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"ISSUES FACED BY MID-LEVEL AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS IN INSTITUTIONS OF THE NORTHEAST"

Pamela Mitchell-Crump, Ed.D.

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"This presentation examines the experiences and strategies utilized by African-American midlevel administrators who face significant obstacles in their attempts to advance to top-level administrative positions within the predominantly white institutions where they work."

This presentation examines the experiences and strategies utilized by African-American midlevel administrators who face significant obstacles in their attempts to advance to top-level administrative positions within the predominantly white institutions where they work. The presentation is based upon a recent research study that sampled over 100 African-American women administrators in the northeast region.

The experiences and strategies used by African-American mid-level administrators in their attempt to overcome barriers to advancement to top-level posts is particularly relevant given the lack of significant numbers of top-level African-American women administrators within institutions of higher education. Recent studies indicate that although women are in the workforce in greater numbers than before, their increased numbers have not been matched by a corresponding rise in their representation in senior levels of administration (Morrison, et al., 1995; Rusher, 1996; Jackson, 1985; Ottinger & Sikula, 1993).

In 1996, the US. Department of Education indicated there were 143,675 executive/administrative/managerial staff employed in institutions of higher education. Of this number 12,619 (11.35 %) were African-American and 6,522 (22%) were women. Therefore acknowledging limited diversity within the top-levels of administration within higher education institutions.

These statistics underscore a belief that diversity is limited at the top levels of administration with higher education institutions. The Department of Labor projects the numbers of women in the workforce will continue to increase steadily well into the 21st. century, but there is no guarantee that they will access to positions of power. The sheer numbers of women in the workforce and the projected increases indicate a critical need to address the issue of why so few women - particularly African-American women - are in top-level administrative positions within higher education. There is a crisis brewing!

The presenter will provide results of her research study completed in 1998 that explores the issues faced by mid-level African-American women administrators in predominantly white institutions of the northeast. Policy and practice implications for institutions of

higher education, as well as for African-American women, will also be provided.

The research study describes the experiences and strategies used by mid-level African-American administrators through the identification of eight common themes which are supported by quotes from qualitative data and the numbers and frequencies of responses provided through quantitative data. The eight themes include the following: institutional climate and culture; barriers faced; supports used; coping and advancement strategies; skills needed; racism and sexism; how African-American women are perceived; and mentoring. I will also present my findings on coping strategies used by the participants in the study.

In conclusion, institutions of higher education must take a more active role in recognizing, addressing, and rectifying the small numbers of women and African-Americans in the top ranks of academia. The issue faced in advancing to top-level posts, as well as the low numbers of women and African-Americans in those posts tear away at the very fabric of building diversity within academia within the top ranks of administration.

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- Rusher, A.W. (1996). African American Women Administrators. New York, N.Y.: University Press of America, Inc.

Presenter:

Dr. Mitchell-Crump did her graduate work at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst located in Amherst, Massachusetts. Her doctorate is in Higher Education Administration. Dr. Mitchell-Crump presently holds a position as the Associate Director of Human Resources and the Director of Equal Opportunity for Westfield State College located in Westfield, Massachusetts. Dr. Mitchell-Crump's research interests include women of color in the academe; higher education administration; and equality in education.