

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF  
UNDERGRADUATES AS REPORTED BY AFRICAN AMERICAN  
GRADUATES OF TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY BETWEEN  
MAY 1998 AND DECEMBER 2003**

A Record of Study

by

JOHN GABRIEL HARNSBERRY

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

August 2005

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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## ABSTRACT

Factors Influencing the Recruitment and Retention of Undergraduates as Reported by  
African American Graduates of Texas A&M University Between  
May 1998 and December 2003. (August 2005)

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The purpose of this study was to examine the influential effects various factors had on the recruitment and the retention of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University, as perceived by those African Americans who had successfully completed their plans of study and received baccalaureate degrees between May 1998 and December 2003.

Data were acquired through e-mail surveys in which three massive e-mailings were broadcast from the collected files of The Association of Former Students of Texas A&M. In this survey, the questionnaire contained closed-ended questions with five-part Likert-type responses. Additionally, the African American alumni were provided the opportunity to recommend additional practices for future recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates at A&M.

An extensive review of the literature that supports this record of study regarding recruitment and retention of African American undergraduate students was made, and in the review, family involvement in education and home/school/campus characteristics

revealed numerous studies that support the positive relationship between family involvement in education and success. There is, however, evidence of barriers, frustration, and discouragement experienced by these African American undergraduate stakeholders in their campus relationships.

Research findings of this study included:

1. The research showed that for this population, the academic standing of A&M is the most influential recruitment practice. Recruitment efforts should concentrate on the most effective recruitment strategies by developing materials that highlight and focus on academic standing as reported by leading publications indicating how A&M is ranked against colleges and universities across the nation.
2. The research showed that the available curriculum at A&M is also an influential recruitment practice. From data discovered in this research, engineering, computer technology, psychology, and journalism were the most popular curriculum attraction to African American students.

Implications from the research include:

1. One significant difference was the finding that the African American females looked more favorably on an institution of higher learning that had a larger enrollment.
2. The other significant difference was the finding that African American males looked more favorably at institutions of higher learning that held higher national ranking in sports in which they were interested.

## **DEDICATION**

This record of study is dedicated to my wonderful lifetime girlfriend, Jamissa, who has been the encouragement and strength for me to reach my goal in education. For all you have done, thank you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I want to thank the Holy Trinity: God-the-Father, God-the-Son, and God-the-Holy Spirit. Without Him, I am nothing and can do nothing.

A very special thanks goes to my committee chair, Dr. Stephen L. Stark, who has provided me with the push and assistance since the very beginning of my master's program too many years ago to mention. Dr. Stark has been my institutional factor of recruitment and retention toward graduation that has spanned parts of four decades.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

President of Texas A&M University Robert Gates (personal communication, November 20, 2004), said of A&M: “It is different, there are certain values that Aggies share. They are loyal. They watch each other’s back. It’s a patriotic school...Above all, the thing that sets the Aggies apart is the sense of family.” This statement was made to a group of more than 100 students ranked in the top quarter of Alief Taylor’s senior class who listened to Robert Gates pitch the university as a welcoming place for students of all ethnicities. Gates also visited Houston’s Madison High School and Hightower High School in Fort Bend County as part of A&M’s effort to attract more minorities, particularly those who would be first-generation college students.

The Alief Taylor students watched a promotional video with scenes from midnight yell practice, the marching band’s football halftime performance, and cultural celebrations. They heard Kandance Krueger, a 2002 A&M graduate who won the 2001 Miss USA title, talk about the A&M community. The video ended with students from various ethnic groups giving a thumbs-up and repeating the phrase: “*I am A&M*” (Spencer, 2004).

The state’s second-largest university has struggled to recruit minority students. Three-quarters of Texas A&M’s 45,000 students during the fall 2004 to spring 2005 year were White, compared with 57% at The University of Texas at Austin. But the

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The style and format for this record of study follow that of *The Journal of Educational Research*.

freshman class was more diverse than any other in the past seven years. The class included 35% more Black students than fall 2003. While that percentage is high, the real number it represents – 55 more Black students – is less impressive (Spencer, 2004).

Before we start celebrating the increase in minority at Texas A&M University, let us take a close look at the real numbers. The double-digit percentage increases in minority students sounds great. The university shows a jump of 35% enrollment by African American students. However, those double-digit percentage figures reflect an actual increase of only 55 African American students, for a total enrollment of 213. These numbers place Texas A&M's minority enrollment at 15%, well below that of many other Texas colleges and universities. It is good to see that after a seven-year downward spiral in minority enrollment, one of Texas' two flagship schools is finally reversing that trend. But *more* needs to be done.

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year that colleges and universities could use race as an admission factor, A&M decided not to do so. Instead, the university announced 2,300 new scholarships for economically disadvantaged students and beefed up its minority recruitment. It also abandoned its long-held tradition of giving admission preference to relatives of alumni, the majority of whom are White. As evidenced by fall enrollment figures, only a little more than one-tenth of those new scholarships resulted in the recruitment of a minority student. A bigger effort to enroll minorities is in order if the statistics are to improve (Spencer, 2004). Senior Bryan Walwyn, who is Black, said afterward that he plans to apply and that he would feel

welcome at A&M. “I know a lot of past Taylor alums who have gone there,” he said. “I don’t really worry about race too much. I’ll be comfortable” (Spencer, 2004, p. B3).

As the percentage of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, continues to remain low, the number of African Americans receiving their baccalaureate degrees is even lower. For the student population of Texas A&M University to become more increasingly culturally and racially diverse, recruitment and retention practices that work are essential. The recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates at this university has become one of the most critical issues of this century. Over a half century ago, the Supreme Court of the United States took one step toward increasing the enrollment of African Americans in all schools by striking down the barriers that prevented them from attending previously all-White schools. Exactly 50 years ago, in the middle of the last century, a landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), was decided in a monumental decision that was handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court at 12:52 p.m. on May 17, 1954.

Ostensibly, it was about the right of a Black girl to attend a newer all-White school only seven blocks from her home instead of an older all-Black school more than a mile away. But *Brown v. Board of Education*, as the case came to be known, was always about much more than that. At its core was whether state governments could claim the right to sustain “separate but equal” schools and other public facilities, segregating Black Americans into a world of far less opportunity and denying them full participation in American life (Halberstam, 2004). The charge against segregated

schools did not come without a fight. Southern activists and politicians resisted the move and did much to stop integration from invading their states. The battle was long and hard, but progress finally came. The 1954 decision of the Supreme Court altered the economic, political, and social structure of this nation. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) helped change the United States forever.

In many ways, the educational map of the South is quite different. At the great universities of the Deep South – places where many a local politician once said that Blacks would never attend – Blacks not only hold degrees, they also teach (Halberstam, 2004).

Texas A&M University has confronted issues of African American recruitment and retention since the mid-1960's and early 1970's. The earlier initiatives mainly focused on recruitment; not until later has the issue of retention become just as important. During the 1960's, Texas A&M University, like other universities across the country, came under extreme pressure in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement and began some of its first Black programs, eventually resulting in institutional changes such as the establishment of Black study centers and curriculum changes (Bowen & Bok, 1998). There are varying perspectives on the reasons why there is a scarcity of African American students attending Texas A&M University: among them is the lack of African American instructors. There are also varying perspectives on the reasons why African American teachers are important and why the role they play in the education of minority students is important. African American students are in need of teachers who can understand and teach within the context of the African American

experience and who believe and expect them to be successful (King, 1993). No other professional group is more closely linked to African American students, parents, and communities than African American teachers (Larke & Larke, 1995). When operating a school without African American teachers, it can be viewed like teaching White supremacy without saying a word. The loss of African Americans in the educational setting has had a lasting negative impact on all students (Hudson, 1994).

The university began recruitment programs designed specifically for minorities in the 1960's. However, these early attempts were primarily voluntary and lacked an institutional commitment. White students used the summer provisional program of the 1960's, which was designed to benefit minorities more. In the early 1970's, the Office of Admissions hired a staff to work on minority admissions. In 1974, the cornerstone of the minority admissions (recruitment) program, the Texas Achievement Award (TAA), was created (Dixon, 1993).

Members of many groups are found at Texas A&M University in lesser numbers than that of the general population. The under-representation of any racial group is an indication of discrimination. In fact, from 1980 to 1984, African Americans represented the highest number of college dropouts; this is particularly discouraging, especially in light of the fact that the number of African Americans attending colleges declined, while the number of African Americans' graduation from high school increased (Colon, 1991). There were 40,000 more African American students enrolled in college in 1976 than in 1984. In fact, by 1993, college enrollment for White

individuals was 41% and for African Americans it was 33% (Ross, 1998). As noted by Nora and Cabrera (1996):

College participation by minority students declined in the middle 1980's following a period of sustained growth. This trend was particularly evident among African Americans...who exhibited both the lowest participation rates as well as the highest propensity to drop out from college. (p. 119).

The admission of an identifiable group of greatly under-qualified African American students is a prescription for frustration, resentment, loss of self-esteem, and racial animosity. Thus are born demands for African American studies and multiculturalism that perform the necessary support for the view that academic difficulties of African American students are due in part to a larger measure of cultural misunderstanding (Graglia, 1993). In the mid-1990's, 40 years after *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), most U.S. students had not encountered an African American educator, and about 70% of all minority students attended predominately or exclusively minority schools (Hudson, 1994). Initiatives must be established to assure a more culturally enlightened nation (Page & Page, 1991). Ineffective recruitment techniques are affecting recruitment of African Americans (Hudson, 1994).

In order to retain African Americans at Texas A&M University, there needs to be strong recruitment and retention practices utilized by the university. In order for young African Americans in today's society to have African American role models besides rap stars and athletes, there needs to be a push to recruit and retain African American students and help them be successful at least until they complete their baccalaureate degrees.



### **Statement of the Problem**

Appiah and Gutmann (1996) admonished that “In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois proclaimed that ‘the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line.’ As we approach the end of the millennium, the accuracy of DuBois’s prophecy is beyond dispute” (p. 3).

We have passed the end of the twentieth century and are now in the first decade of the twenty-first century. What is most disconcerting about this larger societal ill is the fact that universities are experiencing the effects, with an increase in the resegregation of our university campuses. In fact, enrollment on Black college campuses by African American students is increasing, while African American student enrollment on White campuses is decreasing (Delgado, 1996).

Texas A&M University has confronted issues of African American recruitment and retention since the mid-1960’s and early 1970’s (Bowen & Bok, 1998). The author further stated that the earlier initiatives mainly focused on recruitment; not until later has the issue of retention become just as important. Finally, Bowen stated that during the 1960’s, Texas A&M University, like other universities across the country, came under extreme pressure in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement and began some of its first Black programs, eventually resulting in institutional changes such as the establishment of Black study centers and curriculum changes.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examined the factors influencing the recruitment and retention of undergraduates as reported by African American graduates of Texas A&M University. The study also examined the demographic profile of African Americans who received their baccalaureate degrees from Texas A&M University during the years May 1998 to December 2003.

### **Research Questions**

Answers to the following questions were sought in this study:

1. Do recruitment practices influence undergraduates to attend Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?
2. Do the retention practices influence undergraduates to remain until graduation at Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?
3. Is there a relationship between selected variables and successful completion of degree programs of African American graduates at Texas A&M University as self-reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?

### **Operational Definitions**

The following definitions were applied to this research:

*African American:* A citizen of the United States who is of African decent and especially Black regardless of nationality.

*Factors:* One that actively contributes to an accomplishment.

*Graduates:* African American students who remain until completion with a baccalaureate degree.

*Influencing:* A power affecting a person, or course of events, especially one that operates without any direct or apparent effort.

