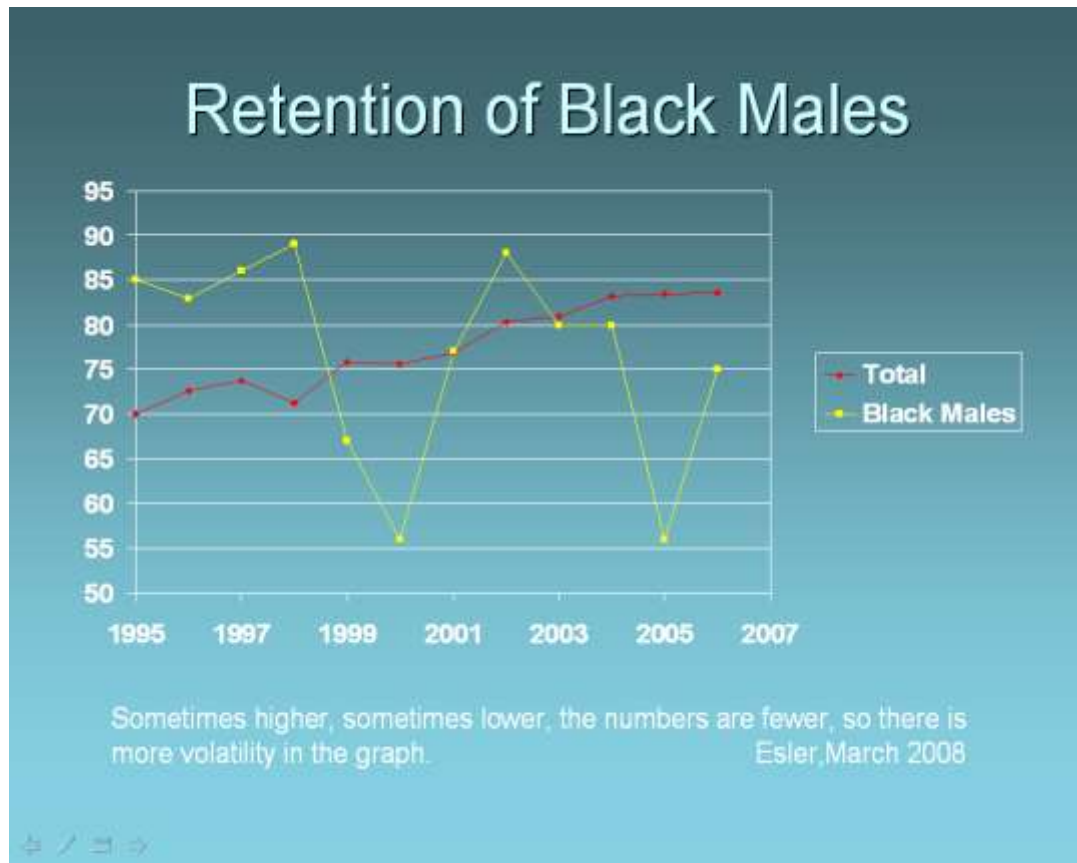


Table VII compares the retention rates of first time full time Black freshmen males to the total population. This graph is phenomenal because it shows just how much retention rates are affected by low enrollment numbers. Depending on enrollment numbers of Black males during individual years there will be more volatility in the results (rates jumping around more). Low enrollment numbers in 1998 and 2004 caused retention rates to plummet. These significant drops in retention cause the total percentage of retention rates to be significantly lower. Without low enrollment numbers in those two years, retention rates of Black males would probably have exceeded that of the total population.

