

A Descriptive Study of the Perceptions of Black
Students' Experiences and Satisfaction
at the University of
Wisconsin-La Crosse

A Seminar Paper
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
University of Wisconsin

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education:
College Student Personnel

by
Ronald Frank Miller
December, 1989

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Acknowledgements

A special note of appreciation is extended to my advisor, Dr. Larry Ringgenberg, who exhibited a great deal of time, advice and flexibility in the development of this paper.

Special thanks is extended to Mrs. Barbara Pedretti for her patience and untiring support in the preparation of the final copy.

And finally, many thanks to the individuals I have met in graduate school who supported me with their interest and friendship.

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Abstract

The intent of this study was to examine the perception of Black students' experiences at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. This was a descriptive study attempting to identify students' perception of the campus environment, including student services, faculty and staff, and the La Crosse Community.

The research instrument was developed by using information from the University of Maryland. The instrument was personally administered to 70 students. A total of 49 students responded to the questionnaire. This constituted a 70 percent return rate.

The data compiled provided a description of the students' experiences. There was a mixture of positive, negative, and neutral comments regarding their experiences and perceptions. However, the general consensus, by a slight majority, was positive. Students referred to adjusting to an alien environment that did not address their needs as being challenging, and enhancing their flexibility and adaptability for future employment. Research revealed what students liked most and least about their experiences.

Results from the questionnaire acknowledged areas where improvement and changes needed to be made to enhance

the matriculation of Black students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Recommendations were made based on the data, and related literature.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past year there has been an increasing concern regarding the recruitment and retention of Black students at most universities throughout the United States. In 1969, 134,000 Black students represented six percent of the total number of students attending college. By 1975, that figure increased to 9.6 percent; about 32 percent of Black high school seniors went on to college. The percent of Black high school seniors attending college dropped to 27 percent in 1985.

The drop in Black student enrollment is of great concern as research and test scores indicate that Black high school students seem better prepared to take on the rigors of a college education (Fleming, 1988). Many of these students will either choose not to attend college or choose a college from which they are not likely to graduate. While access is still an important goal for educators and Blacks alike, retention is becoming increasingly important on many college campuses.

This study examined and discussed the perception of Black student experiences at the University of Wisconsin-

La Crosse. This was a descriptive study describing student attitudes, beliefs, and issues. It was also intended to provide information that correlates to withdrawal from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse by Black students, and to determine how Black students perceive the campus environment.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine Black students' perceptions of their intrapsychic and interpersonal adjustment at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The research attempted to identify factors that contribute to the withdrawal and retention of Black students, and to determine how Black students perceive the campus environment. Student services, faculty and staff interaction, student involvement, and the La Crosse community are believed to contribute valuable experience to all students. The primary question of this study was; Are Black students finding their experience at UW-La Crosse to be positive and rewarding? Secondary questions to be investigated include the relationship between student satisfaction with services and student withdrawal from the institution; the relationship between age and retention, involvement and retention.

Significance of the Study

Providing Black students with a method of assessing their perceptions of their experiences will illustrate the impact that the campus environment has had on the students and can assist the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in addressing some of the external factors that may contribute to the withdrawal of Black students.

The best and most successful retention programs are in institutions that understand the needs of their students who are coming in and then set in place programs, services, people, and attitudes designed to increase the competency base, knowledge and skills of those students (Christoffel, 1986, p.1).

More Black students are leaving college than are persisting in higher education, and this presents a challenge to the educational community.

Do Black students face barriers or problems that need to be specifically addressed? According to the College Board published report, Research and Development Update (1986),

"more institutions are now beginning to develop and carry out pro-active access and retention strategies designed to address the multiple handicaps Black students face once they are enrolled. These handicaps include racial isolation or discrimination, a lack of student peers, language barriers, too few minority faculty or staff to serve as role models, and a lack of understanding among staff of these special problems" (Christoffel, 1986, p.1).

Despite their obvious differences, Purdue University, Boston College, California State University at Fresno, and

the University of North Carolina at Greensboro have found that many similar techniques work in Black student retention programs (Educational Testing Service, 1986). These institutions were profiled in Improving Black Student Retention in Higher Education: A Search for Effective Institutional Practices, a recent study from Educational Testing Services (1986). "As diverse as these four institutions are in terms of location and student body composition, their minority retention programs are based on the same fundamental criteria," says Beatriz Clewell, Educational Testing Services (ETS) researcher and co-author of the study (p.3).

Clewell recommends that predominantly White colleges and universities seeking to improve Black student satisfaction should take the following steps: (a) make a commitment to retain Black students, (b) conduct a needs assessment, (c) develop a data base, (d) state the institution's policy, (e) develop the program according to what the needs assessment reveals, and (f) implement the program.

Clewell also stresses the need to make the college campus a place where Black students feel acceptance for the diverse cultural background they bring to the college experience.

