

**STUDENT SUCCESS FACTORS: SELF-REPORTED
INDICATORS OF SUCCESS FOR IMMORITY
STUDENTS ON THE VPAA/PRESIDENTS'S LISTS**

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Student Success Factors: Self-reported indicators of success for minority students on the VPAA and President's list

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Success Model

- Retention research on minorities often focuses on **failure factors**, such as prior preparation, low test scores, and family disadvantage to understand the mechanisms that encourage dropping out.
- This project addressed the issue of retention from a **success** model.
- **What characteristics do successful students have in common?**

Project Goal

The goal is to develop a program that enables us to increase minority retention and graduation at Truman.

This research addresses the question, what are these students doing right on campus that **encourages academic achievement?**

non-cognitive variables for academic success

- Sedlacek and Brooks (1976) have outlined several indicators that translate into non-cognitive factors for academic success:
- 1) positive self concept,
- 2) realistic self appraisal,
- 3) understanding and the ability to deal with racism,
- 4) preference for long-term goals over short-term or immediate needs,
- 5) availability of a strong support person,
- 6) successful leadership experiences,
- 7) demonstrative community service.

Five main research questions

1. How do minority students on the VPAA's list perceive their level of social integration on campus?
2. How do minority students on the VPAA's list perceive the campus racial environment?
3. How do minority students on the VPAA's list define their own levels of motivation?
4. How do minority students on the VPAA's list feel about their overall experience at the university?
5. What are the implications of these findings for increasing minority student's retention at Truman?

Methodology/sample

- Sample: =14 students with a cumulative 3.50+ GPA for Spring 2003 and place on the VPAA's list (16)
- Students were either interviewed or completed the survey independently.
- November –December 2003
- Questionnaire
 - 60 questions
 - Non Cognitive Variables
 - Misc. questions, religion, financial aid, church, study skills

Demographic information

- **Gender**
 - 3 males and 11 females
- **Parental occupation**
 - Overwhelmingly middle class professional occupations
 - *14/14 students work on campus*

Parents Occupation: Nursing, education, accounting, medical salesperson, electrical engineer, manager, firefighter aviation technician, US army, foreman, entrepreneur.

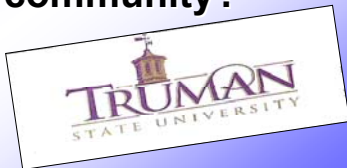
Parental Educational Levels



- **Father**
 - 10/14 father attended college
 - Average years **2.1**
- **Mother**
 - 10/14 mother attend college
 - Average years **4.6**

Social Integration

Would you consider yourself part of the Truman community?



- **7/14** do feel part of the community
- These students cited friendships & active involvement in activities

I am part of the Truman community in that I am a student of the University. I do not feel as though I've been excluded in any sort of way, but I desire no more interaction with Truman than I currently have.

Somewhat. Being Black on campus will always make me an outsider. But, I feel accepted for the most part.

Defining Community ...

Community means that there is a group of people who you can identify with so that you might have meals together, go to movies and attend other events/programs together. Community means a place where you feel that you belong or where if you were gone your presence would be missed. At Truman I've found friends and felt some limited sense of community...



Social Integration Cont.

When asked if the students felt part of the Truman Community.

7/14 reported that they **do not** feel like part of the Truman community

These students distinguished themselves as part of the Truman Black Community

I'm not a part of the whole community b/c I don't participate in predominately white activities. I'm a part of the black community b/c I make my contribution there. Also, I feel that they care about me and know I care for them

No, I consider myself a part of Truman's minority community because that's how we are treated; like we are separate and do not need to be included with the entire community.

Club Participation

Although the students reported mixed answers on social integration they are very well connected to campus clubs and activities.

Over 60 Organizations



What organizations have you participated in on campus?

- Coalition of African-American Women, Concerned Brothers,
- University Conduct Board, Pershing Society
- Peer Mentor/ Mentee Program, Student Advisor in dorm, Student Organization Center,
- Concert Band -Unique Ensemble, Illusion Dance Team, Praise Dance Team
- ABC, National Society of Collegiate Scholars
- Campus Crusade for Christ
- National Pan-Hellenic Council - Phi Beta Sigma, - Phi Kappa Phi, Interfraternity Council
- Phi Epsilon Kappa (major frat), Phi Eta Sigma (honor society), Phi Eta Sigma, Phi Beta Kappa, Kappa Mu Epsilon, Phi Sigma Pi, Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Eta Sigma, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc, Beta Alpha Psi, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority,
- American Medical Student Association, Financial Management Association
- 4.0 Club, Free Thinkers Society, Anime
- Pre-SOMA, Nursing Students Assoc, Horseman's Association
- Triathlon Club, Athletic Training Staff
- NSCS, MASSE, MAC tutor, SMSTA, CRAM, SOC, NPHC, CCF, SIFE, FMLA,
- McNair, Stokes,
- Habitat for Humanity
- Residence Hall Association
- Undergraduate Research, Anime Club
- National Society of Collegiate Scholars

13/14 also reported participation in MAC events

Self Concept

- 9/14 rated their academic ability as above average.
- Out of this 9, 8 also rated themselves as very ambitious
- 5 students rated themselves as average...