*Recruitment:* Encouraging new students to enter Texas A&M University.

*Recruitment Practices:* Factors that are specifically stated on the survey that influence a student to select Texas A&M University as an academic institution of higher learning.

*Retention:* The ability to retain a student until graduation.

*Retention Practices:* Factors that influence a student to remain until graduation.

*Selected Variables:* The choice of a quantity that may assume any one of a set of values. Those selected variables being among the following:

1. Demographics
  - a. Mentor (Who was the mentor?)
  - b. Birth ranking in family
  - c. Gender
  - d. Age of student during university tenure
  - e. Work experience prior to attending the university
  - f. Extracurricular activities prior to post secondary
2. Support
  - a. Financial
  - b. Social
  - c. Personal
3. Major
  - a. Department
  - b. Classes taken
4. Career Goals

*Successful Completion:* Having received a baccalaureate degree from Texas A&M University.

*Texas A&M University:* The fourth largest land grant university in the United States with an enrollment of 46,000 and an African American percentage of 2.3.

*Undergraduates:* University students attending classes up to the moment of receiving a baccalaureate degree.

*May 1998 to December 2003:* The most recent five-year period with data available for the purposes of this study.

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions were applied to this research:

1. The respondents surveyed understood the scope of the study, the language of the instrument, were competent in self-reporting, and responded objectively and honestly.
2. The methodology proposed and described here offered a logical and appropriate design for this particular project.
3. Interpretation of the data collected accurately reflected the intent of the respondent.

### **Limitations**

The research was limited to the following factors:

1. This research was bound by its context. The findings were not generalizable to any other group of students or universities. This information may be biased because it was collected from those who had graduated.

2. This study was limited to the information acquired from the literature review and survey instruments.
3. Findings were generalized only to African American graduates of Texas A&M University from May 1998 to December 2003. In no way can this generalization apply to those who applied but were not accepted to Texas A&M University.

## **Methodology**

### *Procedures*

The researcher obtained information concerning the factors influencing recruitment and retention of African American students through a survey instrument that was formulated from a questionnaire modified by the author. The data collection guidelines were used to obtain standardized information from the subjects in a given population (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). This contained an analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaires. Through Likert-type rating scales for 25 questions, African American graduates responded to statements defining particular practices of recruitment and retention. Information for the study was also provided through two open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire.

The Association of Former Students identified African American graduates from Texas A&M University and e-mailed the survey of questions to their e-mail addresses to make certain privacy of the graduates was protected. If an acceptable response rate was not secured after the initial two-week period to the addressees who did not return the questionnaire within this timeframe, a second e-mail follow-up was

sent to achieve an acceptable number response rate. As a final process, a third e-mail was made to non-respondents to try to maximize the response rate. Consent was given by the participants to become a part of the population by returning the questionnaire.

### *Data Analysis*

The results of the study were reported using appropriate quantitative techniques according to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003). Using the frequency distribution procedure and the necessary statistics to calculate each questionnaire statement, appropriate tables and graphs were developed to present the data.

### **Significance Statement**

Recruitment refers to the success of an institution to enroll a student; it involves the services and advantages that an institution offers. Often these include housing, scholarships and financial aid, degrees, and majors offered. Peripheral factors like the location of the campus, its reputation and rank, and even its athletic programs may also affect a student's decision (Coleman & Dixon, 1993).

How the *Hopwood v. Texas* (1996) decision has affected Texas universities and how universities could address the new challenges in recruiting and retaining minority students punctuated the Thursday afternoon (February 12) session of the second annual Conference on Minorities and Policy Issues, that was held at the George Bush Presidential Conference Center on the Texas A&M University campus ("How the Hopwood," 2000). The conference notes further stated: "Yet, even before the Hopwood decision, which held that colleges and universities could no longer consider race when making admission decisions, Texas A&M had been dealing with difficult decisions on

admittance because students in the large applicant pool were equally qualified, regardless of race” (“How the Hopwood,” 2000, para. 3).

Currently, there are limited quantitative data available drawing correlations between the recruitment and retention of African American students and those who remain until they graduate from Texas A&M University. The state of Texas is becoming more racially diverse each day. This study provides data specific to African Americans holding baccalaureate degrees from Texas A&M University.

The intent of this study was to ultimately contribute additional research-based literature on the debate on affirmative action versus race-based admissions to institutions of higher learning. African American graduates of Texas A&M University offered insight into the factors that influenced them to attend and remain there until they graduated with a baccalaureate degree. The quantitative reporting and comparative analyses presented during the course of this study have practical implications for Texas A&M University and its future (students).

### **Contents of the Record of Study**

The record of study is organized into five major divisions or chapters. Chapter I contains an introduction, a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and a research significance statement. Chapter II contains a review of the literature. The methodology and procedures implemented in the data collection are found in Chapter III. Chapter IV reports the analysis and comparisons of the data collected in the study. Chapter V, the

final chapter, presents the researcher's summary, conclusions, and implications in addition to recommendations for future study.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the current literature that supports the study recruitment and retention of African American undergraduate students at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. The literature review has been organized into information concerning practices for recruiting African Americans and information concerning practices for retaining African Americans at Texas A&M University.

#### Introduction

Kerr (1982) observes that from ancient times, the main purpose of the university, as a social institution, has been to produce knowledge. He also suggested that knowledge eventually leads to changes in the political, economic, and cultural nature of our society. As mentioned earlier in Chapter I, events leading to *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) were the prevention of African Americans from accessing a larger world of opportunity and denying them full participation in American life. Higher education in the United States has had the ability to redefine itself depending on academic and social considerations from colonial times to the present (Boyer, 1992). To the causal observer, one might come to the conclusion that if African Americans were kept from mainstream institutions of higher education, it would hinder their involvement in the political, economic, and cultural processes mentioned above. For the individual student, however, a university education means something much more tangible. Many people fear that the United States will continue to decline in economic power if African Americans are not brought more into the

education process. Without developing and tapping into the potential of the African American population, the United States may not be able to compete in a high-technology, economically competitive marketplace (Schlechty & Vance, 1993). Tinto (1993) finds that student departure without completing a degree hampers a student's lifetime earning potential and entry into prestigious positions in society. Murdock (1996) estimates that a college graduate can expect to earn one million dollars more, over a lifetime of earnings, than an individual without a college degree.

The current graduation of all students who begin a university education in the United States is less than 50% (Tinto, 1993). Student departure is highest during the first year, accounting for almost half of the attrition rate (Erickson & Strommer, 1991).

Recruitment and retention are interrelated and tend to overlap. Recruitment refers to the success of an institution to enroll a student; it involves the services and advantages that an institution offers. Often, these include housing, scholarships and financial aid, degrees, and majors offered. Peripheral factors like the location of the campus, its reputation and rank, and even its sports program, may also affect a student's decision. Retention is the success of an institution to graduate a student. A good retention program analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of each incoming class and adjusts its programs to both improve the student and intervene where possible. Retention encompasses tutorial, supplemental, and remedial courses to counseling, programs that aid in adjustment, prompt delivery of services and assistance, the attitudinal perception of the university, social environment, and financial assistance. The collective university impacts recruitment and retention; however, in most cases it

is not an acknowledged, nor is it a shared responsibility. Ultimately, experts agree that the best recruitment program is good retention (Coleman & Dixon, 1993).

Tinto (1993) proffers that attrition may be caused by a variety of factors, some of which include work and family responsibilities, which is also corroborated by Bean (1990), Chickering (1974), and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991). This is especially true for students from less affluent families (Manski & Wise, 1983).

There is heavy competition for admission into what are generally considered to be “best” universities in the United States. According to Manning (1977), universities fall into one of two classifications in terms of undergraduate admissions: open and selective. The most popular colleges and universities are considered to be “selective,” which means, according to Klitgaard (1985), admitting only one half of the applicants who meet their admissions standards.

The focus of this study was the fourth largest public land grant university in the United States, Texas A&M University, located in College Station, Texas. Using McPherson and Shapiro (1990), who defined “selective” admissions as admitting 75% or less of the freshman undergraduate applicant pool, Texas A&M University could be classified as being selective in the area of admissions. Fernandez (2002) noted that when examined carefully, Texas A&M University admissions appear to have no hidden or subjective criteria that students must meet to be admitted. Rather, the stated admission criteria are written boldly within the admission application material, unlike “virtually all institutions” that keep their undergraduate student admissions selection process general and vague (Beatty, Greenwood, & Linn, 1999). For instance, the Texas

A&M University 2001-2002 undergraduate application plainly states that Texas public high school students who rank in the top 10% or higher are automatically admitted. If not in the top 10%, the student applicants are placed into a review category. High school course work, class rank, standardized test scores, information provided on the application, and an optional essay are all taken into selection consideration (Texas A&M University, 2001). The application-processing fee of 50% may contribute to self-selecting behavior of would-be applicants. From 1994 through 1997, the admission rate for freshman applicants averaged 69% (Texas A&M University, 1998), which confirms to the “selective” model offered by McPherson and Shapiro (1990) above.

The recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates has increased in importance socially and economically for Texas. The necessity to be attuned to the total society and what must be done in the years ahead requires planning and action. The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) case was reviewed in Chapter I, and this review summarizes the background of the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), Texas A&M University’s response to *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), a review of concerns reported regarding recruiting and retaining African Americans, and an examination of strategies reported by African American graduates of Texas A&M University during the timeframe May 1998-December 2003.

Background to the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* Case (1954):

Before *Brown*, the separate but equal doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) prevailed. In 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) legitimized separate educational facilities by making it a legal practice as decided by the United States Supreme Court). In 1899, the high court again affirmed the notion of “separate but equal” in *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education* (1899). In 1950, The U.S. Supreme Court again affirmed the “separate but equal” doctrine in *Sweat v. Painter* (1950)...Because the *Brown* (1954) decision arose from cases which involved only elementary and secondary schools – not colleges and universities – there was some initial doubt in a variety of corners, about whether the *Brown* (1954) decision would apply to public colleges and universities... The mandate of *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954) was clear on segregation in public education... Three years after the *Brown* (1954) decision, 52% of the formerly all-White colleges in the south had token desegregation. (Fernandez, 2002, pp. 6-9)

In 1964, the United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Act (1964). “*Brown* was followed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964” (Fernandez, 2002, p. 31). Bender and Blanco (1987) noted: “This comprehensive legislature had and continues to have an enormous impact on higher education... Basically, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination in any program which receives federal funds” (p. 57).

With the passage of that legislation, enrollment of African American students in higher education became an important higher-education issue. The educational environment between public school and universities was a sharp contrast. Although colleges and universities in Texas made recruiting African Americans a priority, there was a question as to whether African Americans were as equally prepared as their White peers to achieve a college education. Because of the exponential advancements made by African Americans, affirmative action, on different levels is considered useless by many. First of all, the assertion is made that affirmative action is completely

ineffective because African Americans lack the development required to take advantage of such a program (Steele, 1996). Second, and probably more erroneous, is the belief that affirmative action, as Snidermann and Piazza (1996) explained, has widened the racial divide; because Whites dislike affirmative action, this animosity causes their dislike of Blacks. In short, Snidermann and Piazza (1996) argued that a “high proportion of Whites – and for that matter, Blacks, too – perceive Blacks to be failing to make a genuine effort to work hard and overcome their problems on their own” (p. 61). Therefore, affirmative action creates hostilities and racial divides, the same divides it was established to help alleviate.

In 1973 in Florida, a challenge to the Title VI of the Civil Rights became the basis of another case, *Adams v. Richardson* (1973); Florida had to develop specific plans for equalization of educational opportunity in public higher education at both the university and two-year college levels. That plan was revised in 1977 and became the basis for Florida’s plan for equalizing educational opportunity in its public university and community.