Black students on predominantly white campuses must face developmental challenges beyond those confronting the

student majority, but campus activities professionals are in a unique position to promote their growth and create a supportive environment.

Delimitations

Subjects for this study were Black students enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse during the academic year of 1987-1988. The investigation was conducted during the spring and summer session of 1988. This study included Black students who had withdrawn or who had graduated during the 1987-1988 academic year.

It should be noted that:

1. The number of Black students enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse is limited.
2. Most Black students enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse are male athletes.
3. Students completing and returning the questionnaire for this study were affected by prior research conducted in this area. This caused a slight resentment by many of the Black students.
4. Students completing and returning questionnaires did not respond to every question.
5. Students evaluated services they did not use, by using their perception of that particular department.

Implications

For the purpose of this study, the following implications are proposed:

1. Increased Black student involvement at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse will result in a higher matriculation rate and a greater sense of belonging.
2. Significant faculty and staff interaction among Black students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse could enhance the academic performance of Black students.
3. The availability and presence of Black faculty and staff can allow Black students to identify with positive role models and develop a positive self-concept.
4. Promoting diversity and encouraging interaction among the entire student body could generate a harmonious environment and illustrate a pro-active measure toward student development.
5. Student affairs and other student services should provide diversity among their staff to increase their multi-cultural functions on the campus. This could encourage Black students to network into the mainstream of campus.
6. Greater commitment, less passivity, and eliminating victim blaming regarding Black students survival on campus, could result in a larger Black student population and more Black faculty and staff.
7. Black student athletic involvement could increase

Black students' matriculation rate.

8. Encouraging Black students to network and mainstream on the campus could lead to greater Black student satisfaction.

9. Encouraged interaction with other organizations besides the Black Student Unity could lead to better relations and harmony with White students.

Definition of Terms

1. Attrition. The procedure in which students are no longer matriculating or enrolled in school.

2. Commitment. The process by which those who are in a decision-making capacity demonstrate a visible effort to provide student services in tune with student needs; hire the faculty and staff, reform the teaching and curriculum, and develop an institutional environment in which all students, regardless of ethnic background, can flourish.

3. Diversity. When institutions provide students with a variety of ethnic differences, values, faculty, and staff. This includes cultural programming, and the realities of the contributions that minorities contributed to the development of the United States and the world.

4. Institutional racism. Any attitude or systematic structure that prevents and hampers the ability of students to matriculate on a college campus. Universities failing

to address barriers that discourage Blacks from matriculating on White campuses, such as all Eurocentric curriculum, racism, lack of support, and isolation.

5. Mentor. When students are able to develop relationships with other individuals on a college campus as part of a viable support system. This allows students to adjust and adapt much more quickly to a particular college environment.

6. Retention. The process by which students continue to maintain and complete their studies.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of related literature in this study will be divided into five areas. These areas are: Developmental Theory, Noncognitive Variables that are critical in the lives of Black students on white campuses, Satisfaction Comparison, Campus Environment, and Institutional Commitment.

Developmental Theory

How can higher education professionals on predominantly white campuses evaluate the adequacy of the collegiate education they provide Black students? The basic mission of higher education needs to be considered.

Today's ideal liberal education offers personal as well as intellectual development. If higher education articulates a concern for the education of the student both in and out of the classroom, it is natural for the educational community to look for those areas that can significantly influence the holistic quality of student life.

In examining the role of institutional programming

and co-curricular involvement, as it relates specifically to Black students, two perspectives on student development --Arthur Chickering's developmental vectors and Alexander Astin's student involvement theories--can be used to investigate the developmental opportunities afforded contemporary Black students in higher education.

Chickering bases his theory on the ideal of interfacing the developmental concerns of students with the social situations in which they find themselves. He sees the student as "a person in a distinct psycho-social phase defined by the emergence of certain inner capabilities and needs which interact with the demands of a particular college environment" (Chickering, 1969, p. 10). Focusing on the concept of identity formation, Chickering reveals seven developmental vectors that fall under the generalized premise of identity resolution. These are developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity.

One summary of Chickering's seven vectors was offered by Miller and Prince who grouped them into three broad areas: developing autonomy, developing mature interpersonal relationships, and developing purpose (Miller & Prince, 1973). The integration of these three domains allows life to flow with "direction and meaning" (Chickering, 1969, p. 17).

If students are experiencing these stages of development, students then become capable of performing tasks in a variety of areas without needing continuous reassurance and reinforcement. Students also become more mature by exposure to different cultures and life-styles. Students attain the ability to see and respond to people as individuals rather than stereotypes, which in turn enhances the quality of their education. The development of these sectors, according to Knefelkamp et al. (1978), is the college environment connecting with students in a certain way which encourages student development.

Astin's theory is referred to as a "student involvement theory." The basic premise is that student learning increases in direct relation to the degree of student involvement. For Astin, involvement is "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (1984, p. 21).