Truman students all strive for the best. I was above average in high school. This is a new level and everybody is trying to be on top

There are very intelligent individuals attending Truman, and I think we are all equally capable of success

Attributions for Success

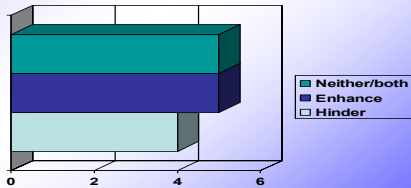
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
Hard Work	7	2	2	0	2	1	0
Family Support	1	5	3	0	3	2	0
HS Background	2	2	2	5	1	0	0
Luck	1	1	1	1	1	4	3
Teaching	0	1	3	5	1	3	0
Mentors	0	1	3	3	3	2	1
God	4	2	0	0	0	0	0

Motivation

- When asked about the most important factor in finishing college
 - 11/14 better themselves
 - 2 learn new things
 - 1 get a job
- All of the respondents suggested that they see college as means to an end to reach their career goals.
- 13/14 reported professional long term goals

Campus racial environment

Do you feel (that being the only minority in class) hindered/ or enhanced your academic experience here at Truman, why or why not?



- Only 4/16 reported that being the only minority in class was a hindrance to them

In some ways this has hindered my academic experience at Truman, because I have been afraid to speak in class because I did not want to look stupid. Sometimes I feel as though some white Americans think I'm not smart because I'm black

Sometimes it seems as if it's a hindrance because not only am I trying to do good in the class, I'm having to deal with a feeling of isolation. Especially when race comes up in a class.

5/14 - Enhanced experience

- I think it enhanced my experience. It showed me how some people really don't realize what they say as being offensive. It taught me that people think they are doing nothing wrong with their assumptions of minorities. I refused to try to prove my points by being the token black girl. I just listened to them speak on their ignorant points of view
- Enhanced. Sometimes being the only one forces you to go beyond and not be invisible!
- It has enhanced the experience because it has motivated me to perform above and beyond others.
- It has enhanced my experience by making me work harder to prove that I am as competent as my peers
- It has definitely enhanced my experiences b/c its motivated me to work harder than I normally would. What's more, being "the only one" has sparked my interest in tokenism.

Both Hindered and Enhanced

5/14 reported that the experience was both

- Depends on the class. Some professors make a big deal about... being Black. Make "racial" comments hinder because you feel that they won't help, but hurt you. Enhance because some professors understand that standardized tests are hard for African American and allow you to write out answers and express it in a way you can handle
- Used to being the only one, so Not an issue.
- I am used to being the only minority in my class and even my entire school, so it doesn't bother me at all. Being in a class of a lot of minorities would be strange for me. I in no way feel either hindered or enhanced by the ethnic composition of the University.

Experienced Racism/discrimination?

10/14 reported experiencing racism

- I've had to listen to students make degrading comments about my people. I have been told that I don't belong here. I've been called a nigger, and assaulted.
- When I first enter a class, students are reluctant to speak until it is made known that I am a very successful student.
- Never blatant. More like being treated differently from other students
- Bus load of kids spit at house shouting "Go home niggas."
- A frightened white female students fled from a group with him in it. Passed by a car yelling racial slurs.
- In the classrooms, being referred to as "the other one". People always saying "you guys or you all" when referring to my race
- WACT professor told [student] that her writing was too structured, and that if using Ebonics would help her write in a conversational tone, then write in Ebonics.

Would you consider yourself a leader?

- 11/14 -Characterized themselves as leaders
- These students also reported that they hold leadership positions on campus.
- 14/ 14 –Reported that people also come to them for advice



Mentor Relationships

- 4/14 reported that they would discuss issues of racism or discrimination with a mentor
- 11/ 14 students reported a close relationship with a faculty member
- 2 students reported that their closest relationship on campus is with a mentor



Overall experience at the university

- When you graduate from Truman will you return for special events?
 - 8/14 reported that they would return
 - The students were very specific with their answers they would return for sorority events, friends graduation and specific organizational activities
 - 6/14 noted that they would not return
 - One student noted that once you leave the plantation you never return
 - They reported that they just didn't want to come back

Would you recommend Truman to other minority students?

- 12/14 would recommend the university to other minority students
- There are a lot of great opportunities here for minorities, it's a good education, and it's cheap
- Truman gives you many leadership, service, and social opportunities.
- It's a great study environment and the support within "our community" is conducive for success.
- Depending on goals. If school has a good emphasis on a particular field, then yes.
- HBCUs are too expensive. Truman less expensive. Good bargain. Black people are the same everywhere. Truman represents the real world.
- I would if they want a challenge and aren't in college to have fun. If they want to grow, this is good. I would not if they expect college to be the best time of their lives; full of fun people and parties. That's just not here.
- If the student was interested in accounting and wanted to work and get a good job.
- Yes, it'll help them get used to the real world very quickly and help them focus on their studies, there is nothing here to be preoccupied with.
- Yes, I personally have found no fault with the University based on racial or ethical issues, and I would have no problem recommending the University.
- Yes, if they can receive financial aid.
- Yes, because Truman is a good school, and it needs more minorities.

Research Summary

In General the successful students who participated in this survey had an overall positive experience and perception of Truman.

Their responses were consistent with the literature. These students rated high on variables such as social integration, leadership, motivation, self concept and the ability to handle racism.

Although there are many issues students bring to the table before admission, these variables can be enhanced by campus programs designed to improve retention.

Focusing our retention efforts on a campus-wide push for the development of programs that stress more of the non cognitive variables, such as leadership, social integration, & motivation etc. will work to increase the positive factors that encourage graduation.

Suggestions for future programs

- Encourage organizational participation
- Establish programs that emphasize education as a means to an end
- Reinforce mentoring programs
- Create leadership development programs
- Encourage programs like McNair(5) and the 4.0 Club (7)

Discussion Questions

- What would a success oriented retention program look like?
- What types of programs would develop leadership skills?
- What realistic types of programs would deal with the type of discrimination mentioned by the students?
- How do we promote education as a means to an end?
- How do we increase mentorship?