### **Texas Responds to *Bakke* and *Hopwood***

The Supreme Court ruling in the *Bakke* case (*Regents of University of California v. Bakke*, 1978) made the term “reverse discrimination” a common expression. Reverse discrimination became a popular term to describe situations in which majority group members experienced the reverse role effect of being on the receiving end of discrimination as a result of ethnic affiliation due in large part to affirmative action policies being applied. The *Bakke* case made it illegal to have

separate admissions standards for different groups. The results of *Bakke* did not outlaw the use of race as a legitimate admissions criterion and was used across the nation until *Hopwood v. Texas*, in 1996, to be explained later in this chapter.

As early as October 1977, the Commissioner of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), Dr. Kenneth Ashworth, commented in a report that “called for removal of any formal dualism and cautioned against replacing it with a now form of social rigidity” (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1978, p. 6). The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board discussed the possibility of the state being reviewed by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) in 1978. Before that meeting, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1978) stated that the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) visited 18 public college campuses to review their compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and reported that “Texas may be required to develop a state desegregation plan if HEW officials conclude that a significant disparity exists between opportunities for Whites and those for minorities” (p. 2).

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1978) Report followed the *Bakke* case as it progressed through the courts, and Commissioner Ashworth noted that the results of the Supreme Court decision, “leaves the political process open to promote the recruitment and admission of more minorities” (p. 1). In February, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1978) noted:

After finding vestiges of a racially dual system of higher education in Texas, the Education Department on January 15 agreed to provisionally accept a plan designed to bring the state’s public colleges and universities into compliance

with federal civil rights statutes... The plan was submitted... in an effort to prevent initiation of administrative enforcement proceedings or litigation against the state by the Education Department. (p. 1)

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1978), Attorney General Mark White negotiated the plan with the broadest commitment requiring the state to “vigorously pursue” the following specific objectives, without adopting any quotas, to be met by no later than fall 1986:

1. That the proportion of Black high school graduates throughout the state who enter two-year and four-year undergraduate public higher education institutions, be taken as a whole, at least be equal to the proportion of White high school graduates throughout the state who enter such institutions.
2. That the disparities be reduced by at least 50% between the proportion of White high school graduates entering traditionally White four-year and upper-division undergraduate public higher education institutions in the state and the proportions of Black high school graduates entering such institutions in the state.
3. That the proportions of Black Texas graduates from undergraduate institutions in the state system who enter graduate study or professional schools in the state system at least be equal to the proportion of White Texas graduates from undergraduate institutions in the state system who enter such school.
4. That the proportion of White students entering traditionally Black institutions be increased, while any disparity be reduced between the proportion of Black students and the proportion of White students completing and graduating from the two-year, four-year, and graduate state higher education institutions. (pp. 1, 5)

Additional actions were required to be completed between February and June 1981, “to help assure that the state [was] in full compliance with civil rights statutes on June 15 when provisional acceptance of the voluntary plan expires” (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1978, p. 5). These included (a) providing the OCR a



mission statement for each institution removing race from the statement; (b) providing recruiting and retention plans from campuses of The University of Texas, Texas A&M University, and The University of Houston Systems if they had not developed such plans; (c) providing OCR with detailed plans “to strengthen Prairie View A&M University and...to eliminate unnecessary program duplication within the A&M system” (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1978, p. 5); (d) developing programs for the above-mentioned systems to increase the numbers of African American faculty and administrative personnel with other institutions being encouraged to do the same; (e) providing OCR an interim report for strengthening Texas Southern University’s role plus specific improvements for the physical plant and equipment, quality and range of course offerings, and improvement of faculty both in quality and quantity; (f) giving OCR commitments of state officials to achieve compliance with Title VI; (g) giving OCR recruiting and retention plans for major two-year and four-year schools outside of the aforementioned systems so as to meet the goals for minority enrollment developing specific numerical goals and timelines for improving minority participation in graduate and professional studies; and (h) providing OCR any additional information on specific strategies employed to meet full compliance with Title VI.

The then-Governor of Texas, Bill Clements, made a statement that Texas was not in violation of the *Adams v. Richardson* (1973) case and immediately appointed a desegregation committee (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1978) while the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board was contemplating actions to meet the

requirements of the *Adams v. Richardson* (1973) case. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1978) published comments concerning the delay of progress in the *Adams v. Richardson* (1973) case and took action to improve credit transfers to universities, which aided in the programs to recruit Blacks.

Yet, by August, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Report stated the desegregation plan had set minority enrollment goals and in May-June, the Coordinating Board Report, reported that 398 minority students received legislative grants with additional funds allotted to 30 universities. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Report noted that funding was being sought from the legislature for a staff facility and a desegregation monitoring system. In February, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1978) Report related a consultant report of studies on Prairie View A&M and Texas Southern University indicating that the respective “campuses were less attractive than the six predominantly white campuses with which they were compared” (p. 1). The submission of revised desegregation proposals to OCR along with the notation of a revision of the scholarship guidelines to improve integration were reported in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Report. In August, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Report indicated that the desegregation plan had been approved by the federal offices and action to implement policies to meet the pledges in pursuit of the enrollment goals was under way. This was followed by a report in February that a panel was studying the problems of Blacks in college and by July, improvements at Texas Southern University and

Prairie View A&M were being reported (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1978).

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Report, the final approval for the desegregation plan was given in July. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Report carried articles on minorities in science and engineering and noted progress while urging action on the desegregation issues. The situation was changing as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1978) Report stated that “Texas universities retain fewer minorities than whites; nearly 10 percent more blacks dropped out than whites” (p. 7). The situation stagnated by summer when the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1978) Report indicated that “minority recruitment was showing little result” (p. 6). The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Report (1978) headlined that “minority recruitment far short of goals: One year left in Texas Plan” (p. 1) and emphasized to the Coordinating Board that “a combination of economic, social, and political factors is responsible for low, and in some cases, declining minority enrollment” (pp. 1-2).

The environment for African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University worsened in 1997 when the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, in a case that has become known as “*Hopwood*” (*Hopwood v. Texas*, 1996), made it illegal for Texas colleges and universities to use race as a factor in considering students for admission, in awarding financial aid, and admitting students into retention programs. The *Hopwood* case’s resulting legal action was implemented for students entering college for the first time in 1997, and its implications are beyond the scope of this paper.

However, *Hopwood* is nonetheless mentioned here to show another legal action affecting African American educational opportunities and to assure the reader that data used for this study were post-*Hopwood* data and as a result, the *Hopwood* case did play a role in the admission and retention of the subjects in the study.

### **Texas A&M University Reacts to the University of Michigan Decisions**

In June 2003, supporters of affirmative action cheered as the U.S. Supreme Court upheld factoring race into college admission (Pope, 2004). The decisions in these two cases involving the University of Michigan would ensure racial diversity for many of America's selective colleges and universities. Pope further says "but in the months since, some of the sheen has come off their victory" (p. B7). The win came after a decade in which legal uncertainty and public pressure had caused colleges to shy away from the most overt forms of affirmative action, and supporters think some colleges are gun-shy. Texas A&M University decided not to factor race into admissions decisions even after the court cleared it to do so (Pope, 2004).

Why African American students do not come to Texas A&M University: As of 1991, 23,271 African Americans graduated from high school in Texas. Only 2.8% of the total student body was African American. There is some consensus that much of the recruitment problem lies with the poor state of the public school system in Texas. Public higher education institutions, however, must adjust and compensate for this problem. Recruitment *per se* is largely an issue of access. Recruitment is primarily concerned with five main issues, (a) the application process (inclusive of academic

qualifications), (b) financial aid and scholarship assistance, (c) housing, (d) perception, and lastly (e) size and location (distance) (Dixon, 1993).

Many students are instructed to start the application during the middle of their high school careers. Short of not always receiving direct input from their high school counselors, one of the first stumbling blocks in the decision to apply for admission to Texas A&M University could possibly be as simple as the required fee requested to be submitted with the application. The application-processing fee of \$50 may contribute to self-selecting behavior of would-be applicants. From 1994 through 1997, the admission rate for freshman applicants averaged 69% (Texas A&M University, 1998), which conforms to the “selective” model suggested by McPherson and Shapiro (1990).

Before retention can occur, college students follow the first steps of entering college, which is commonly known as gaining admission into an institution of higher learning. Students are admitted based on a variety of factors that include: (a) standardized exams such as the American College Test (ACT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), (b) high school grades, (c) high school curriculum, and (d) potential to succeed (Portales, 1999). Retention can also be analyzed when various student and institutional factors are taken into consideration so as to form a “fit” that helps the student achieve desired academic outcomes such as graduation (Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980). Institutional factors for retention may include programs such as orientation, advising and counseling, learning centers, and services for non-traditional students (Garland, 1985). Other programs or services that may affect retention include career planning, teaching of writing, research skills (Maxwell, 1979), and offering

remedial-type courses (Cahalen, 1986). Tinto (1993) developed theories that resemble those by Starr, Betz, and Menne. These authors introduced the notion that a person-environment fit exists (Starr, Betz, & Menne, 1972). Within the broad range of academic and social pressures found in college, college students hope to find what these authors call congruence or fit. If students find success in achieving congruence within their college environment, they are more likely to be retained than students who do not find congruence or fit. Cope and Hannah (1975) also suggested that a lack of fit might be central to the understanding of retention. A group led by Flannery et al. (1973) developed another theory similar to congruence. In their research, these scientists did find attrition as the difference between attainment and expectation. Students who failed to attain their personal expectations were more likely not to be retained.

Another author Alfred (1974) drew on what he termed “Symbolic Interaction Theory” to glean insights into understanding undergraduate student attrition. Using a complex matrix of variables and applying chi-square statistical methods to derive meaningful outcomes from his research, he found that several of his factors correlated significantly with attrition. These factors that Alfred (1974) identified as playing a significant part in attrition behavior include the following: enrollment status, class attendance, classification level, gender, age, veteran status, self-income, residency, financial status, financial-aid intentions, work status, method of transportation, purpose of being in college, reason for selecting college, career plans, continued education plans, and type of degree plans.

The majority of these factors were taken into consideration during the research for this record of study. Astin (1975) indicated that students who had dropout tendencies had predictive group indicators. These included students with poor past academic performance, low career aspirations, poor study habits, parents with low educational attainment, and being raised in small or rural towns. Group retention was also improved if students had similar characteristics to students who were already enrolled at the college on personal characteristics such as hometown size, religion, and race. Tinto (1993) found that there was no significant relationship between the characteristics of parental income and academic ability and retention. Additionally, Astin (1977) found that gender might influence retention. Other personal traits that appear important to retention have also been identified. For example, traditionally aged students are more likely to persist than older-than-average students (Astin, 1975).

#### *Areas of Residency*

Some researchers looked at where students live and how that affects retention. In summary, students who lived in college-owned residence halls (commonly referred to as dorms or dormitories) had a higher tendency to be retained than students who lived off campus (Alfert, 1966; Astin, 1975, 1977, 1993; Bolyard & Martin, 1973; Chickering, 1974; Nasatir, 1969). The reasons for this phenomenon were stated in general as developing living/learning communities; although very interesting, they are beyond the scope of this study.

### *Retention and Study Skills*

Frysinger (1998) in his study focused on special course work designed to increase retention. He suggested that at least 50% of four-year institutions of higher learning offered a course whose main purpose was to teach study skills. Seventy-seven percent of institutions surveyed had a course aimed at helping students cope with college. The literature supported the intent for offering these special courses in order to affect retention positively. Haislett and Hafer (1990) observed that focused interventions, i.e., study skills courses, are needed to improve student motivation.