For the purpose of this study, Chickering provides the outline of student development objectives, and Astin's theory serves as an implementation strategy that can lead to realizing those objectives. We can use this information and developmental theory as an application to construct an outline for positive involvement by Black students on predominantly white campuses.

Noncognitive Variables

Sedlacek and Brooks (1976) hypothesized that there were seven noncognitive variables that were critical in the lives of Black students on white campuses. How students adjusted to these dimensions and how faculty and staff encouraged this adjustment would determine the success or failure of Black students. Tracy and Sedlacek (1984, 1985; Sedlacek, 1987) demonstrated the validity of the seven variables plus an eighth--nontraditional knowledge acquired--by showing the usefulness of a brief questionnaire (The Noncognitive Questionnaire (NCQ)) in predicting cognitive grades, retention, and graduation for Black students for up to six years after initial matriculation. The noncognitive variables of the NCQ are: (a) positive self concept on confidence, (b) realistic self-appraisal, (c) understands and deals with racism, (d) demonstrated community service, (e) prefers long-range goals to short term, (f) availability of strong support person, and (g) successful leadership experience.

Self-Concept

Many studies demonstrate that the way Black students feel about themselves is related to their adjustment and success at white institutions (Bayer, 1972; Bohn, 1973). This aspect of self-concept--seeing oneself as part of the school, or identified with it--is a common thread for Black students. Sedlacek and Brooks (1976), and Astin (1975,

1982) provided evidence that identification with an institution is a more important correlate of retention for Black students than for other students.

In addition to the usual school pressures, a Black student must typically handle cultural biases and learn how to bridge his or her Black culture with the prevailing one at the white university. DiCesare, Sedlacek, and Brooks (1972) found that Blacks who made this transition were more likely to stay in school than Blacks who did not.

Realistic Self-Appraisal

An important variable that exists in combination with self-concept is how well Black students in white schools assess themselves. Because faculty members, students, and staff often view Black students differently than they view white students, it is harder for Black students to get straight-forward information on which to base their evaluations of how they are faring (Astin, 1985).

White faculty members may give less consistent reinforcement to Black students than they give to white students (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). Nettles, Thoeny, and Gosman (1986) found faculty contact outside the classroom is lower for Black students.

Racism

Handling racism is further complicated by the distinction made between individual and institutional

racism (Barbarin, 1981; Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). Institutional racism involves policies and procedures, either formal or informal, that result in negative outcomes for Blacks. Institutional racism in the form of admissions policies, relationships with faculty and campus life staff, and attitudes of white students is often more of a problem for Blacks than is individual racism (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976).

Long Range Goals

The extent to which Black students are able to defer gratification is correlated with their retention and grades in school (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984, 1985; Sedlacek, 1987).

Astin (1975) found that those Blacks with lower aspirations and less clearly defined goals than other Blacks were more likely to leave school. Noel (1973) supported Astin's conclusion by noting that Black high school students with specific plans for college were much more likely to attend college than were those students with no plans. Green and Winter (1971) found that Black leaders in campus organizations were more apt to have long-range goals than were other Black students.

Strong Support System

Black students dealing with racism face difficult adjustments on a white campus and are, therefore, in particular need of a person they can turn to for advice and

guidance (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). Black students often find difficulty forming relationships with white faculty and staff. Additionally, Black faculty and staff often are not available. Black students have expressed a need for more Black faculty and staff in general (Burrell, 1980).

Leadership

Successful Black students have had successful leadership experiences. They have shown the ability to organize and influence others, often within their cultural/racial context. Blacks often do not show leadership in traditional ways. Black students are more likely to exhibit leadership off campus, in the community or in their churches than are white students (Sedlacek, 1987). When Blacks show leadership on campus, it is often through informal or Black-oriented channels, which are less likely to be validated by white faculty, students or college student personnel workers.

Heyward (1985) concluded that Blacks do not look to white faculty and staff as role models for their leadership. They look to other Blacks or develop their own styles and forms of leadership.

Community Service

As part of a viable support system, Blacks need to have identification with and be active in the community. Thus, Blacks need a supportive group that can give them

advice, counseling, and orientation to sustain them as they confront the larger often hostile systems they must negotiate. Many researchers have shown that Blacks often believe that they do not belong on predominantly white campuses (Bradley, 1967; Kleinbaum & Kleinbaum, 1976; Lunneborg & Lunneborg, 1985). Mallinckrodt and Sedlacek (1987) also found that Blacks who were interested in activities sponsored by the student union had better retention than did those who were not interested. Webster and Sedlacek (1982) found the student union to be a central part of Black student community development.

Satisfaction Comparison

The college experience of Black students attending predominantly Black institutions and those attending predominantly white institutions vary dramatically in terms of student academic performance, racial attitudes and satisfaction with college, according to a study sponsored by the Southern Education Foundation, Inc. (Allen, 1986, p. 6).

