

The Role of Two Year Colleges in Improving the Achievement Gap: An African American Perspective

A presentation by
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Two-year Public Historically Black Colleges

- Bishop State Community College, Alabama
- Shelton State Community College, Alabama
- Gadsden State Community College, Alabama
- J.F. Drake Technical College, Alabama
- Lawson State Community College, Alabama
- Trenholm State Technical College, Alabama
- Southern University at Shreveport, Louisiana
- Coahoma Community College, Mississippi
- Hinds Community College, Mississippi
- Denmark Technical College, South Carolina
- St. Philip's College, Texas

Two-year Private Historically Black Colleges

- **Concordia College, Alabama**
- **Lewis College of Business, Michigan**
- **Clinton Junior College, South Carolina**

Source: US Department of Education, National Association for Equal Opportunity (NAFEO)

Aggregate Institutional Aid Awarded by 50 Flagship Universities, 1995-2003 (in millions)

Family income	1995	2003	Amount change	% change
>\$20,000	\$196.6	\$171.0	-\$25.6	-13.0%
\$20,000-\$39,999	\$187.0	\$288.3	\$101.3	54.0 %
\$40,000-\$59,999	\$122.2	\$229.2	\$107.0	87.6 %
\$60,000-\$79,999	\$82.5	\$259.6	\$177.1	214.6 %
\$80,000-\$99,999	\$25.2	\$147.3	\$122.1	484.5 %
\$100,000+	\$50.8	\$257.3	\$206.5	406.0 %

Source: Gerald, D. & Haycock, K. Engines of Inequality, The Education Trust

Five Categories of College Opportunity and Achievement Gauge the Educational Health of Each State's Population

- **Preparation:** To what extent are high school students equipped to pursue higher education?
- **Participation:** the rate at which students attend higher education
- **Completion:** the rate at which students graduate, considering completion rates and time to degree
- **Affordability:** whether higher education is affordable to all segments of the state population by using median income of residences and college costs in individual states
- **Benefits:** How well do those who either complete two-year colleges or go on for further training contribute to the economic and civic well being of each state?

Academic Courses and Programs Needed to Assist Students Once They Enroll

- **Summer Bridge Programs** are offered to high-risk students during the summer prior to the fall they enroll. Students are provided with academic work, generally in mathematics and English, and receive counseling and advising services
- **Research Seminars** offered in the freshman year serve to build confidence for students who might not have had such experiences during their secondary school years.
- **Summer Research experiences and Internships** strengthen intellectual skills and build confidence. Two-year institutions should develop partnerships with research universities that offer the opportunity for students to engage in research with a faculty member and frequently with graduate students.

Academic Courses and Programs Needed to Assist Students Once They Enroll (Continued)

- **Legislative Internships:** Clinton Junior College students participate in legislative internships in collaboration with the State Legislative Black Caucus of South Carolina. Through this effort students learn how the political system works, and begin to understand the importance of their participation.
- **Community Service Learning Programs** require students to enroll in a course or courses that require involvement in community agencies and schools. The importance of such programs has been noted (Smith, 1984).
- **“Lunch Buddy Programs”** are designed to have college students mentor students in elementary schools. This type of activity mutually benefits the mentor and those that are mentored. A program that matched student athletes from Clinton Junior College with African American third-grade male students from single-parent families proved to be beneficial for both groups.

College Affordability: Financial Barriers

The following efforts can assist in bridging the financial aid barrier:

- The availability of other **financial resources, such as institutional scholarships**, both need-based and merit
- **College Work Study** and work opportunities paid from institutional funds and loans are essential for those who do not have either parental financial support or personal income to defray these costs.
- Prior to their entering college, students and their parents must know how to **apply for financial aid and recognize the importance of applying for other scholarships**, such as those provided by public service and civic organizations.

College Affordability: Financial Barriers (continued)

- **Outreach:** Colleges must make special efforts to reach first-generation low-income students and their parents. Providing information on how financial aid may be packaged tends to help both parents and potential students understand that college may be a viable option. Students with good academic records often receive additional financial assistance from sororities and fraternities, churches, civic clubs and philanthropic groups. To increase the probability that low-income students will pursue higher education, it is essential that they receive information on financial aid at various stages during their secondary school years.

Activities and Programs That Help Ensure Academic Success

The following is a list with descriptions of some effective activities and programs:

- **Monitoring class attendance:** The importance of being in class is stressed. In some institutions students may not accumulate more than three unexcused absences.
- **Rewarding students** for academic and extra-curricular accomplishments.
- **Faculty Recognition for outstanding teaching:** Faculty encourage and promote student success through mentoring and support. Small class sizes especially in some of the most challenging courses allow students to have individualized instruction, encourage critical thinking, and promote learning.