An additional study of special programs aimed at increasing retention, Landis (1992) identified and discussed how a multitude of colleges around the country are successfully implementing special programs and courses aimed at admitting and retaining “at-risk” students. Even though the focus of Landis’ research was based on remedial type of intervention strategy, he did indicate that there was a great amount of interest among college administrators in increasing retention rates through the use of special course work.

Countless local and national projects have been launched to reshape the curriculum, instruction, assessment, school organization and governance, and the professional roles of educators. It is not necessary to point out that African American students are behind their White peers to the lowest academic tracks and to special education (Lipman, 1995).

What is interesting is that Astin (1993) found that taking remedial, developmental, reading, or study skills courses were not “associated with any outcome



of note” (p. 380), which contradicts findings of other researchers and noted above. Texas A&M University had such a course: CAEN 101 (“Succeeding in College”) offered through the Center for Academic Enhancement). Frysinger (1998) described the course as not being remedial in nature, but rather, it was intended to refine students’ study skills and provide students with information to their success at Texas A&M University.

Despite the dismal failure to positively educate African American students, many schools do have teachers who nurture the academic excellence and cultural integrity of African American students. The real difference between successful and unsuccessful African American students is successful teachers who are engaged in culturally relevant teaching. This kind of teaching uses the students’ culture to help them achieve success and allows students to achieve academic excellence without losing a sense of personal and cultural identity (Harry, 1996).

A quick reference to retention is reflected in two longitudinal studies: Donavan (1984) and Eddins, as cited in Tinto (1993); it was found that low-income African American students departed primarily due to academic behavior rather than the impact of social integration. Other research has shown that the presence of a multiracial staff facilitates the integration process by dispelling myths of racial inferiority and incompetence (Rong, 1996).

#### *Financial Aid and Student Work*

Financial aid has been studied as a factor in the retention of several studies but not to the extent of other retention factors (Nieto, 1999). Astin (1975) found that

student work correlated positively with retention as long as the following elements related to work were also present: (a) students worked less than 25 hours per week, (b) the work was on the campus, (c) college work was begun as a freshman, and (d) the student received little to no governmental aid in the form of loans or grants. Reliance on loans alone for completing a degree was negatively correlated with retention. Another study suggested that receiving financial aid had no effect on retention.

During a 20-year period, research related to financial aid in its relation to retention shifted significantly. Astin (1975) in his analysis stated that the awarding of financial aid had significantly positive effects on retention. But in 1991, Pascarella and Terenzini reported that the awarding of financial aid had a mixed or even negative impact on the retention of students. In 1993, Astin agreed with Pascarella and Terenzini's (1991) reportings. Astin (1993) reported that institutional grants and scholarships have a positive effect on retention, while federal grants and loans have a negative effect on retention. Astin reasoned that institutional recognition might motivate students as a result of institutional aid being awarded based on merit and that students are more motivated by achievement-driven methods. Varieties of federal aid, such as loans and grants, may have become an automatic fixture in some students' minds and correlated negatively with characteristics such as achievement and retention.

Fernandez (2002) reported in his dissertation that on the average, a higher proportion of African American undergraduate students, compared to White undergraduate students, received need-based financial aid.

*Department (Discipline)*

**Key Findings on Financial Aid in Texas**

The following numbered items are key findings that illustrate the current state of financial aid for Texas undergraduates as found by Sharp (1998).

1. Approximately 35% of Texas undergraduates received some form of need-based aid from 1996 to 1997.
2. For students receiving need-based financial aid, 9 out of every 10 financial aid dollars were provided by the federal government, although the state did provide more aid than in past budget cycles.
3. Loans make up 75% of need-based financial aid disbursed to undergraduate students.
4. On average, higher proportions of African American undergraduate students, compared to White undergraduate students, receive need-based financial aid.
5. The average debt incurred by Texas undergraduate students attending public colleges and universities was approximately \$12,000 (from 1996 to 1997).

The information above agrees with Astin's (1975) findings regarding the relationship between financial aid and student development (student growth related to social-integration). In 1975, Astin found that financial aid in the form of work-study and scholarships had a positive impact on student-development, and loans had a negative effect on student development.

Looking at the above data, if proportionally more minority students than White students received some form of financial aid, minority students should be retained in higher percentages. However, data show minority students are retained in lower percentages than Whites (Sharp, 1998). Astin (1993) explains that during the last 20 years, the awarding formulas of financial aid, including loans, has changed to the point that the awarding of financial aid no longer has a discernable relationship to student development, except in the case of merit-based grants and scholarships awarded by the college. Astin (1993) further explains that one reason for a lack of a discernable influence on the relationship between student development and state or federal aid may be the perception that “students may view such aid pretty much as an entitlement that is awarded on a more or less mechanical basis” (p. 396).

### **Major Selections**

Astin and Holland (1961) researched the concept of student selection of major area of concentration from a global orientation rather than from an individual student’s point of view. From their studies, they suggested that college retention could be influenced by the concentration or predominance of various fields of study. Then in 1993, Astin reported that a re-testing of recent college and college students, selection of academic majors may or may not impact retention. He indicated that several academic majors had no significant effect on student outcomes such as retention. Those academic majors included agriculture as well as mathematics and statistics. Of the other academic majors studied by Astin in 1993, seven had significant outcomes related to retention or degree aspirations. Astin (1993) reported that students who selected the

biological sciences, education, psychology, or social sciences as initial academic majors were found to have high degree aspirations. Additionally, Astin (1993) found that students who chose physical sciences or psychology were found to have a high correlation to degree completion. Moreover, Astin concluded that students who chose engineering or health sciences had a negative correlation with degree completion and retention.

### *Faith in the African American Culture*

Faith is necessary for African American students to survive in America today; hope is the ground from which expectations spring. Many African Americans openly acknowledge the central role of faith and hope in their everyday lives and pass this on to their students. Trust has to be established between reality and role of African American teachers with the expectations of the students (Dillard, 1994).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The purpose of this study was to identify which perceived factors used to influence recruitment and retention of African American students at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, have been effective. African American graduates of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, between May 1998 and December 2003, who received a baccalaureate and who had active e-mail accounts as identified by The Association of Former Students were surveyed because of their insight as to what recruitment and retention practices were important to them. The study attempted to identify practices within the population that were perceived to be useful in the recruitment and retention, and this study attempted to discern which were effective practices.

The author obtained information concerning the factors influencing recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University through a survey instrument that was formulated from a questionnaire modified by the author. The data-collection guidelines were used to obtain standardized information from the subjects in a given population (Gall et al., 1996). This chapter contains an analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaires. Through Likert-type ratings scales for 25 questions, African American graduates of Texas A&M University responded by e-mail to statements defining particular practices of recruitment and retention. Information for

the study was provided through two-open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire.

These particular persons in the computer bank of The Association of Former Students of Texas A&M University were chosen to complete the survey because of their ethnic background and alumni status. This chapter describes the procedures used to: (a) identify the research population, (b) modify the questionnaire, and (c) collect and analyze the data.

### **Population**

The population under investigation in this study was African Americans who graduated from Texas A&M University with a baccalaureate degree between May 1998 and December 2003 and had active e-mail addresses as identified by The Association of Former Students. Descriptive statistics were employed because the entire population in this category was studied. The Association of Former Students of Texas A&M University queried this population from its computer files of students who identified themselves as African Americans, who graduated during that five-year span of time, and had listed e-mail addresses with The Association of Former Students.

To receive an acceptable number of responses by July 21, 2004, all 239 alumni were e-mailed the instrument to their most recent listed address. Acknowledgement of participation was made by the subjects returning the completed survey. A lack of response indicated a declination to participate in the survey. The initial e-mail sent out resulted in 39 rejections because either e-mail addresses had been changed or disconnected. Over the next ten days, there were received a total of 41 completed

responses from the surveyed population. The researcher decided to send a second e-mail on July 30, 2004, with a comment asking all who had received and responded to disregard the second request and accept thanks for responding timely. The net population was 200; therefore, the return rate was 75.5%. Each gender was represented.

The responses included in this research were distributed into two categories and are shown in Table 3.1. Each category represented a gender graduated.

Table 3.1. African American Students Who Responded by Gender Who Graduated With a Baccalaureate Degree From Texas A&M University

Male	Female	Responses
45	106	151

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher designed the cover letter (Appendix A) to provide information to the participants about the research. A cover letter accompanied each questionnaire (Appendix B) that was e-mailed to all African Americans who had graduated from Texas A&M University from May 1998 through December 2003 and who had listed e-mail addresses with The Association of Former Students of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.

A test run for instrument clarity was conducted during late spring of 2004 with African American managers, librarians, and leaders of the Austin Public Library as the



participants. These participants were encouraged to indicate clarification needs of the survey and suggested additional recruitment and retention practices. Refinements were made on the survey to achieve better responses with the e-mailed instrument. Following the revision of the questionnaire, the group met again to further review and critique the document. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

The questionnaire that was revised by the researcher followed a standard procedure recommended by Gall et al. (1996) and was used to measure factors that influence the recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. The researcher's review of the literature supported the content of the questionnaire.

The first portion of the questionnaire, which is included in Appendix B, requested information about participants and their background. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of recruitment and retention practices. The Likert-type scale was used and questionnaire participants responded to a series of statements by designating: VE - very encouraging, E - encouraging, D - discouraging, VD - very discouraging, and N/A - not applicable. The third part of the questionnaire permitted the participants to respond to two open-ended questions concerning any additional information the participant thought should be included. The results from each item were tabulated through standard descriptive statistics procedures. The results were situational because the population was restricted by African American graduates of Texas A&M University who graduated during the past six years and who had current e-

mail addresses listed with The Association of Former Students of Texas A&M University.

### **Procedures**

The surveying process began in the late spring of 2004 with the distribution of the questionnaire. A questionnaire with cover letter was e-mailed to 239 African American graduates of Texas A&M University at College Station who received their baccalaureate degree between May 1998 and December 2003. The cover letter ensured anonymity and provided careful instructions for the completion of the instrument. A group search was designed in the addresses in order for follow-up e-mails to be sent to individuals who did not respond in the initial two weeks. The first surveys were e-mailed July 21, 2004, a follow-up group was e-mailed on July 28, 2004, and the third in early August 2004. Since a return rate of approximately 60% was expected, no further follow-up procedures were used.

### **Data Analysis**

This section describes the data analysis procedures used to determine the results of the written e-mailed questionnaire. The written questionnaire contained both open-ended and close-ended items. Close-ended responses on the approximately 239 written surveys were coded as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 that corresponded with the Likert scale. Items coded "1" indicated (VE) very encouraging; "2" indicated (E) encouraging. Discouraging (D) was indicated by "3" and very discouraging (VD) was indicated as "4." Also, (N/A) not applicable was indicated as "5."

Most of the responses to individual items were neatly marked VE, E, D, VD; however, some respondents indicated N/A on items that did not influence them. The results of the forced responses were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences data analysis tool in the computer. Using the frequency distribution procedure and the descriptive procedures, the necessary statistics were calculated for each questionnaire statement. The results of the tabulation are discussed in Chapter IV.

Two questions in the written questionnaire were open-ended and no pre-coded categories were designated. These open-ended questions were answered by a few respondents. The other responses will be included in a narrative analysis in Chapter IV only as they relate to the three research questions.

The descriptive statistics used were familiar to African American graduates and other readers who needed the information to increase the number of African American students and graduates at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas. The statistics were consistent with the design of the study. Descriptive data were calculated for the entire population. From the descriptive data, the study determined if there were any connections between recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates. An analysis of the study provided readers with a list of the most encouraging, as well as the most discouraging recruitment and retention practices. Analysis and interpretation of the data followed the principles prescribed by Gall et al. (1996).