The Southern Education Foundation study found that the Black student academic performance is higher in institutions where the students are happier and more satisfied with college life, usually the traditional Black college. Three-fourths of Black college students currently attend predominantly white institutions where their adjustments to campus life are generally awkward and unsatisfying.

Black students on white campuses complain of frequent racial discrimination and report little or no integration into general campus life. Although a minority of these students claim satisfactory personal relationships with whites, they characterize the general state of campus race relations as poor.

In contrast, students on Black campuses report more satisfying adjustment to college life and more cordial relations with faculty and staff. Reports of racial discrimination were virtually non-existent, despite the presence of other-race students, faculty and staff in the university.

Walter R. Allen, Ph.D., author of the study and Associate Professor of Sociology and Afro-American Studies at the University of Michigan/Ann Arbor, states that "Black students who want to go to college are forced to make a trade off. Those who choose to attend Black schools purchase psychological well-being and spiritual affinity often at the cost of less than favorable physical circumstances" (Allen, 1986, p. 6).

"Blacks who choose white campuses purchase richly-endowed physical surroundings and bureaucratic efficiency at the cost of less than favorable interpersonal relations and peace of mind" (Allen, 1986, p. 6).

Other findings released in the report, entitled Gender and Campus Race Differences in Black Student Academic

Performance, Racial Attitudes and College Satisfaction,

include:

1. Academic Performance. Black students on both Black and white campuses experience dramatic drops in academic performance levels compared with their high school grades.

Seventy-five percent of Black students on white campuses reported GPA's of less than 3.0 on a 4.0 scale; 66 percent of students at primarily Black colleges reported averages of less than 3.0.

While Black colleges have higher retention and graduation rates, 40 percent of their students say they have considered dropping out, as compared to 33 percent at other schools.

2. Racial Attitudes. Student racial attitudes at both Black and white institutions show Black women to be more conservative than Black males. Black women were more strongly opposed to inter-racial dating than Black men. Those who were most involved in campus life also tend to be conservative in their racial attitudes. Well to do students were no more conservative than students of lower socio-economic backgrounds.

3. Student Satisfaction. Student satisfaction is greater for males on both Black and white campuses than it is for Black females. Black females reported unfavorable relations with white faculty and staff on their campuses. Twenty-six percent of students on Black campuses reported considerable interest in activities, while only eight percent of Black students on white campuses said activities were of interest.

4. Student Aspirations. Black students on white campuses voiced higher educational and occupational aspirations than those on primarily Black campuses.

(p. 176)

Black Student Adjustment

The first comparison of Black students' adjustment at predominantly Black universities with their adjustment at predominantly white universities involved measurement of personality characteristics: self-concept, vocational aspiration, and academic performance (Styles, 1969). The

research suggested that the self-concept of Black female students declined significantly at predominantly white universities (Styles, 1969). The most telling effect, however, was found in the area of "sense of belonging."

Fleming (1984) conducted longitudinal research designed to understand Black student matriculation in predominantly Black universities and concluded:

1. Development among white students in white colleges roughly parallels that of Black students in Black colleges.

2. On predominantly white campuses, disenchantment of white students is less devastating to cognitive functioning because policies on white campuses succeed in integrating the intellectual and interpersonal needs of white students.

3. Black male development suffers the most on predominantly white campuses. On predominantly Black campuses, Black men occupy turf that is comparable to that of white men on white campuses.

4. Black women are least likely to express so-called matriarchal powers of dominance on predominantly Black campuses. Conversely, Black women are more assertive on predominantly white campuses, but they suppress their assertiveness to please men.

5. Predominantly Black colleges positively influenced Black students' cognitive development, and interpersonal development.

6. Predominantly white colleges have not succeeded in combatting Black students' social isolation, perceptions of classroom biases, and perceptions of hostile interpersonal climates.

(pp. 135-136)

Most studies indicate different adjustment patterns on campus for Black women and Black men. Payton (1985) reinforced Fleming's (1983) findings that Black women become more assertive and self-reliant at predominantly white institutions.

Campus Environment

While there are many student variables such as high school GPA, academic aptitude, etc., which relate to retention, it has been somewhat recently recognized that there are many factors within the college environment which contribute to, or detract from, student persistence.

A major consensus is that there needs to be greater attention given to the relationship between academic and non-academic dimensions of student life. Beal and Noel, authors of What Works in Student Retention (1980) emphasize the importance of the interaction between students and the institution. It is then clear, that the student affairs and services staff should be more proactive identifying student needs. This requires that the professional staff be knowledgeable of, and sensitive to, multicultural factors. Instead of minority affairs offices being the primary provider in student services, other areas of service must be more proactive and unafraid to relate to Black students (Smith, 1985). A more appropriate thrust would include an office of minority affairs that functions as a clearing house within the structural mainstream of campus. Rather than having Black students isolated, staff would be in touch with all areas of the university and then could mainstream Black students as well. Such a model would require having a diversity of staff in every area of student services (Smith, 1985).