Table VIII: Enrollment by Gender

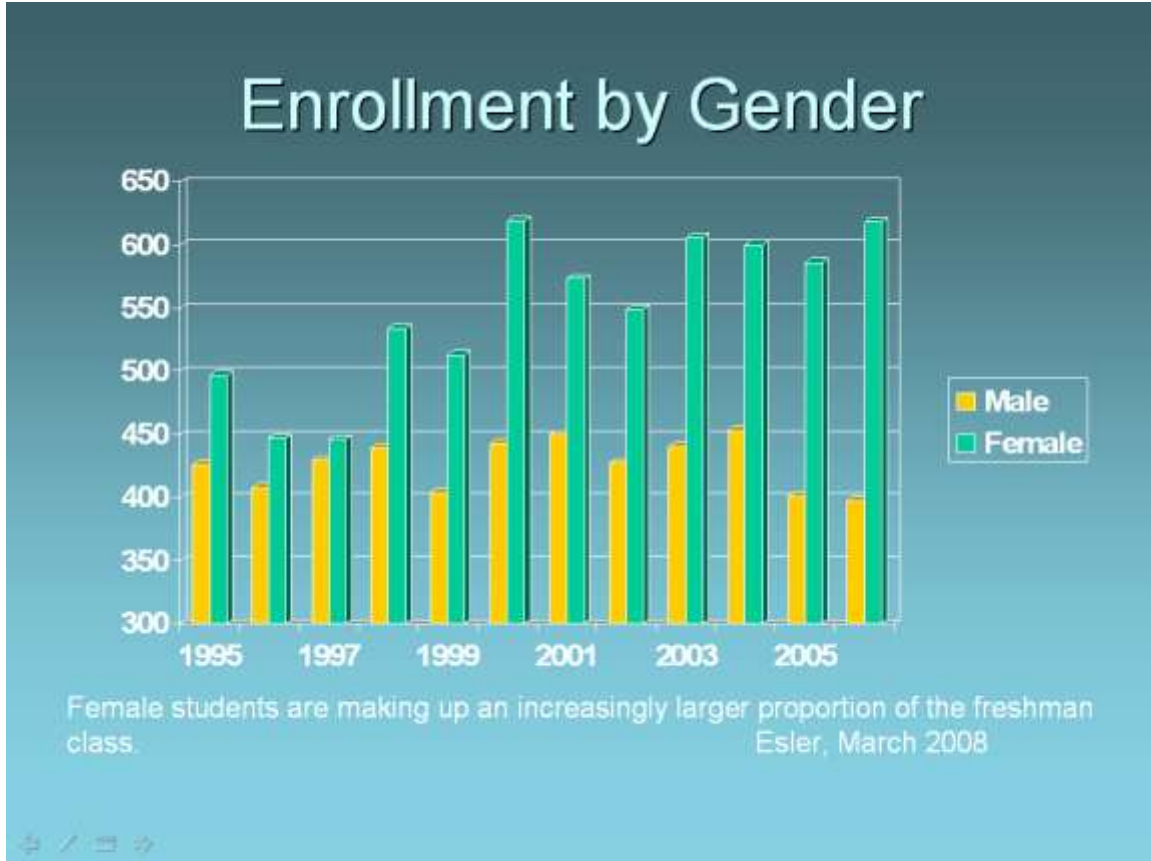


Table VIII illustrates enrollment by gender between the years 1995 and 2006. This graph is relevant because it displays the enormous increase in female enrollment while male enrollment remains constant. It is significant to also point out that after 1997, The College at Brockport made a deliberate effort to increase the “quality” of their student body. It seems female applicants are viewed as more “quality” students than males. This difference in enrollment should have raised red flags to those working in admissions in relation to accepting more “quality” male students.

