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## Tapping into the Campus Power Structure: The Duty of Black Student Leaders in Predominantly White Universities

Andrew C. Davidson  
*Cornell University*

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# **Tapping into the Campus Power Structure: The Duty of Black Student Leaders in Predominantly White Universities**

**Andrew C. Davidson**  
Cornell University

**As young student leaders, the knowledge gained through experience, discipline, reading, and a clear vision can be helpful in developing strategies to produce a more positive campus climate.**

In this paper, I wish to expound upon my experiences as a student leader at Syracuse University in New York, which is a predominantly White institution with an underrepresented (i.e., African American, Native American, Latino, Asian/Asian American) student population of approximately 15 percent. From 1992-1996, I attended Syracuse University while pursuing my bachelor's degree in psychology and African American studies. Throughout this time I served as a leader within organizations directed toward the Black student population and also the larger student body. I believe the knowledge gained through these experiences will be helpful in the development of strategies which will produce a more positive campus climate, especially concerning race relations.

During my sophomore year, I was elected Comptroller of the Student African American Society. This organization serves as the vanguard for addressing Black student concerns. Within the position of comptroller I was responsible for overseeing the allocation of a budget of approximately \$75,000. I simultaneously served on the Assembly of the university's Student Government Association.

The following fall semester, in 1994, I traveled abroad to study African culture in Zimbabwe. Upon returning to Syracuse in the spring of 1995, I ran for President of the Student Government Association and won in a tight election against two other candidates. As the chief executive officer of the university's student government, I was responsible for addressing the concerns of approximately 11,000 undergraduate students and distributing a budget of approximately \$1 million dollars to various student organizations. The wealth of knowledge which I gained from this experience is vital for other students of color as well as members of the larger campus community who wish to effect change in a positive manner by tapping into the campus power structure.

## **PRESENTER**

**Andrew C. Davidson** graduated from Syracuse University cum laude in May 1996. He has entered Cornell University, where he is pursuing a master's degree in African studies.