Wanda E. Gill (1987, p. 28), Director of Special Services project at Bowie State College in Bowie, Maryland, suggested that the retention of Black students on white campuses is related to the support system within the environment. Black students need to see caring faculty and staff, and role models who set expectations that students will achieve, and that they can master their environment.

The campus environment, for Black students on predominantly white campuses, continues to indicate that more college campuses are experiencing hostile situations for Black students. Many institutions are making efforts to improve relationships for Black students.

A resurgence of racist incidents in the past two years has led some educators, students, and others associated with higher education to warn of "a new racism" on college and university campuses (Farrell, 1988).

It is "new", they say, in that it has taken on less extreme proportions than the racial strife of years past when Black students were fighting for access to white institutions (Farrell, 1988). Blacks have won access and are finding that white campuses are often hostile environments in which vestiges of the "old" racism persist: racist themes at fraternity parties, subtle different treatment by professors, and epithets scrawled on residence hall room doors (Farrell, 1988).

There are publicized incidents that are happening

across the country. Incidents include (Farrell, 1986): (a) fights among Black and white students at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, (b) fights between Black and white students at Fairleigh Dickinson University, and (c) attacks by whites on a Black student at Manhattanville College. Other such incidents involved fraternities at New Jersey Institute of Technology being placed on probation for throwing a party with the theme "Howard Beach goes to trial", and a fraternity at the University of Wisconsin-Madison being temporarily suspended for racist actions toward Black students. Another incident evolved when two Black students at Rutgers University were told by white students to leave the residence halls. Campus police allegedly mishandled the situation, prompting a sit-in against racism at the university. The protest ended after university officials agreed to form a committee to ease racial tensions on the campus.

These are just a few incidents that have developed on campuses throughout the United States. Reginald Wilson, Director of the American Council on Education's Office of Minority Concerns points out that many white students as well as faculty have the notion that students of color were enrolled in school only through affirmative action and took white peoples' slot. "They're saying, why are minorities getting those grants and my dad has to pay? Couple that with the political climate, the legacy of racism, and the

climate is ripe for racial strife" (Farrell, 1988, p. A37).

Many colleges are paying attention to the warnings, Dr. Wilson says, and are doing something about improving relationships for all students. Some colleges now hold human relations seminars to get racial questions out into the open (Farrell, 1988).

The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse has conducted human relations workshops as well as diversity sessions to encourage integration and show the importance of valuing diversity. The university also formed a minority participation committee to assess the needs, wants, and perceptions of minority students.

Institutional Commitment

"We have had a lot of unimplemented idealism lately," observed Dr. Robert Atwell, president of the American Council on Education (Odin, 1987, p. 5). Atwell called on administrators to "see what you can do in your own backyard" (p. 5) rather than blaming public schools for education's failure to meet the needs of Blacks in higher education: (a) Universities must address the barriers that discourage Blacks from matriculating on white campuses, such as racism, lack of support and isolation, (b) more work should be done to see that curricula reflects ethnic diversity, and (c) institutions should guard against passive searches for minority faculty and the appointment of minority faculty to dead end positions with little

chance for professional development.

At predominantly Black colleges institutional values coincide with those of the students, but at predominantly white institutions the values must begin to shift more toward teaching and service, and away from research. They have failed to take the initiative to stretch their own institutional arms across the landscape of their own campuses to help Black students who are struggling to move into an environment very different from that to which they have been accustomed (Odin, 1987). It should be noted, that this support should not be just the business of the institution's office of minority affairs. Dr. Atwell added, "The truth of the matter is while many colleges are aware of the problem, there still is no commitment" (1987, p. 6).

The facilitating role of equal opportunity should be spread among all the constituents of the university--faculty, staff, students, and alumni--plus local government, the local business community, private organizations, foundations, and individuals Until there's a willingness to provide the student services in tune with student needs, hire the faculty and staff, reform the teaching and the curriculum, and develop an institutional environment in which all students regardless of background can flourish, until more institutions are willing to make that kind of commitment, Black enrollment and retention are unlikely to increase significantly.

(Turner, 1988, p.18)

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of Black student experience at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The researcher attempted to identify elements within the campus environment to determine what effect the elements had on Black student withdrawal.

Sample

A questionnaire was used to acquire the data needed for this study. The questionnaire was designed to ascertain the perception of Black student experience at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

The questionnaire was delivered to 70 Black students enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse during the 1987-88 school year. Ten Black students who had withdrawn from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse within the last year also completed the questionnaire. This researcher believed, for the purpose of this study, that African students have the same psychological experiences as any other Black student; therefore, eight African students were included in the sample. The listing of these students was gathered from the Office of Minority Affairs.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire (See Appendix A) used for this research was designed by the researcher and an unbiased evaluator. Entitled, "Black students' perception of their experiences at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse" the instrument allowed Black students that were enrolled during the 1987-88 academic year, and Black students who had withdrawn from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse within the last year to express their views regarding the impact the campus environment has had on them.

