

# RETENTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

Tennessee Association for Student Success  
and Retention Conference

# Introduction

- ▶ The under-representation of African American males in education has serious repercussions not only for the men themselves, but also for our nation as a whole. Whenever a group of individuals is not interacting and achieving at optimum levels, the country is robbed of talent that could enrich the lives of many. It is the intent of this presenter to explore the unacceptable retentions rates among this population and determine factors that could provide academic success.

# Plight of African American Men

- ▶ *Cut dead* is a nineteenth century idiom meaning to be ignored deliberately or snubbed completely.
- ▶ William James (1890) a noted psychologist employed this phrase in the book *The Principles of Psychology*.
- ▶ James argued that humans are social with an innate desire to be noticed, and noticed favorably by others.
- ▶ Conversely, going unnoticed or being cut dead is torturous.

# Cut Dead

- ▶ Cut to the chase– muteness and invisibility
  - Muteness suggests silencing
  - Invisibility refers to that which is not an object of sight



# Cut Dead– Year 2010

## ▶ Statistical Evidence

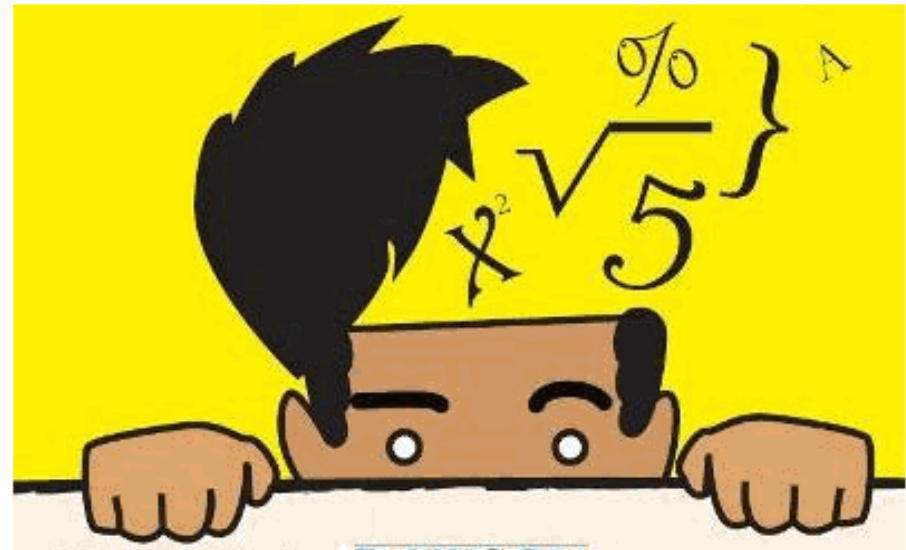
### ◦ Bureau of Labor Statistics

- 47% of African American Men graduated from high school
- Study showed that among sixteen to twenty-four year old males surveyed 64.9% did not attend college



# Why do student leave college?

- ▶ 1. College does not care
- ▶ 2. Poor Services
- ▶ 3. Finances
- ▶ 4. Grades
- ▶ 5. Educational Quality
- ▶ 6. Personal

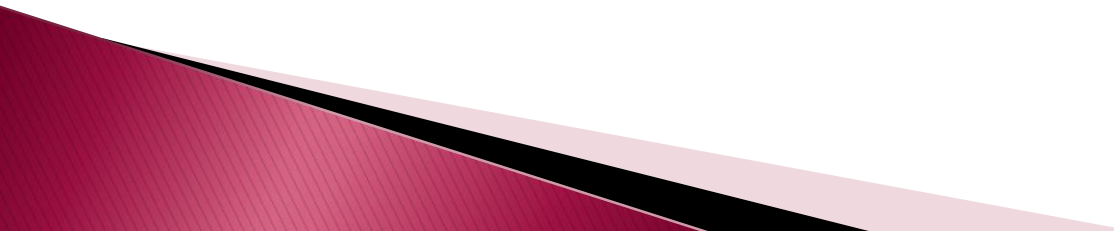


# Retention

- ▶ Is the obligation of the student as well as the obligation of the university.
- ▶ If either side defaults on the commitment; then the student leaving the college is inevitable.

