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Rhetoric to Reality: Growing Our Own Minority Education Candidates

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Rhetoric to Reality: Growing Our Own Minority Education Candidates

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Introduction

The shortage of minority teachers is one of the nation's most critical educational problems (Smith, 1989.) In 1990, minorities composed only 13 percent of the nation's teachers. Those percentages are steadily declining and according to some estimates, may drop to 5 percent by the year 2000. The U.S. Department of Education reports that in 1990, of the students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools 68 percent were White, 16 percent were Black, 12 percent were Hispanic, 3 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander and 1 percent were American Indian/Alaskan Native. By the year 2000, it is estimated that the minority student population will approach 50 percent; and in 53 of the nation's largest cities, children of color will comprise the majority in student populations.

Research regarding minority participation in K-12 concludes that efforts to achieve parity between the teaching force and the student population would require the licensing and certification of 450,000 minority teachers among the 1.5 million teachers needed for our schools during the next five years. Of the 700,000 new teachers who are expected to be trained in this period, only about 35,000 are estimated to be minority.

The Importance of Teachers of Color

According to a "Report of the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession," education is important in shaping children's attitudes toward school, their academic accomplishments, their view of their own and others' intrinsic worth and their opinions about the larger society and their own futures. It is crucial that students of color have teachers of color to assist them in this process. Further, Dilworth (1990) believes that while role models in securing a racially and ethnically balanced teaching population. Teachers of color bring with them an inherent understanding of the backgrounds, attitudes and experiences of students from certain groups and therefore can help inform majority teachers on effective ways and means to communicate with students of color.

Growing Our Own

Minority Programs In Education (MPIE) formerly known as TEAM- UCF was established in 1990 and funded for six years by a grant from the Ford Foundation. The

purpose of the program is to respond to the critical shortage of minority teachers. Initially, TEAM (Teacher Education for America's Minorities) was part of a consortium of seven state universities. To date, the University of Central Florida's College of Education is the only member of the consortia to formally integrate the program into its College of Education.

As a course of action, MPIE identifies, recruits and supports minority students who want to pursue a teaching career. The support is manifested through small group sessions, tuition assistance, volunteer opportunities and an overall sense of warmth and commitment to students of color. In short, the mission of MPIE is to serve as a home away from home for future educators of color. Minority Programs in Education aspires to be a place where minority students will find guidance, emotional support and financial assistance. Over the past seven years, MPIE has successfully:

- Recruited and retained over 150 students;
- Graduated 90 students (to date);
- Taught and modeled effective communication, study and presentation skills;
- Built partnerships with local schools and community groups;
- Initiated a minority mentoring program;
- Conducted career exploration modules to expose minority and public school students (grades 6-12) to college life and careers within the field of education; and
- Maintained a 97 percent student retention rate (with a mean gpa of 3.0+ each semester)

This presentation will discuss the minority teacher education program at the University of Central Florida. Its primary focus will be on: (1) the program in terms of funding, structure and objectives; (2) program successes: student retention rate, hire/ employment rate and grade point average; and (3) providing a model for others to replicate. This session should particularly benefit those who are administering or plan to implement a minority recruitment and/or retention program.

PRESENTERS

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