Guidelines and reference points to develop this questionnaire were provided by the Adele Stamp Union and the Counseling Center at the University of Maryland, College Park. Brent Mallinckrodt and William Sedlacek used a questionnaire regarding the quality of life, in their effort to correlate student retention and the use of campus facilities on the University of Maryland campus. For the purpose of this study, their section on location ratings was helpful because it related to the students' perspectives of a particular area and meeting place on campus. However, there were other sections of their questionnaire that were too vague and unrelated to the present study.

To assure that the questionnaire was complete, thorough, and understandable, a pilot test was conducted on seven Black students who had withdrawn from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse more than two years prior to this

research. These students never completed their degree program and currently live in the La Crosse area.

The face validity and completeness of this questionnaire were based on expert advising, literature review, and environmental experiences that students gain on college campuses.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section one related to personal data, while section two addresses student involvement and the use of student services and an evaluation of the services. Section three focused on the evaluation of the impact the campus environment and community have had on students. Section four allowed students to make comments regarding the impact of their experiences.

Procedure

This instrument was administered to 70 Black students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. All of these students received the questionnaire personally. The majority of students were given the questionnaire at the Black Student Unity organization meetings. There the researcher had the opportunity to discuss with students the contents of the questionnaire and the purpose it served. Ten students completed the questionnaire at the meetings. Others made a commitment to complete the questionnaire and return it to the Office of Minority Affairs, Admissions, or Student Affairs.

Other students who didn't attend Black Student Unity meetings on a regular basis were contacted in the residence halls, Office of Minority Affairs, the physical education building and at off campus residences.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The questionnaire of Black students enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse during the 1987-88 school year, and those who had withdrawn during that period, was completed and returned by 49 of the 70 who had received them. This constituted a 70 percent return rate.

Analysis of Data

Demographics

Section I

Section I of the questionnaire was intended to obtain individual and background information about the total number of students who responded to the questionnaire.

The male to female ratio was more than two to one, with 34 males compared to 15 females. Data indicates males outnumber females by a percentage of 69.4 to 30.6. Black male enrollment at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse tends to be double that of Black females. Data figures of gender may be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Respondents - Gender (N=49)

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	15	30.6
Male	34	69.4

Of the total 49 respondents, 11 (22.4 percent) indicated their present age to be 19. Table 2 provides a breakdown of age classification.

In response to the students' classification, 15 (30.6 percent) were freshmen, 13 (26.5 percent) were sophomores, 12 (24.5 percent) were juniors, and 9 (18.4 percent) were seniors. Table 3 reflects this data.

In response to the question regarding the academic area in which students were enrolled, 29 (59.2 percent) of the respondents indicated Arts, Letters and Sciences. Table 4 provides a breakdown of the college students are enrolled in.

Table 2

Demographics of Respondents - Age (N=49)

Years of Age	Number	Percentage
18	8	16.3
19	11	22.4
20	9	18.4
21	7	14.3
22	6	12.2
23	4	8.2
25	2	4.1
30	1	2.0
32	1	2.0

Table 3

Demographics of Respondents - Classification (N=49)

Class in College	Number	Percentage
Freshman	15	30.6
Sophomore	13	26.5
Junior	12	24.5
Senior	9	18.4

Table 4.

Demographics of Respondents - College of Enrollment (N=49)

College of Enrollment	Number	Percentage
Arts, Letters & Sciences	29	59.2
Business	16	32.7
Education	4	2.0
Health & Human Services	2	4.1
Health, Physical Education & Recreation	5	2.0

Of the 49 respondents, 26 (53.1 percent) indicated Wisconsin is their state of residency. The other 23 (43.7 percent) that responded are from various states throughout the United States, and include three international students from Africa. (See Table 5.)

In response to participation in the summer Academic Institute or pre-collegiate program, 10 (20.4 percent) of the respondents indicated they were involved in that program. Thirty-nine (79.6 percent) were not involved. (See Table 6.)

Table 5

Demographics of Respondents - Permanent Residence (N=49)

Place of Residency	Number	Percentage
Wisconsin	26	53.1
Illinois	8	16.3
Florida	5	10.2
Minnesota	4	8.3
Outside of USA	3	6.1
Texas	1	2.0
Tennessee	1	2.0
Michigan	1	2.0

Table 6

Participation in Summer Academic Institute (N=49)

Status	Number	Percentage
Participants	10	20.4
Non-Participants	39	79.6

Of the total respondents, 29 (59.2 percent) expressed an interest to return to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Twenty (40.8 percent) indicated they would not return. However, six of those not returning were due to graduation. Those who were not returning due to graduation

made up 12.2 percent of all responses, and accounted for slightly more than one-third of those who indicated they would not return to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. (See Table 7.)

