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“MINORITY STUDENTS WITHIN A COLLEGE OF BUSINESS: HEARING THE VOICES”

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"In recognition of the dynamic interplay among academic and social aspects of any student's campus experience, our institution has implemented an Innovative Community Initiative (ICI) which provides a panoply of support programs for students of color."

Across the nation, predominantly white universities continue to devise and implement strategies for achieving a more diverse community on campus. Often a narrow "recruitment and retention" focus could be improved by greater awareness of the importance of cultural capital and cultural integrity (Freeman, 1997 and Tierney, 1999) for minority student academic success. In particular, Tinto's (1975) comprehensive model of retention has been criticized for its assimilationist slant and its underappreciation of the need to affirm students' cultural roots and identity. In recognition of the dynamic interplay among academic and social aspects of any student's campus experience, our institution has implemented an Innovative Community Initiative (ICI) which provides a panoply of support programs for students of color. To address feelings of alienation and loneliness, these programs are designed to help students overcome academic, social, racial and cultural barriers.

As the College of Business at a medium sized rural, predominantly white public university, we are collaborating with the university-wide effort, while increasing our efforts on behalf of, and with, minority students of business. Our presentation will highlight our efforts to develop a more affirming environment by reducing social distances between professors and minority students, and by ensuring that students' voices are heard when designing support services. Though we continue to be challenged by both our demographic and geographical realities, as well as by perspective and current students' perceptions, our programs are designed to be inclusive and affirming. While unable to declare that we have found the solution to minority student success, others might benefit from hearing how we have included minority students in our on-going search for improved supportive programs within the College of Business.

Our paper fills a gap in the literature by focusing on the environment encountered within a business degree program at a public university in a rural setting, and the policy and

program response to perceived needs and talents of students of color.

References

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Presenters:

Dr. Brendan Finucane is the Chair of the Economics Department at Shippensburg University and Chair of the College of Business Diversity Task Force. He has written numerous papers and presentations dealing with issues of social capital and institutional and personal efficacy. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh in Economics in 1982.

Dr. Stephen Holoviak is the Interim Dean of Shippensburg University's John L. Grove College of Business. Steve has written over 100 articles and 6 books and is an active consultant on issues of organizational culture. He received his Ph.D. from West Virginia University in Economics and Industrial Relations in 1980.

Dr. Anthony S. Winter, associate dean and business internship director of the John L. Grove College of Business at Shippensburg University, has been directly and actively involved with diversity issues in higher education for the past decade. Dr. Winter has provided leadership for the College of Business in the area of minority student recruitment and retention. Dr. Winter is currently working with Dr. Finucane on a number of minority student initiatives in the College of Business and is co-chair of the university's Thurgood Marshall Mentoring Program for minority students.