Statistics were used that consisted primarily of percentage comparisons to determine the relationship between group members and their responses to each of the

questions. Multiple displays of tables were used to study findings from the researcher's questionnaire. The responses for each question were computed and evaluated according to the descriptive statistics.

The instrument requested additional information from each respondent in the form of two open-ended questions. Some of the information provided points of additional investigation for the author. The analysis and interpretation of the data followed the principles prescribed by Gall et al. (1996).

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of 239 African American alumni of Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, toward perceived recruitment and retention practices. Recruitment and retention practices of African Americans were evaluated in a written questionnaire instrument e-mailed to all African Americans who graduated from Texas A&M University from May 1998 through December 2003 and who had listed e-mail addresses with The Association of Former Students at Texas A&M University.

Chapter IV provides the results of the written form of the questionnaire completed by the selected population. The results were looked at for the differences and similarities of the recruitment and retention practices as viewed from the African American graduates from Texas A&M University during the timeframe of May 1998 through December 2003 who completed a baccalaureate degree. This chapter presents results from a questionnaire modified by the researcher from a Likert-type scale questionnaire (see Appendix B) that identified recruitment and retention practices of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University.

In the first section of the questionnaire, the respondents provided personal information that included their gender, age group, and age upon entering Texas A&M University, highest level of degree attained by respondent, highest level of education of respondent's mother, respondent's father, any of respondent's sibling(s), birth order of respondent in family, undergraduate major, who influenced them to attend Texas A&M

University, size of hometown or size of high school attended, work experience before attending Texas A&M University, extracurricular activities, transfer information to Texas A&M University where applicable, and requests for amounts of visits made to the Texas A&M University campus before acceptance. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of 25 Likert-type response statements and two open-ended questions.

### **Analysis of Demographic Data**

Since a selected population, African American graduates of Texas A&M University from May 1998 through December 2003, was included in the study, the researcher used the computer files from The Association of Former Students of Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas. From the 1063 African American graduates from Texas A&M University at College Station from May 1998 through December 2003 with a baccalaureate degree, 239 had listed e-mail addresses with The Association of Former Students to receive the questionnaire. Two hundred and thirty-nine questionnaires were e-mailed out with replies received from 151 African American alumni or a 75.50% return. The researcher stated in the cover letters that accompanied the surveys e-mailed to the African American alumni that the questionnaire information would be anonymous.

In Table 4.1, the researcher demonstrated the number of responding African American alumni who represented a particular population in the study. In this study, the researcher chose to rank by female and male. The researcher chose this method of selection because this method was more objective in making sure that both genders of

population were represented. As a result of this selection method, 29.80% of the respondents were male; 70.20% of the respondents were female.

Table 4.1. Summary of Demographic Data for the Total Responding Group of African American Alumni in Reference to Gender at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	45	29.80
Female	106	70.20
Total	151	100.00

Using the criteria discussed in Chapter III, this particular information was gathered from the selected population because it represented the most recent and available six years of information, including e-mail addresses listed in the files of The Association of Former Students. The six years represented the cross-section of African American alumni of Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, included in this study and ranged from May 1998 through December 2003.

According to the responses that provided personal information, each year was represented by the African American alumni who participated in the questionnaire research from all years dating back to the beginning of 1998. The demographics data for this study combined the African American representatives of the six years of

graduation stratification of Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas. As the data indicate in Table 4.1, most graduate respondents, 70.20%, were female.

According to the information compiled from the demographic section for the survey, Table 4.2 shows that most responding African American alumni were in the age range of 21-30 years of age.

Table 4.2. Frequencies of Demographics Information Regarding Age for the Total Group of African American Alumni Responding to Survey From Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas

Age Classifications	Gender	Frequency
21-30	Male	43
	Female	105
31-40	Male	1
	Female	1
41-50	Male	1
	Female	0
Total	Male	45
	Female	106
Grand Total		151

According to the information compiled for age at entering Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, Table 4.3 shows that 6 or 13.33% of the male alumni were 17 years old; 35 or 77.78% of the responding male alumni were 18 years old; 2 or 4.44% of the alumni were 20 years old; 1 or 2.22% of the responding male



alumni was 23 years old; and 1 or 2.22% was 41 years of age. In the same fashion, the table shows that 21 or 23.86% of the responding female alumni were 17 years old; 61 or 69.32% of the responding female alumni were 18 years old; 2 or 2.27% of the female responding alumni were 19 years old; 1 or 1.14% of the females who responded was 20 years old; 2 or 2.28% female respondents were 21; and 1 or 1.14% of the female respondents was 24 years old.

Table 4.3. Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Information Regarding Years of Age Males and Females Entering Texas A&M University for the Total Group of African American Alumni Responding From Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas

Age at Entering Texas A&M University	Frequency		Percent	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
17	6	24	13.33	22.64
18	35	74	77.78	69.81
19	0	2	0.00	1.89
20	2	2	4.44	1.89
21	0	3	0.00	2.83
23	1	0	2.22	0.00
24	0	1	0.00	1.14
41	1	0	2.22	0.00
Total	45	106	29.80	70.20

According to the information compiled for the alumni in the study who transferred to Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, Table 4.4 shows that

92.71% of the African American alumni were not transferred. Only 9 students in the population transferred from other higher education institutions.

Table 4.4. Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Information Regarding Transfer by Gender for the Total Group of African American Alumni at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas

Gender	Frequency	No Transfer Percent
Males	37	24.50
Females	103	68.21
Total	140*	92.71

\*One subject did not respond to this item.

Table 4.5 provided information concerning the highest degree attained by African American alumni respondents. One hundred percent of the respondents attained a bachelor's degree; 30 or 19.9% of the respondents attained a master's degree; 4 or 2.60% received a doctorate.

Table 4.6 provided information concerning the highest level of education attained by the fathers of the African American alumni respondents. Seventy-eight or 51.70% of the respondents' fathers attained less than a high school education or its equivalency; 44 or 29.10% of the respondents' fathers attained a bachelor's degree; 16 or 10.60% of the respondents' fathers attained a master's degree; 7 or 4.60% of the respondents' fathers attained a doctorate degree; and 6 or 4.00% did not respond.

Table 4.5. Frequencies of Demographic Information Regarding Degrees Attained for the African American Alumni at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas

Degrees Attained	Frequency
Bachelor's	151
Master's	30
Doctorate	4

Table 4.6. Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics Regarding the Highest Level of Education Attained by the Fathers of the African American Alumni Respondents at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas

Highest Level of Education Attained by Fathers	Frequency	Percent
High school or equivalency or less	78	51.70
Bachelor's degree	44	29.10
Master's degree	16	10.60
Doctorate degree	7	4.60
No response	6	4.00
Total	151	100.00

Table 4.7 provided information concerning the highest level of education attained by the mothers of the African American alumni respondents. Seventy-one or 47.00% of the respondents' mothers attained a high school diploma or equivalency; 49 or 32.50% of the respondents' mothers attained a bachelor's degree; 22 or 14.60% of the respondents' mothers attained a master's degree; 6 or 4.00% of the respondents' mothers attained a doctorate degree.

Table 4.7. Frequencies and Percentages Regarding the Highest Level of Education Attained by the Mothers of the African American Alumni Respondents at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas

Highest Level of Education Attained by Mothers	Frequency	Percent
High school or equivalency or less	71	47.00
Bachelor's degree	49	32.50
Master's degree	22	14.60
Doctorate degree	6	4.00
No response	3	1.90
Total	151	100.00

Table 4.8 provided information concerning the highest level of education attained by any sibling of the African American alumni respondents. Sixty-two or 41.10% of the respondents' siblings attained a high school diploma or its equivalency

or less; 47 or 31.10% of the respondents' siblings attained a bachelor's degree; 14 or 9.30% of the respondents' siblings attained a master's degree; 11 or 7.30% of the respondents' siblings attained a doctorate degree; and 17 or 11.20% of the respondents' siblings did not respond.

Table 4.8. Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics Regarding the Highest Level of Education Attained by the Siblings of the African American Alumni Respondents at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas

Highest Level of Education Attained by Siblings	Frequency	Percent
High school or equivalency	62	41.10
Bachelor's degree	47	31.10
Master's degree	14	9.30
Doctorate degree	11	7.30
No response (or no siblings)	17	11.20
Total	151	100.00

Table 4.9 showed that as many of the African American alumni respondents provided input as to who was most influential in their decision to choose Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, as an institution of higher learning. Eighty-six or 56.95% respondents feel a family member was most influential; 30 or 19.87% respondents feel that a friend was most influential; 16 or 10.60% respondents feel that a

counselor was most influential; 16 or 10.60% respondents feel that a high school teacher was most influential; and 52 or 34.44% respondents feel someone else or something else was most influential in their decision to choose Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, as an institution of higher learning. Some of the influential persons listed were: physician, youth group leader, TAMU students, and God.

Table 4.9. Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics Information Regarding Influential Person for the Total Group of African American Alumni at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas (May Have Multiple Responses)

Influential Person	Frequency	Percent
1. Family member	86	56.95
2. Friend	30	19.87
3. Counselor	16	10.60
4. High school teacher	16	10.60
5. Elementary teacher	0	0.00
6. Principal	0	0.00
7. Other	52	34.44

### **Analysis of Research Questions**

The intent of the research was to compile information regarding the factors that influence recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas. Each statement in the questionnaire was

analyzed by compiling the results of the Likert-form responses – 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1 (very encouraging, encouraging, discouraging, very discouraging, and not applicable) – into a statistical chart that provided information for descriptive statistical analysis. The results of the questionnaire provided the answers to the three research questions that guided the study:

1. Do recruitment practices influence undergraduates to attend Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?
2. Do the retention practices influence undergraduates to remain until graduation at Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?
3. Is there a relationship between selected variables and successful completion of degree programs of African American graduates at Texas A&M University as self-reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?

Each close-ended research statement in the questionnaire was discussed in the paragraph that preceded the figure reporting the percentages computed from responses of African American alumni for each research statement. Descriptive statistics for each research were computed to provide a comparison of the responses of the alumni in regards to the factors influencing recruitment and retention.

The first eight research statements related to the factors influencing recruitment of African American undergraduates to Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas. The remaining five research statements related to the factors influencing retention of African American undergraduates to Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas. The last two open-ended questions requested information concerning how recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates can be improved.

*Research Question #1*

Do recruitment practices influence undergraduates to attend Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?

Table 4.10 provides a comparison report of the recruitment practices means and standard deviation of the responses from the respondents. According to respondents, they agree that academic standing is the most influential factor for recruitment of African American undergraduates with a response of 151; the mean was 3.60. Respondents also agree that a mentor was not the most influential factor for recruitment of African American undergraduates. The mean for the response of 151 was 2.48, meaning that the respondents feel that mentoring as a recruitment factor is discouraging.



Table 4.10. Summary of the Means and Standard Deviations for Recruitment Practices of African American Undergraduates at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas (N = 151)

Recruitment Practices	Means	Standard Deviation
1. Academic standing	3.60	.505
2. Available curriculum	3.49	.609
3. Location of university	3.06	.886
4. Size of university	2.85	.752
5. Athletics	2.69	1.059
6. Mentor	2.48	1.193
7. Class size (actual)	2.08	.842
8. Class size (projected)	1.93	.851

*Note:* Recruitment practices were rated on a scale of 4-high to 1-low.

### **Recruitment Research Statement #1: Academic Standing**

According to the respondents, Table 4.11 shows that 143 or 94.70% feel that academic standing as a recruitment practice is encouraging/very encouraging; 5 or 3.31% did not respond.