Table 7

Continued Enrollment Plans (N=49)

Plans	Number	Percentage
Continuing	29	59.2
Not Continuing	14	28.6
Graduated	6	12.2

Of the total respondents, 15 (30.6 percent) indicated involvement in Freshman Orientation. Thirty-four (69.4 percent) of the total respondents indicated that they did not participate in Freshman Orientation. (See Table 8.)

Table 8

Participation in Freshman Orientation (N=49)

Status	Number	Percentages
Participant	15	30.6
Non-Participant	34	69.4

The total number of respondents identified as transfer students was 16.3 percent (8). Forty-one (83.7 percent) of

the total respondents described themselves as not being transfer students. (See Table 9.)

Table 9

Transfer Status (N=49)

Status	Number	Percentage
Transfer	8	16.3
Non-Transfer	41	83.7

The total number of respondents identified as being involved in student organizations was 34 (69.4 percent). Fifteen (30.6) of the total respondents indicated no involvement in student organizations. (See Table 10.)

Table 10

Extra-Curricular Involvement (N=49)

Status	Number	Percentage
Involvement	34	69.4
No Involvement	15	30.6

Section II

In Section II of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate how many times per year they used the student services and then evaluate their experiences regarding those services. It must be noted that there are discrepancies in the data reflecting how students used and evaluated student services. The total number of respondents evaluated student services, including those they did not use, and used their perceptions of particular departments as their means of evaluation. This is reflected in Table 12. The following scale was used as an evaluator: 1=very negative, 2=negative, 3=neutral, 4=positive, and 5=very positive. (See Tables 11 and 12).

Fourteen of the respondents (28.6 percent) indicated no use of Academic Advising and 35 (7.4 percent) indicated an average use of four times per year. Of the total evaluating respondents, 23 (46.9 percent) evaluated their experiences as positive.

Nineteen respondents (38.8 percent) indicated an average use of Admissions was one time per year. Eleven of the evaluating respondents (22.4 percent) evaluated Admissions as neutral and 13 (26.5 percent) evaluated their experiences with Admissions as being positive, and 51 percent evaluated Admissions as negative.

Slightly more than 61 percent of the respondents (30 individuals) had no use of Student Affairs, and 19 (38.8

percent) of the respondents had an average use of 1.4 percent. One (5.0 percent) of the respondents evaluated their experiences with Student Affairs as negative, nine (45.0 percent) rated their's neutral, and 10 (50.0) rated their experiences as positive.

Thirty-four of the total respondents (69.4 percent) indicated no use of Career Services throughout the school year. Fifteen (30.6 percent) indicated an average use of three times per year. Two (11.1 percent) of the respondents rated their experiences with Career Services as negative, four (22.2 percent) as neutral, and 12 (60.7 percent) as positive.

Five individuals (10.2 percent of the total respondents) had no use of Minority Affairs. Forty-four (80.2 percent) indicated use of the Minority Affairs office. Three respondents (6.8 percent) evaluated a negative experience with Minority Affairs, nine (10.5 percent) reported their experiences to be neutral, and 32 (72.1 percent) evaluated their experiences as positive.

Table 11

Use or Non-Use of UW-L Services (N=49)

UW-L Service	Used		Not Used	
	No.	%	No.	%
Financial Aid	49	100.0	0	0.0
Murphy Library	45	91.8	4	8.2
Minority Affairs	44	90.8	5	10.2
Academic Advising	35	71.4	14	28.6
Cartwright Center	33	68.3	16	32.7
Health Center	32	65.3	17	34.7
Whitney Center (Food Service)	25	51.0	24	49.0
Admissions	19	38.8	30	61.2
Student Activities	19	38.8	30	61.2
Career Services	15	30.6	34	69.4
Counseling & Test'g	14	28.6	35	71.4
Special Services	3	6.1	46	93.9

Four individuals (8.2 percent of the total number of respondents) reported no use of the campus library, while 45 (91.8 percent) indicated using the library. Two (4.4 percent) of the respondents evaluated their experience as negative, nine (2.0 percent) as neutral, and 34 (75.6 percent) reported positive experiences with the campus library.

Thirty (61.2 percent) respondents indicated they had not used Student Activities, while nineteen (38.8 percent) of the respondents indicated some use of Student Activities. Of the total respondents, eight (40.0 percent) evaluated their experiences with Student Activities negatively, and nine (45.0 percent) evaluated their experiences as being positive.

Thirty-five (71.4 percent) of the 49 respondents indicated they had not used Counseling and Testing. Fourteen (28.6 percent) indicated some use. Two (13.3 percent) of the respondents evaluated their experiences with Counseling and Testing as being negative, four (26.7 percent) as neutral, and nine (60.0) as being positive.