Table IX: One Year Retention Rates

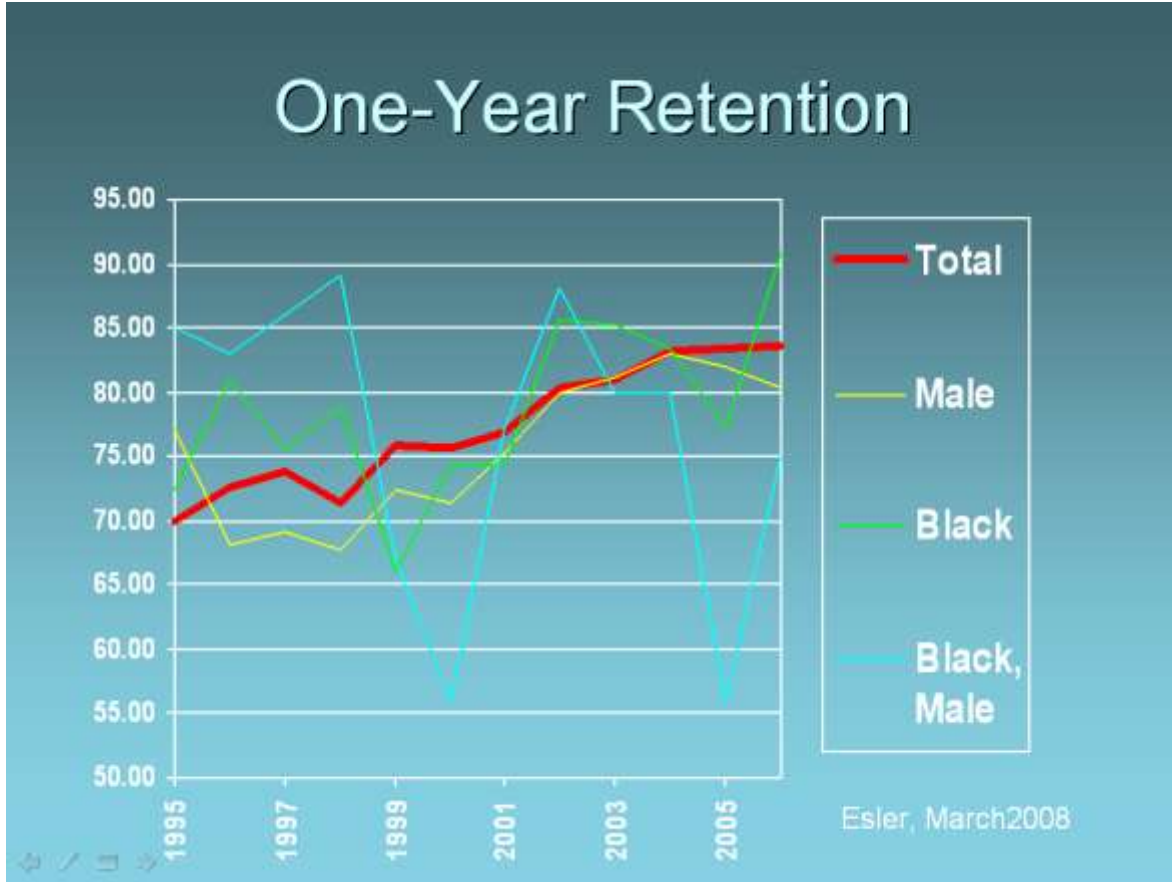


Table IX displays yearly percentages of retention rates of first time full time Black freshmen males compared to all males, all Blacks, and the total population between 1995 and 2006. Total student retention appears to be the only population with constantly increasing retention rates. Retention rates of these other populations have more volatility in their rates due to low enrollment numbers and students deciding to leave the institution for whatever reason. However, if one averages the retention rates of black males from years 1995 – 2006 the average retention rates for all freshman cohorts is 77.29% and for black male cohorts it is 76.83%, which is slightly less.