Table 4.11. Percentages of Recruitment Responses by African American Alumni Regarding Their Consideration of Texas A&M University's Academic Standing of Texas A&M University as an Institution of Higher Education in Influencing Their Choice to Attend as Undergraduates

Choice Influenced by	Encouraged/ Very Encouraged		Discouraged/ Very Discouraged		No Responses	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Academic standing	143	94.70	2	1.32	5	3.31
Available curriculum	132	87.40	4	2.60	15	9.93
Location	105	69.60	28	18.50	18	11.92
Size of university	96	63.60	24	15.90	31	20.53
Athletics	52	34.40	22	14.60	77	51.00
Class size (actual)	33	21.70	56	37.10	62	41.06
Mentors	41	20.50	23	15.20	87	57.62
Class size (projected)	21	13.90	60	33.10	70	46.36

### **Recruitment Research Statement #2: Available Curriculum**

Table 4.11 shows that 132 or 87.40% of the respondents feel available curriculum is encouraging/very encouraging as a recruitment practice; 15 or 9.93% did not respond.

**Recruitment Research Statement #3: Location of Texas A&M University**

According to respondents, Table 4.11 shows that 105 or 69.60% feel that the location of Texas A&M University is encouraging/very encouraging as a recruitment practice; 18 or 11.92% did not respond to this question.

**Recruitment Research Statement #4: Size of Texas A&M University**

Table 4.11 shows that 96 or 63.00% of the respondents feel that the size of Texas A&M University is encouraging/very encouraging as a recruitment practice; 31 or 20.53 did not respond to this question.

**Recruitment Research Statement #5: Athletics**

According to the respondents, Table 4.11 shows that 52 or 34.40% feel that athletics as a recruitment practice is encouraging/very encouraging; 77 or 51.00% did not respond.

**Recruitment Research Statement #6: Size of Classes (Actual)**

According to the respondents, Table 4.11 shows that 33 or 21.70% feel that the actual size of the classes at Texas A&M University as a recruitment practice is encouraging/very encouraging; 62 or 41.06% did not respond.

**Recruitment Research Statement #7: Mentors**

Table 4.11 shows that 41 or 20.50% of the respondents feel using monitors as a recruitment practice is encouraging/very encouraging; 87 or 57.62% did not respond.

**Recruitment Research Statement #8: Class Size (Projected)**

Table 4.11 showed that 21 or 13.90% of the respondents feel the projected size of the classes at Texas A&M University is encouraging/very encouraging as a recruitment practice; 70 or 46.36% did not respond.

Some of the ways that questionnaire respondents felt recruitment could be improved are:

1. Provide equal opportunity based on true qualifications and not “who you know.”
2. Have students who are really interested in attending Texas A&M University go and speak with African American students already enrolled.
3. Utilize the news media – television, radio, and the Internet.
4. Recruit African American high school seniors and juniors nationwide as a stronger effort.
5. Promote the many opportunities available at Texas A&M University.
6. Attend summer workshops.
7. Seek out African American instructors.
8. Show their presence is desperately needed.
9. Increase scholarships.
10. Increase financial support.
11. Portray African Americans in the real workplace.
12. Improve recruitment of African American professionals.
13. Start recruitment at junior high level.

14. Allow presently employed professors to recruit.
15. Increase benefits.

*Research Question #2*

Do the retention practices influence undergraduates to remain until graduation at Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?

Table 4.12 provided a comparison report of the retention practices means, medians, modes, and standard deviation responses of the respondents. According to respondents, they agree that academic status was the most influential factor retention of African American undergraduates.

Table 4.12. Summary of the Means and Standard Deviations for Retention Practices of African American Alumni From Texas A&M University

High School or Equivalency Retention Practices	N	Means	Standard Deviation
Academic status	144	3.60	.505
Curriculum	136	3.49	.609
Location	133	3.06	.886
Size of university	120	2.85	.752
Athletics	74	2.69	1.059
Mentor	54	2.48	1.193
Class size (actual)	89	2.08	.842
Class size (projected)	70	1.94	.849

*Research Question #3*

Is there a relationship between selected demographic variables and successful completion of degree programs of African American graduates at Texas A&M University as self-reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?

Table 4.13 provides a comparison of the selected demographic variables on the recruitment practices as reported by the African American graduates of Texas A&M University. According to respondents, they agreed that the father's highest level of education was representative of the recruitment practice that influenced them to consider Texas A&M University as their undergraduate institution of higher learning.

Table 4.13. Summary of Selected Demographic Variables on the Recruitment Practices as Reported by African American Alumni From Texas A&M University

Recruitment Practice by Father's Highest Degree		<u>Father's Highest Degree</u>		
		HS diploma or less (N=78)	Bachelor's (N=44)	Graduate (N=23)
1. Academic standing	Frequency	73	43	23
	Percent	93.6	97.7	100.0
3. Projected class size	Frequency	56	31	14
	Percent	71.8	70.5	60.8
8. Location	Frequency	5	12	4
	Percent	6.4	27.3	17.4
4. Size of university	Frequency	50	30	15
	Percent	64.1	68.2	62.2
7. Class size (actual)	Frequency	10	17	5
	Percent	12.8	38.6	21.7

Table 4.13 (continued)

Recruitment Practice by Father's Highest Degree		<u>Father's Highest Degree</u>			
		HS diploma or less (N=78)	Bachelor's (N=44)	Graduate (N=23)	
2. Available curriculum	Frequency	66	39	23	
	Percent	84.6	88.6	100.0	
5. Athletics	Frequency	25	14	11	
	Percent	32.1	31.8	47.8	
6. Mentors	Frequency	16	11	4	
	Percent	20.5	25.0	17.4	
Recruitment Practice by Birth Order		Oldest/ Only	Second Born	Middle Born	Youngest
1. Academic standing	N	73	28	17	19
	Frequency	73	28	17	19
	Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
2. Projected class size	N	71	21	16	19
	Frequency	56	16	13	16
	Percent	78.9	76.2	81.3	84.2
3. Location	N	38	1	11	8
	Frequency	10	1	4	5
	Percent	26.3	100.0	36.4	62.5
4. Size of university	N	58	24	16	16
	Frequency	42	20	15	16
	Percent	72.4	83.3	93.8	100.0
5. Actual class size	N	48	15	11	11
	Frequency	17	4	3	7
	Percent	35.4	26.7	27.3	63.6
6. Available curriculum	N	69	26	18	17
	Frequency	67	26	16	17
	Percent	97.1	100.0	88.9	100.0

Table 4.13 (continued)

Recruitment Practice by Birth Order		Oldest/ Only	Second Born	Middle Born	Youngest
7. Athletics	N	33	16	10	11
	Frequency	23	10	8	9
	Percent	69.7	62.5	80.0	81.8
8. Mentor	N	28	9	10	3
	Frequency	14	6	7	2
	Percent	50.0	66.7	70.0	66.7

  

Recruitment Based on Hometown Size/School Size		Rural/Small/Suburb	Major City
School Size	Frequency	36	(N=143) 107
	Percent	25.2	74.8
Projected class size	Frequency	27	(N=133) 78
	Percent	20.3	58.7
Location	Frequency	6	(N=71) 15
	Percent	8.5	21.1
Size of university	Frequency	22	(N=120) 74
	Percent	18.3	61.7
Actual class size	Frequency	8	(N=89) 25
	Percent	9.0	28.1
Available curriculum	Frequency	34	(N=136) 98
	Percent	25.0	72.1
Athletics	Frequency	10	(N=52) 42
	Percent	19.2	80.8



Table 4.13 (continued)

Recruitment Based on Hometown Size/School Size		Rural/Small/Suburb	Major City
			(N=31)
Mentor	Frequency	4	27
	Percent	12.9	87.1

### **Retention Research Statement #1: Academic Status**

According to the respondents, Table 4.14 shows that 104 or 68.87% feel academic status as a retention practice is encouraging/very encouraging as a retention factor.

### **Retention Research Statement #2 Location**

According to respondents, Table 4.14 shows that 62 or 41.06% feel that location is encouraging/very encouraging as a retention practice.

### **Retention Research Statement #3: Size of Texas A&M University**

According to respondents, Table 4.14 shows that 52 or 34.44% feel that the size of Texas A&M University is encouraging/very encouraging as a retention factor.

### **Retention Research Statement #4: Class Size**

Table 4.14 shows that 28 or 18.54% respondents feel class size is encouraging/very encouraging as a retention practice.

### **Retention Research Statement #5: Other**

Eighty-eight (88) or 58.28% of the respondents feel that other factors as retention practices are encouraging/very encouraging/encouraging.

Table 4.14. Summary of Selected Demographic Variables on the Retention Practices as Reported by African American Alumni From Texas A&M University

Retention Practice – Overall Responses (Without Disaggregation)		N	Frequency	Percent
1. Academic status of Texas A&M		151	106	70.2
2. Class size		151	29	19.2
3. Location		151	65	43.1
4. Size of university		151	53	35.1
5. Other		151	92	60.9

  

Retention Practice by Father's Highest Degree		<u>Father's Highest Degree</u>		
		HS Diploma Or Less (N=78)	Bachelor's (N=44)	Graduate (N=23)
1. Academic status of Texas A&M	Frequency	53	35	16
	Percent	68.0	79.6	69.6
2. Location	Frequency	34	21	7
	Percent	43.6	47.7	30.4
3. Size of university	Frequency	27	16	9
	Percent	34.6	36.4	39.1
4. Class size	Frequency	10	11	7
	Percent	12.8	25.0	30.4
5. Other	Frequency	48	26	14
	Percent	61.5	59.1	60.9

Table 4.14 (continued)

Retention Practice by Gender		<u>Gender</u>	
		Male (N=45)	Female (N=106)
1. Academic status of Texas A&M	Frequency	32	74
	Percent	71.1	69.8
2. Class size	Frequency	9	20
	Percent	20.0	18.9
3. Location	Frequency	18	47
	Percent	40.0	18.9
4. Size of university	Frequency	18	35
	Percent	40.0	33.0
5. Other	Frequency	29	63
	Percent	64.4	59.4

  

Retention Practice by Hometown		<u>Hometown Size/ School Size</u>	
		Rural/Small/Suburb/ 1A, 2A, 3A N=36	Major City 4A, 5A N=115
1. Academic status of Texas A&M	Frequency	26	80
	Percent	72.2	69.6
2. Class size	Frequency	6	23
	Percent	16.7	20.0
3. Location	Frequency	16	49
	Percent	44.4	42.6
4. Size of university	Frequency	8	45
	Percent	22.2	39.1
5. Other	Frequency	22	70
	Percent	61.1	60.9

Table 4.14 (continued)

Retention Practices by Birth Order		Oldest/ Only N=75	Second Born N=29	Middle Born N=20	Youngest N=21
1. Academic status of Texas A&M	Frequency	22	10	6	5
	Percent	29.3	34.5	30.0	23.8
2. Class size	Frequency	53	19	14	16
	Percent	70.7	65.5	70.0	76.2
3. Location	Frequency	14	6	4	5
	Percent	18.7	20.7	20.0	23.8
4. Size of university	Frequency	27	7	9	9
	Percent	36.0	24.1	45.0	42.9
5. Other	Frequency	42	20	12	14
	Percent	56.0	69.0	60.0	66.7

### **Some of the Self-Reported Retention Practices**

Some of the retention practices that respondents listed are: self-determination, parental drive, friends, God's Grace, extracurricular activities, scholarship, minority programs, too much invested, desiring to be a product of A&M, and corporate view of Texas A&M University.

This concludes the data analysis section of the study. In Chapter V, the conclusions, implications and potential ramifications of the study will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This final chapter provides a brief summary of the review of literature, procedures, and major findings of this study. From these findings, the conclusions, implications, and potential ramifications for practice and future research in the area of recruitment and retention are discussed.

