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African American Women Community College Administrators: The Legacy of Being Black and Female

Abstract

This presentation reports the results of a 1998 study of African American women community college administrators conducted by Dr. Moore Ramsey. The 94 women in the study represented a diverse range of administrative levels, responsibilities and professional experiences. It was determined that African American women remain underrepresented, isolated and at risk in many higher education environments. They constantly encounter discrimination and challenges to their leadership. Using the lecture format, as an initial workshop component, providing the results of the study, participants, based on their experiences and perceptions will complete a questionnaire. Using an open discussion/interactive forum, the workshop will focus on the cultural experiences, mentoring relationships and the affect that race and gender had on the professional careers of the women in the study and continue to have on African American women administrators today.

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Today, 45 years after the civil rights movement and 30 years after the Women's movement, African American women are still engaged in an on-going struggle with the insidious, double discrimination of racism and sexism. The ultimate impact and result of this on-going struggle is subjugation by society invisibility in the workplace and comparatively, virtual non-existence in literature, history and research. The social movements of the tumultuous 1960s gave rise to a changed revolutionized higher education system which expanded, at that time to include a new dimension, the community or two-year college. Historically and primarily because of the political, economic, and social movements, including but not limited to the community college movement, it was not until the early 1960s that women and minorities had reasonable access to the full range of educational opportunities that could prepare them for professional and consequent leadership positions. Even with all of the political, economic and social movements, African American women, while in the pipeline, have not progressed in repressive numbers into the administrative and leadership positions in higher education. This study explored the leadership styles of African American women community college administrators, the variables that influence their leadership styles, as well as the effects, from their perspective, of their race and gender on their professional experiences and careers in higher education. The data were analyzed to determine if there was a dominant leadership style as determined by the LOQ and if there were any significant relationships between the nominal variables and the leadership dimensions. The findings indicated that no dominant leadership style was exhibited by the administrators. There was a significant relationship between leadership style and the respondents' preferred leadership style. The findings referencing the cultural influences

found a significant relationship between the role and extent of the administrators' religions and spiritual experiences in childhood and their leadership style. A majority of the administrators who were interviewed by telephone indicated that their culture had a positive impact on their lives and leadership style. This enculturation appeared to be grounded in a religious and/or spiritual ethic which inculcated a sensitivity to diversity, family support and security and a value for education.

Presenter

Donna Moore Ramsey is the Assistant Dean at the Geauga Campus of Kent State University, Burton, Ohio. A native of Toledo, Ohio, she has a B.S. degree in Zoology from Ohio University, a M.Ed. from Rutgers and a Ph.D. in Administration of Higher Education from Kent State University. Before coming to the Geauga Campus, she worked at Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio for many years. Her tenure at Cuyahoga included tenured faculty member (associate professor) and Program Director of the Medical Laboratory Technology/Medical Assisting Department; Division Head of Mathematics and Technologies, Assistant Dean, Automotive Technology, Associate Dean of Instruction and Dean (Acting) of Instruction. She is a certified Medical Technologist. Dr. Moore-Ramsey is listed in Who's Who of American Women, served on the Board of Trustees for the Commission of Higher Learning, serves as a Consultant Evaluator for the Commission of Higher Learning, is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority and a charter member and immediate past president of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Greater Cleveland Chapter.