Table X: Black Male Retention By Admit Type

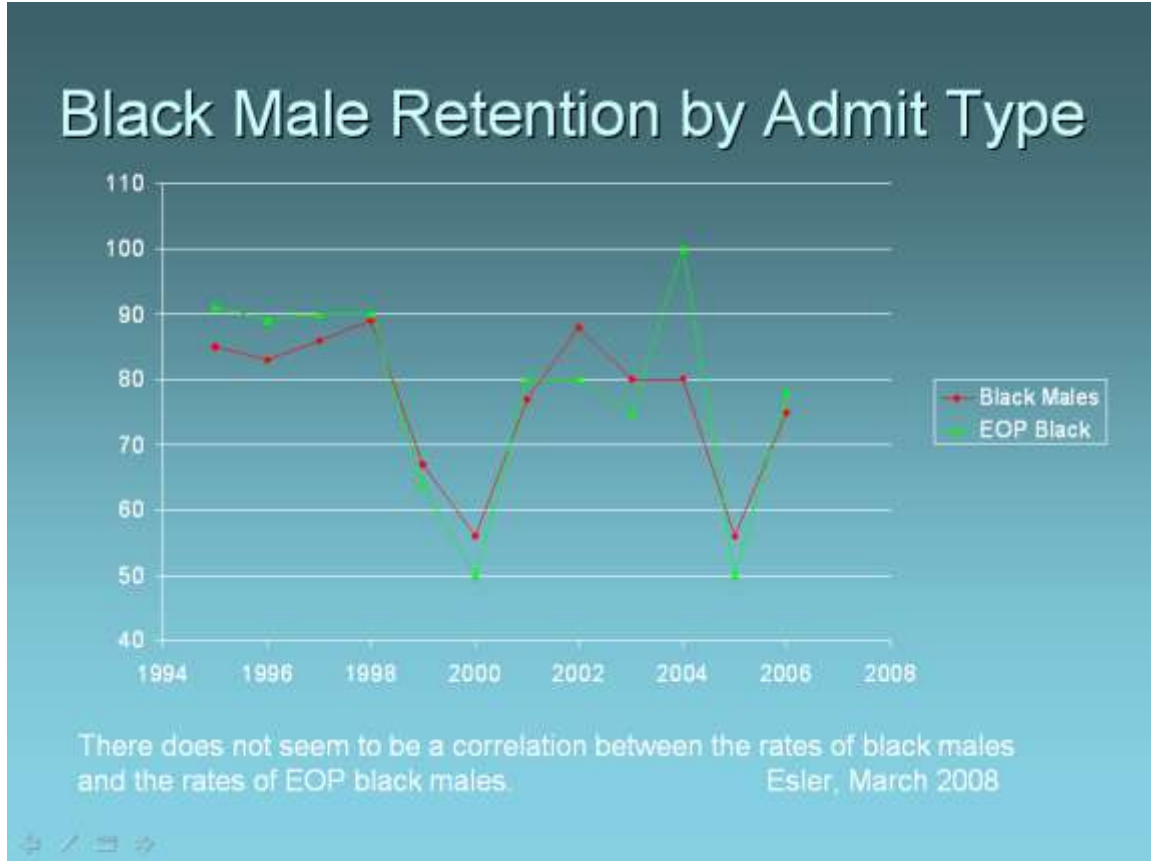


Table X exemplifies Black male retention rates according to admit type. Students can be admitted as regular admits, exceptional talent, Educational Opportunity Program, transition, and excel. However, excel was discontinued due to low numbers and poor retention. There were only 2 Exceptional Talent black males in 2002, 2 in 2004 and 2 in 2005 and one Transition black male in 2006. EOP male rates were more volatile because there are less of them.