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this record of study was to research the factors that influence recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. To attain an understanding of the factors that influence recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University, the researcher e-mailed questionnaires to all of the African American alumni holding a baccalaureate degree from Texas A&M between the years May 1998 through December 2003 who had listed e-mail addresses with The Association of Former Students at Texas A&M University. The questionnaire, modified by the researcher, contained 25 closed-ended questions with five-part Likert-type responses. Additionally, the African American alumni were provided the opportunity to recommend additional practices for recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas.

Two hundred and thirty-nine questionnaires were e-mailed to the African American alumni. A total of 151 questionnaires were returned, which provided a rate of 75.50 percent return. All data were studied, recorded, proofed, and analyzed.

Descriptive statistics were computed to determine if there were differences and similarities between recruitment and retention practices of the research statements.

The summary of the responses from open-ended questions 1 and 2 included opinions from 100% of the population. Sixty-four percent of the 151 respondents indicated that recruitment practices other than the ones listed on the questionnaire brought them to Texas A&M University. Thirty-one percent of the respondents indicated other retention practices could be useful to retain African American undergraduates other than the ones listed on the questionnaire. The research agreed with the studies provided by Middleton (1996) and Witty (1982) that concluded that the academic standing of Texas A&M University, the available curriculum at A&M, and the location of the Texas A&M University campus were the highest recruitment practices among the African American population. Respectively, the highest-rated retention practices reported by the African American alumni were university academic status, the size of the classes, and the geographic location of Texas A&M University. The idea that these recruitment and retention practices should be put into place were in agreement with those endorsed by Alston (1988) and Post and Woessner (1987) in their studies.

African American alumni identified academic standing, curriculum, location, and the size of classes as the preferred recruitment and retention practices as the most influential recruitment and retention practices, and because of this knowledge, African American alumni should work closely with Texas A&M University for recruiting other African American undergraduates. The depth and variety of additional responsibilities

of African American undergraduates assisting in recruitment may vary according to the number of African American alumni and their willingness to assist in recruitment.

Attracting and holding outstanding African American undergraduates to Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, is paramount if ethnic diversity balance is to be achieved. Balance cannot be achieved if we fail to bring to Texas A&M University the brightest and the best and help them find success in their pursuits. Cultural diversity imbalance exists at the University, and it will worsen unless fundamental reform occurs in the recruitment of a student body that is reflective of the cultural diversity of the state of Texas. Although African American undergraduates are recruited disproportionately from other ethnicity groups, the need for African Americans as role models is increasing (Harry, 1996). A shortage of African American professors has severe implications for African American undergraduates. The lack of African American professors means a decrease in African American role models and indirectly could lead to a lowering of aspirations among African American undergraduates (King, 1993). White students will suffer without one-on-one interaction with students from cultural groups outside their own (Hudson, 1994).

Data collected for this study were guided by the research questions listed below. The summaries of the results of the collected data from the Likert-like questionnaire are presented in relation to each research question.

1. Do recruitment practices influence undergraduates to attend Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?

2. Do the retention practices influence undergraduates to remain until graduation at Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 December 2003?
3. Is there a relationship between selected variables and successful completion of degree programs of African American graduates at Texas A&M University as self-reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?

In order to answer these questions, the researcher modified a questionnaire that was divided into three sections. The first section requested demographic data from the respondent including gender, age frame, years of work experience before attending Texas A&M University, highest degree attained by respondent, highest level of education attained by respondent's parent(s), highest level of education attained by respondent's sibling(s), birth rank in family, and person(s) who influenced their decision to enter Texas A&M University as an institution of higher learning. Section two contained research statements that corresponded to the first and second research question relating to the recruitment and retention practices of African American undergraduates. Section three was comprised of research statements concerning the opinions of how recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates could be improved.



## Conclusions

### *Research Questions*

#### **Research Question #1**

Do recruitment practices influence undergraduates to attend Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?

According to the results of the questionnaire, statements concerning the recruitment practices of African American undergraduates included: recruit from predominately White high schools instead of predominately African American high schools; connect prospective African American students with current and former students of Texas A&M University; and highlighting the academic curriculum and geographic location of the university. The results of the research ratings are as shown below:

1. The research found that 94.70% of the respondents felt that the academic standing of the university was a very encouraging/encouraging recruitment practice.
2. Research found that 132 or 87.42% felt that curriculum was a very encouraging/encouraging recruitment practice.
3. Respondents, 105 or 69.545, felt that the geographic location of the university was a very encouraging/encouraging recruitment practice.
4. The population responded: 96 or 63.60% felt that size of the university was a very encouraging/encouraging recruitment practice.

### *Implications*

Certain implications for African American undergraduates can be made due to these findings. The research showed that for this population, academic standing of Texas A&M University is the most influential recruitment practice. Recruitment efforts should concentrate on the most effective recruitment strategies by developing materials that highlight and focus on academic standing as reported by leading publications indicating how Texas A&M University is ranked against colleges and universities across the nation. In the *Students Review Official Rankings of Independent Top 50 Schools* (2005), the rankings reveal the schools to which students aspire. The rankings are generated directly and only from student survey data. Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, ranked 26<sup>th</sup>.

A reading of the *U.S. News and World Report* indicated the ranking of 62 for Texas A&M University (“America’s best colleges,” 2005). When a more in-depth review of *U.S. News and World Report* was made, Texas A&M ranked #155 in campus diversity of national universities and only then because of its 9% Hispanic population, notwithstanding its 2% African American enrollment (“America’s best colleges,” 2005). Similar supporting rankings were reported in *Campus Dirt 2005* (“Campus excellent,” 2005) and the *Princeton Review 2005* (“Rank and file,” 2005).

Secondly, available curriculum is an influential recruitment practice; from the data discovered in this research, engineering, computer technology, psychology, and journalism were the most popular curriculum attraction to African American students.

Thirdly, Texas A&M University could emphasize its geographic location to recruit African American students. A major practice in the research was the location of Texas A&M University with its proximity to major Texas cities like Houston, Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio. Within these geographic areas are located other major universities like The University of Texas, Baylor University, The University of Houston, The University of Texas at San Antonio, to name a few. Many of the respondents were products of these major cities or had friends and former high school classmates who were studying at the major and less populated colleges and junior/community colleges there.

Lastly, this study indicated that African American students who feel that their projected class size by the students before applying to Texas A&M University as a means for their recruitment might be less likely to make a difference in their recruitment practice.

### **Research Question #2**

Do the retention practices influence undergraduates to remain until graduation at Texas A&M University as reported by African American graduates from May 1998 to December 2003?

According to the results of the questionnaire statements concerning the retention practices of African American undergraduates, academic standing of the Texas A&M University continued to be a factor, as did the geographic location of Texas A&M University as the alumni continued their academic careers, the size of Texas A&M University, as did the actual size of the classes at the university, and other

factors as well. The African American alumni indicated by the ranges of means from 4.00 to 1.00 with the academic standing of the university and location of the university being the highest.

The top five retention practices identified were: (a) 70.20% of the respondents felt that the academic standing of Texas A&M University was a very encouraging/encouraging retention practice; (b) 43.00% felt that location of Texas A&M University was a very encouraging/encouraging retention practice; (c) 60.90% of the respondents felt that other retention practices were a very encouraging/encouraging retention practice; (d) 35.10% felt that the size of Texas A&M University was a very encouraging/encouraging retention practice; and (e) 19.20% felt that size of the classes was a very encouraging/encouraging retention practice.

### *Implications*

Certain implications for African American undergraduates can be made due to these findings. The research showed that for this population, academic standing of Texas A&M University is the most influential retention practice for African American undergraduates. Texas A&M University, in deciding how to influence the retention of African American undergraduates, should begin by assessing the reported attitudes of African American alumni toward their feelings. This study indicated that African American undergraduates who feel a part of Texas A&M University were secure in their stay at the university. However, since size of classes at Texas A& M University is not an influential practice, efforts by Texas A&M University administrators to use the

practice of ratio of instructor to student as the only means of African American undergraduate retention could possibly be ineffective.

### **Research Question #3**

Is there a relationship between selected variables and successful completion of degree programs of African American graduates at Texas A&M University as self-reported by African American graduates between May 1998 to December 2003?

From the questionnaire results of the responses by African American alumni of Texas A&M University, there were small differences in recruitment and retention practices; however, significant differences were discovered.

Results of this study were in agreement with the African American female alumni who participated in the questionnaire and the African American males who responded to the questions.

In most responses by the alumni in the 25 statements relating to recruitment and retention, the calculated means ranged from 4.00 to 1.00. Three factors of recruitment and retention are similar in response to the mean with eight recruitment factors having a mean of 3.06 or better and two retention factors having a mean of 3.10 or better with one factor with a mean below 3.00. According to the respondents, they agree that academic standing of the university and location of the university are the most influential recruitment and retention practices.

### *Significant Differences*

The findings show two significant differences in the recruitment and retention practices that are influential to African American male and female undergraduates. The size of Texas A&M University and athletics were significantly different between the male and females.

It is this researcher's belief that the findings showed the females' proclivity to attend the largely populated Texas A&M University is an ages-old thought of the larger the institution, the larger the dating pool of eligible males. In contrast, the African American male alumni held a greater interest in attending a university with a good reputation and consistent high national ranking in sports, especially football and basketball. These relationships between recruitment and retention are observed by African American alumni of Texas A&M University based on the selection of variables that influence decisions to remain there until the completion of their degree plans.

### *Summary of Open-Ended Responses*

The summary of the responses from open-ended questions #1 and #2 included opinions from 100% of the population. Sixty-four percent of the 151 respondents indicated that recruitment practices other than the ones listed on the questionnaire brought them to Texas A&M University. Thirty-one percent of the respondents indicated that other retention practices could be useful to retain African American undergraduates other than the ones listed on the questionnaire:

The visibility of other active African Americans is essential in creating culture. Observing African American traditions and history and seeing others succeed helps engender motivation in some students.

Below are direct quotes of survey respondents. They were responding to the question, “In your opinion, how could recruitment and/or retention of African American students be improved?”

If TAMU would recruit African American students who are capable of doing the work, then they would graduate. Many of the students from the targeted schools simply aren't up [to] the university's demands. Many of the targeted school's students aren't made to perform at the required level in high school, but are expected to perform in college.

We should recruit from schools that are rigorous so we aren't setting the students from those schools up to fail. A 4.0 from a school known to be “easy” means very little, but a 3.0 from a school where students are known to work and take AP classes, means a lot. TAMU targets easy schools for African Americans and then wonders why so many drop out.

I'm honestly not sure that there's more that the school could do. It has ExCel, so many organizations for African Americans, classes that emphasize African American or minority perspectives...I think the administration had done a great job changing with the times. It was just the student body that hadn't.

One thing is to prevent the public displays of discouraging acts such as the “minority bake sale,” which proves the ignorant mentality of many of the individuals there, and gives the image that that is the majority perspective of the university.

I think the university should also show more support of Black organizations. Other universities such as the University of Oklahoma and the University of Michigan strongly support Black organizations such as NSBE. I saw this when traveling with this organization in college. Getting the university to donate sums of money when putting on the same type of program at A&M was much harder and most of the time all we got was bad press.