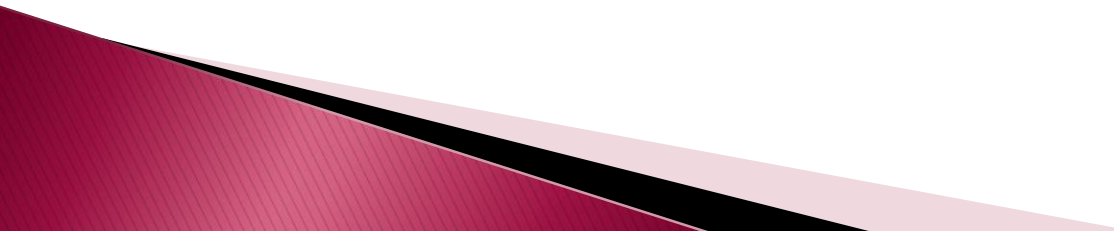


# Institutional Roles

- ▶ Provide adequate faculty and staff development
  - ▶ Commit to long-term process of program development
  - ▶ Place ownership of programs in the hands of those who can implement change
  - ▶ Make retention a campus wide approach
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# Impact on Field

- ▶ Retention impacts the creditability of the college
  - ▶ Graduation rates influence educational quality
  - ▶ Retention impacts employment statistics
  - ▶ Graduation rates influence the feasibility of the college
  - ▶ Retention fosters self-confidence and personal growth
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# Defining Retention

- ▶ Seidman (2004) suggests the use of different definitions for different types of institutions.
- ▶ Colleges have varying missions; therefore retention will be determined differently.
- ▶ *Retention equals early identification plus early intensive interventions.*
- ▶ *The major components of the above definition are : early identification and intensive intervention.*

# Definition

- ▶ For this presentation – *retention* will be defined as graduation from college.



# Vincent Tinto's Three Stage Process

- ▶ Students experience college in three stages:
  - Separation – leaving old behaviors and patterns of association
  - Transition – Managing the stress of leaving the familiar while not completely grasping the new college environment
  - Incorporation – Feeling proficient being a member of the college environment

# Strayhorn (2008)

- ▶ Of the 15 million undergraduates that enrolled in higher education institutions in the U. S.
- ▶ Fewer than 5% are African American Males
- ▶ Study had two dependent variables
  - Graduation rates and persistence

## Independent Variables

age, high school GPA, total amount of financial aid received, remedial coursework, credit hours attempted and credit hours earned

# Results of Study

- ▶ High School GPA is a predictor for retention and graduation rates
- ▶ Age and SAT scores are not significant in predicting retention or graduation rates.
- ▶ During the admission process, especially for African American males, more attention could be paid to high school GPA and less to standardized test scores.

# Maramba (2010)

- ▶ Explored factors that were important to retention and persistence of African American males
- ▶ Her study exposed four items that were significant to the success of these young men:
  - Relationship with parents, particularly the mother
  - Support from family
  - Access to positive role models
  - Religious Beliefs

# Tinto (1993)

- ▶ Recommended that students divorce themselves from former communities to facilitate academic and social integration into college. Most research done on this population recognizes that this is not pragmatic for this populace because in many cases, their support network lies outside the college community.



# Strategies for Retention

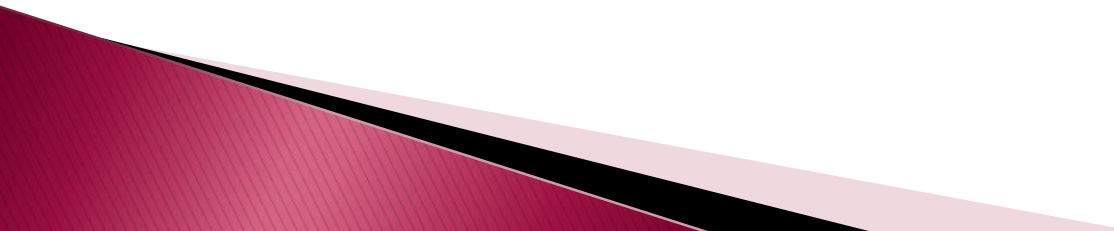
- ▶ Institutional Philosophy for Student Retention
  - Identify an individual within the institution to be the leader of the retention program
  - Organize a task force to develop and implement retention goals and the retention plan.



# Strategies for Retention

- ▶ Institutional Processes and Procedures
  - Provide staff training and orientation to aid institutional understanding and support of student retention
  - Identify current projects that support and encourage retention
  - Review recruiting and admission processes and forms to determine if the information gathered provides a solid foundation for retention strategies
  - Establish an early-warning system that lets faculty notify counselors, advisors, or tutors to assist students who are having difficulty in class

# Strategies for Retention/African American Males

- ▶ Cultivate relationships
  - ▶ Pay Attention to Early Warning Signs
  - ▶ Raise the Academic Bar
  - ▶ Make Learning Relevant
  - ▶ Keep the student engaged
  - ▶ Create Learning Communities/Cohorts
  - ▶ First Year Experience Program with a male focus
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# Conclusion

- ▶ The under-representation of African American males in education has serious repercussions not only for the men themselves, but also for our nation as a whole. Whenever a group of individuals is not interacting and achieving at optimum levels, the country is robbed of talent that could enrich the lives of many.

# Conclusion

- ▶ The retention of college students remains an important goal for all postsecondary institutions. However, the struggle to retain significant proportions of students is all too familiar for most colleges. It is the hope of this presenter that this dialogue will produce best practices that will foster greater retention thus producing higher graduation rates

# References

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- ▶ Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethink the causes and cures of student attrition* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.