Table XI: Correlation between Percentage of EOP Students and Retention Rate

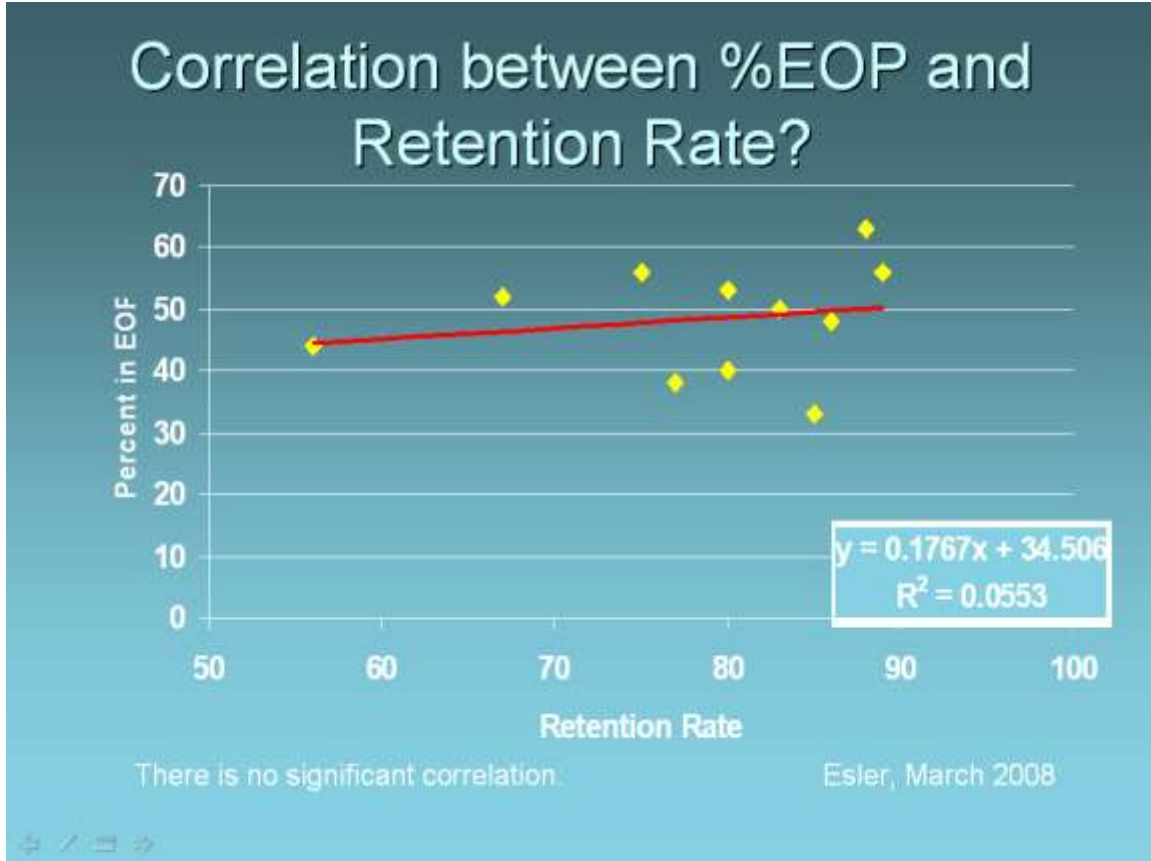


Table XI illustrates the correlation between the percentage of first time full time Black freshmen males enrolled in the Educational Opportunity Program and retention rates. Each dot represents one of the cohort years. The “x” coordinate is the retention rate of black males that year, and the “y” coordinate is the percent of black males in EOP that year.

The red line is the regression line that best fits our data points. There is no significant correlation, because our points are not clustered around the line. The coefficient of determination (r-squared) is the square of the correlation coefficient. Its value may vary from zero to one and it tells us how far, on average the points are away from the line. It may be interpreted as the proportion of variance in the dependent

variable that can be accounted for by the regression equation. For example, this r-squared value of .0553 means that only 5.53% of the variance in the dependent variable (the percent in EOP) can be explained by the regression equation. The other 94.47% is unexplained. So being in EOP does not appear to explain higher retention rates. This speaks well for EOP support services because the black EOP males were weaker when admitted, yet are maintaining similar retention rates.

These results have clearly proven that Black male retention is an issue that needs to be addressed. By receiving these results this researcher was able to completely understand the aspects of Black male retention rates at The College at Brockport. These results were further addressed in the discussion session.

Discussion

This researcher decided to conduct this study because retention rates of Black males are not just a problem at The College at Brockport, but nationally. Conducting an archival study of previously documented data would be the best way to gain a full perspective of the retention rates of the Black males at The College at Brockport because data will provide exact numbers. The research design of this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do retention rates of Black males compare to all males, all blacks, and the total population?
2. What support programs are in place to help improve retention rates among Black male students enrolled at the institution?