Retention hinges on some of the very same thoughts I mentioned as reasons that Aggieland fails at recruiting African American students. Texas A&M, during my four years there, harbored an “un-welcome” atmosphere for the majority of those who don’t fall into its roughly 82% Caucasian majority. During my time at Texas A&M, friends of mine suffered racially derogatory statements during Bonfire 1998, there was a series of assaults on Asian students near the “Dixie Chicken” during 2000, and a student editor of the Battalion wrote that John Rocker, then a pitcher for the Atlanta Braves, was justified in his assessment of New York City’s racially diverse population. John Rocker made several racially, inflammatory statements about African Americans, Asians, Latinos, and Puerto Ricans to *Sports Illustrated*. I was offended by the student editor’s statements and attempted to write a letter to be published in the Battalion about his and John Rocker’s comments. After 10 or so days after not seeing my letter published, I contacted the paper and was told that my letter was too “controversial,” and I would possibly need protection from other students if my letter had been published. I promptly decided to boycott the newspaper and carried a petition for two weeks. My boycott received little attention even by other African American students. Almost one year later, a racially offensive cartoon featuring an African American boy and his mother in Blackface-like images were depicted in the Battalion, and the campus students didn’t begin to make a major issue of the cartoon until weeks later when it reached national headlines. The campus advisor for the newspaper defended the actions of its student editors, and thus, the students involved were lightly reprimanded. Until Texas A&M and America take true responsibility for these actions and demands racial diversity instead of suggesting it, Aggieland will always be more White than maroon.

I don’t have much more to say other than I am proud of the university I attended and enjoyed all of my four and a half years there. Like a family, however, I despise some of the thoughts and actions fellow Aggies chose to involve themselves in. I find it very ironic that a school that touts a very close-knit atmosphere flourishes at segregating those who choose not to fit into the Aggie mold. The student body even has the term “2-percenter” for this group. If I’m correct, the African American population comprises roughly “2%” of Texas A&M’s total population. How ironic.

I think there needs to be a stronger African American presence in the Staff, Faculty, Board of Regents, and other high level positions. That will show the African American community that we CAN achieve success here and not just at Prairie View. Seriously beefing up diversity classes and library collections will help. Also, have more conventions, and seminars



discussing our uniqueness and how we are similar to other races. Make sure to emphasize that EVERYONE is welcome.

Offer more programs or resources that appeal strictly to Blacks. As a one of two Black females in the Aero Department, I felt as though I had no support system to turn to. The chances that there was someone or someplace for me to go and feel comfortable were non-existent. It's never a matter of the class load but more of the environment and whether we feel that we are welcomed and have a place to be ourselves without having to conform to many old time traditions of A&M. Diversity is what is majorly lacking at A&M where everyone feels comfortable to be themselves and bring new traditions to the campus that reflect who they are.

Help them pick a major, study groups, etc., because a lot of people I knew left because of their grades. It could also help if we could reduce the amount of racist remarks and demonstrations supported at least passively by the administration. I think developing support groups in general would improve retention. I believe the more involved you are in organizations and the more friends you make, the more likely you are to stay and graduate. Phone-a-thons might work as well. Right now I believe they're geared toward freshmen, but in multicultural students services were to call every semester to as many Blacks as possible to see what their concerns are as well as to invite them to some kind of meeting, or weekly/biweekly retention session, that might help.

It is important to make the students feel like a part of the entire student body not the AA/minority part of A&M. One of the things my friends and I did while being at A&M was to incorporate ourselves into the culture of the school (i.e., football, traditions), which helped us to adjust to the environment. I think A&M should encourage more events like Whoopstock and the International Festival as major A&M traditions, along the lines of football, instead of segregating it to be for minorities only.

The Minority Engineering Program was committed to providing support to the minority engineering students when I was enrolled at A&M. African American students must have a network of support in order to succeed. The programs they supported, Phase I, evening tutoring sessions, mentoring, and the practice of enrolling minority students together in certain courses were most beneficial in my success. These programs gave me the support and encouragement that the faculty at A&M did not provide. I utilized the programs mostly during my freshman and sophomore years. This helped me to develop a solid foundation. The support system that was formed and the skills that were learned helped me

throughout my academic career. This type of program is crucial in retaining African American students.

Plug them into networks that will allow them to be successful. Things that will keep them accountable. Usually if a student leaves TAMU, it not because they did not like A&M; it is because they were not able to return.

Mentorship is a joke!

### **Recommendations Based on Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that influence recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates as self-reported by African American graduates at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas, from May 1998 to December 2003. Based on the research investigations, the review of literature, and the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are provided:

#### *Recruitment Recommendations*

1. Location of the university should be considered when recruiting African American undergraduates. Texas A&M University at College Station is very centrally located in the heart of a geographic triangle connecting the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex to Houston-Galveston to the San Antonio-Austin areas. Located within that “triangle” is a great majority of the state’s population as well as cultural and sporting events.
2. Scholarships in greater numbers should be awarded when recruiting undergraduates at Texas A&M University. Many of the African American alumni reported having relied heavily on financial aid and loans while they

were undergraduates. They reported that more full academic scholarships made available to them would make a great difference in selecting Texas A&M University as the primary university to attend.

3. Social outlets and organizations should be considered when recruiting undergraduates at Texas A&M University. The general interest of the African American alumni is not very different from those in the majority percentage of students at Texas A&M University. The thing that some of the students voiced was in the ability to relate to major holidays and to start new, racially sensitive, respected events in which all are welcome.

#### *Retention Recommendations*

1. The academic standing of Texas A&M University is important in retaining undergraduates. African American alumni consistently kept their perception that a degree from the university would help “open doors” in their professional careers.
2. The available curriculum is important in keeping undergraduates at Texas A&M University. The research indicated that not only was the curriculum a draw in persuading African American undergraduates to choose A&M, it was a major factor in their continued re-enrollment at the beginning of each semester.
3. The other factor included, but was not limited to, active participation by staff and faculty members.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study considered the factors that influence the recruitment and retention of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University as self-reported by African American alumni who graduated between May 1998 to December 2003.

1. While this research was based upon African American alumni who had known active e-mail addresses, further study could include all African Americans undergraduates who graduated between May 1998 to December 2003.
2. Additional study could determine if there is a relationship between the recruitment practices and retention practices at a major Historically Black University (HBU).
3. Replicate this study on recruitment and retention practices for African Americans at the alumni postmasters' and postdoctoral levels.
4. A study could be conducted to determine the negative factors that should be removed as reported by African American alumni of Texas A&M University.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**INFORMATION SHEET**

### *Information Sheet*

#### Factors Influencing the Recruitment and Retention of Undergraduates as Reported by African American Graduates of Texas A&M University

You have been asked to participate in a research study regarding the recruitment and retention practices of African American undergraduates at Texas A&M University. You were selected to be a possible participant because The Association of Former Students of Texas A&M University has identified you from its files as being an African American who graduated from Texas A&M University with a baccalaureate degree between the span of May 1998 and December 2003. A total of 416 people have been asked to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to determine those recruitment and retention practices that are helpful in recruiting and retaining African Americans until successfully graduated from Texas A&M University. This study is the topic of a record of study.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey instrument that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You will be asked demographic information and items regarding the educational levels of your parents and siblings. The risks associated with this study are minimal. However, you may experience a slight increase in your stress level by taking this amount of time from your otherwise very busy schedule. You will receive no monetary payment for your participation in this study. Your submission of the survey will ensure that you receive a copy, upon request, of a summary of its results upon completion.

This study is anonymous. Your individual responses will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only The Association of Former Students will have access to the records. Your decision of whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Texas A&M University. If you decide to participate, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. You can contact John Gabriel Harnsberry, the study researcher, at (210) 849-6899 or at [John.HarnsberryJr@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:John.HarnsberryJr@ci.austin.tx.us) or Dr. Stephen Stark at (979) 845-2656 or [ssstark@tamu.edu](mailto:ssstark@tamu.edu) with any questions about this study.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subject's rights, you can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Research Compliance, Office of Vice-President of Research at (979) 845-8585 ([mwbuckley@tamu.edu](mailto:mwbuckley@tamu.edu)).

**By returning this document to John Harnsberry, you are agreeing to participate in this research. Please return surveys by e-mailing [John.HarnsberryJr@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:John.HarnsberryJr@ci.austin.tx.us) or faxing (979) 862-4347, attn: JohnHarnsberry.**

**APPENDIX B**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**



## Background Information

*Please check the appropriate response(s) for each item:*

1. **Gender:**  
 a. Male     b. Female
2. **Age (Currently):**  
 a. 21-30     b. 31-40     c. 41-50     d. 51-60     e. 61+
3. **Age upon entering Texas A&M University:** \_\_\_\_\_
4. **Highest academic degree you have attained:**  
 a. Bachelor's     b. Master's     c. Doctorate  
**Highest academic level of father:**  
 a. High School or less     b. Bachelor's     c. Master's     d. Doctorate  
**Highest academic level of mother:**  
 a. High School or less     b. Bachelor's     c. Master's     d. Doctorate  
**Highest academic level of any sibling:**  
 a. High School or less     b. Bachelor's     c. Master's     d. Doctorate
5. **How many siblings are in family?** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Where do you rank in relation to your birth order to your sibling(s)?**  
 First-born     Second-born     Middle sibling     Youngest     Other
6. **What was your undergraduate major?**  
Major: \_\_\_\_\_
7. **The most influential person(s) in your decision to attend Texas A&M University:** (check all that apply)  
 a. family member     b. mother     c. father  
 d. friend     e. high school teacher     f. principal  
 g. counselor     h. other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. **Hometown Data or Size of High School:**  
 a. Rural Community/ 1A     b. Small town/ 2A     c. Suburban/3A  
 d. Major City/ 4A or larger
9. **Work experience prior to attending Texas A&M University:**  
 Years     Months
10. **Extra curriculum activities:**     Sports     Debate     Student government
11. **Did you transfer to Texas A&M from other college or university? yes no**  
**Please list any visits made to the Texas A&M University campus prior to acceptance:**  
Number of visits \_\_\_\_\_    Purposes or visits \_\_\_\_\_

**Factors Influencing Recruitment and Retention of African American Students**

The following items represent various factors attending a university. Please rate each factor as you regard its relative degree of encouragement for considering attending and remaining at Texas A&M University. Please place the appropriate letter(s) in the space provided to the left of each number.

**All questionnaires are anonymous.**

**Ratings:** **VE** very encouraging **D** discouraging **N/A** not applicable  
**E** encouraging **VD** very discouraging (if an item did not influence you)

**Recruitment Practices**

*What encouraged you to attend Texas A&M University?*

- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ___ 1. Academic standing      | ___ 2. Class size (projected) |
| ___ 3. Location               | ___ 4. Size of university     |
| ___ 5. Size of Class (actual) | ___ 6. Available curriculum   |
| ___ 7. Athletics              | ___ 8. Mentor_____            |

**Retention Practices**

*What kept you there until graduation?*

- |                           |                   |                 |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| ___ 1. Academic status    | ___ 2. Class size | ___ 3. Location |
| ___ 4. Size of university |                   |                 |
| ___ 5. Other_____         |                   |                 |

**In your opinion how could recruitment of African American students be improved?**

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**In your opinion how could retention of African American students be improved?**

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**Additional Comments:**\_\_\_\_\_

## VITA

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### EDUCATION

2005	Doctor of Education, Educational Administration Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
1986	Master of Education, Educational Administration Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
1972	Bachelor of Science, Biology/Pre-Med Huston-Tillotson University, Austin, Texas
1970	Associate of Arts, Biology/Pre-Med Blinn Junior College, Brenham, Texas

### EXPERIENCE

2000-Present	Administrative Manager City of Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas
1998-1999	Human Resources Director SITEL Corporation, San Antonio, Texas
1996-1998	Training/Employment Manager Stewart & Stevenson, Inc., Sealy, Texas
1989-1996	Director of Program II Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas
1982-1988	Recruiter/Educational Program Manager IBM, Austin, Texas
1977-1986	Instructor Austin Community College, Austin, Texas

This record of study was typed and edited by Marilyn M. Oliva at Action Ink, Inc.