Results revealed Black male retention rates were low as originally expected, but due to lower enrollment numbers in certain years there was more volatility in their rates (they jump around more).

When this research was presented on Scholars Day the researcher was questioned regarding his view of why enrollment numbers of first time full time Black male freshmen were declining and what should be done to correct the issue.

These results were just as the researcher expected. The target group of first time full time Black male freshmen enroll in The College at Brockport at low rates because they may feel uncomfortable with the social environment, may be lacking the academic preparation, may not be aware of the schools proximity and location. Some of the first time full time Black males have enrolled in The College at Brockport due to their exceptional talent to participate in athletics. According to Person and LeNoir (1997), African American male student athletes graduate at a slightly higher rate than African American male non-athletes. However, the issue is not whether the black athletes fare better than the black non-athletes; rather, it is that both populations graduated at a rate less than that of student athletes in general (Person & LeNoir, 1997, p. 79). For local Black males who do not attend Brockport for athletics the location may be seen as distant. Sixteen miles west of the City of Rochester, Brockport is located in a suburban setting accompanied by stores, shopping plazas, churches, cinemas, and restaurants (SUNY Undergraduate Studies, 2007-2009). This convenient location provides a nurturing environment away from city living, but allows one to travel back and forth if desired.

It is the responsibility of high school counselors and college recruiters to take a proactive approach in educating this population about The College at Brockport. Not only The College at Brockport, but higher education institutions as a whole. Not being educated about the possibilities and opportunities that await them in higher education some young men believe they do not have what it takes to excel on the higher education level. Many of these young men will opt to attend Community Colleges simply because of the social environment and their lack of knowledge regarding four year institutions. In some cases, these young men do not have educated role models living with them, allowing them to focus on academics without being concerned with monetary responsibilities.

According to Snipe (2007), “there appears to be two options for black males – prison or outreach programs” (Snipe, 2007, p.18). The researcher agrees with this statement because outreach programs have played a major role in helping young Black men remain focused on their future. Snipe (2007), felt a remedy for low enrollment numbers would be to reestablish after school programs and summer jobs which have not existed in the last few years. He also believed placing a higher emphasis on academic enrichment programs in inner cities and rural communities would provide a safe haven for these young men to learn and grow from their experiences (Snipe, 2007). This research thinks outreach programs are the best way to keep Black males engaged in educational opportunities because without constant support it will be easy for them to get sidetracked by everything going on around them. The researcher thinks another study could be conducted comparing Black male retention to participation in outreach programs and the positive or negative effects associated with participating in such programs.

Recommendations for Further Study

When looking at retention rates of Black males it is important to understand the steps it takes for these young men to be enrolled full time in institutions of higher education. Aside from lack of preparation, low socio economic status, and lack of support it is essential to know what other factors are contributing to low enrollment numbers of Black males. This study was limited because it concentrated on first time full time freshmen students. By including all students future researchers may receive better results because of an increase in the sample setting. Another area that should be further examined is the role of Admissions in determining which Black male applicants will be accepted.

Suggestions for Higher Education Practice

Higher education institutions need to take a more proactive approach in recruiting Black males. Having individuals of color in positions of power when dealing with Black males makes the transition easier because these students feel they are dealing with someone they can relate to. It is up to every institution of higher education to make a whole hearted effort to enroll individuals who do not represent the mainstream culture to enroll in their institution.

Conclusion

Retention rates of Black males are lower when compared to all males, all blacks, and the total population at The College at Brockport. Retention rates were directly impacted by low enrollment numbers of first time full time Black male freshmen in certain cohort years. After collecting the necessary data with the help of Institutional Research and the Director of Student Retention the results were congruent to what the

researcher believed they would be. If lack of preparation, low socio economic status, and lack of support systems have been identified as reasons for low enrollment of first time full time Black males then it is up to individuals and departments within the institution to recognize these issues and provide alternative options to these students. It appears that Black males as a group will suffer more in the long haul because institutions will continue accepting other qualified applicants causing Black males to fall further behind their counterparts in higher education.

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