All 49 (100.0 percent) respondents indicated use of the Financial Aid Office. Four (7.5 percent) of them felt their experiences were negative, nine (22.5 percent) felt their experiences were neutral, and 27 (67.5 percent) felt they had positive experiences.

Seventeen (34.7 percent) respondents indicated they had not used the Health Center, and 32 (65.3 percent) indicated some use. Of the 32 who used the Health Center, three (9.4 percent of the total) felt their experiences at the Health Center were negative, five (15.9 percent) felt their experiences were neutral, and 24 (75.0 percent) felt their experiences were positive.

Table 12

Evaluation of Student Services (N=49)

UW-L Service	No. of Responses	Evaluation of Services		
		Pos.	Neg.	Neu.
Academic Advising	49	47.0	26.5	26.5
Admissions	49	26.5	51.1	22.4
Student Affairs	20	50.0	5.0	45.0
Career Services	20	60.7	22.2	16.1
Minority Affairs	47	72.1	6.8	21.1
Murphy Library	45	75.6	4.4	20.0
Student Activities	20	45.0	40.0	15.0
Counseling & Testing	15	60.0	13.3	26.7
Financial Aid	41	67.5	10.0	22.5
Health Center	32	75.0	9.4	15.6
Special Services	3	0.0	66.7	33.3
Whitney Center (Food Service)	27	22.2	37.0	40.7
Cartwright Center	35	60.0	2.9	37.1

Forty-six (9.39 percent) of the respondents reported they had not used Special Services. Three (6.1 percent) of the total indicated some use. Of the three (6.1 percent) who indicated some use of Special Services, two (60.0 percent) had an experience they evaluated as negative, while one

(40.0 percent) had a neutral experience.

Twenty-four (49.0 percent) respondents reportedly did not use Whitney Center. Twenty-seven (51.0 percent) indicated they had used Whitney Center. Of the 27 who indicated having used Whitney Center, 10 (37.0 percent) reported a negative experience, 11 (40.7 percent a neutral experience), and six (22.2 percent) a positive experience.

Sixteen (32.7 percent) respondents reported not using Cartwright Center. Thirty-five (68.3 percent) had used Cartwright Center. Of those who had used Cartwright Center, one (2.9 percent) had a negative experience, 13 (37.1 percent) had neutral experiences, and 21 (60.0 percent) had positive experiences.

Section III

In Section III of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate the impact of their experiences regarding the La Crosse community and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse environment. The following scale was used as an evaluator: 1 = very negative, 2 = negative, 3 = neutral, 4 = positive, 5 = very positive.

(See Table 13.)

La Crosse Community. Seventeen of the total evaluating respondents (24.7 percent) evaluated the La Crosse community as having a very negative impact. Nine (18.4 percent) of the respondents indicated a negative impact, 18 (36.7 percent) had neutral feelings, four (8.2 percent

indicated a positive impact, and one (2.0 percent) indicated a very positive impact.

Table 13

Evaluation of Other Factors (N=49)

Factor	No. of Responses	Evaluation of Factors		
		Pos	Neg	Neu
La Crosse Community	49	2.0	43.1	54.9
Social & Cultural Environment	49	18.4	59.2	22.4
Faculty & Staff Interaction	49	30.6	22.4	47.0
Minority Faculty/ Staff Interaction	49	28.6	22.4	39.0
Interaction w/White Students	47	28.6	22.4	49.0
Residence Halls	49	30.6	26.5	42.9
Academic Curriculum	49	63.2	8.2	28.6
Interaction w/Other Black Students	49	71.4	8.2	20.4
Black Students' Political Environm't	49	24.5	38.8	36.7
Minority Affairs	49	65.3	12.3	22.4
Student Organizations and Activities	49	24.5	44.9	30.6
UW-L Administrators	49	26.5	42.9	30.6
Overall UW-L Impact	49	44.9	24.5	30.6

Social and cultural environment at UW-L. Fifteen evaluating respondents (30.6 percent) evaluated the cultural environment at UW-L as having a very negative impact. Fourteen (28.6 percent) of the respondents indicated a negative impact, 11 (22.4 percent) had neutral feelings, while nine (18.4 percent) indicated a positive impact.

Faculty and staff interaction. Twenty-three respondents (46.9 percent) indicated a neutral impact regarding faculty and staff. Eleven (22.4 percent) indicated a negative impact, while 15 (30.6 percent) expressed a positive impact regarding faculty and staff.

Minority faculty and staff. Fifteen of the 49 respondents (30.6 percent) indicated neutral feelings regarding the impact that minority faculty and staff had upon them. Fourteen (28.6 percent) expressed a positive impact, while nine (18.4 percent) indicated a negative impact, and two (4.1 percent) felt the impact was very negative.

Interaction with white students. Twenty-one respondents (42.9 percent) indicated neutral feelings regarding the impact of their relationship with white students. Fourteen (28.6 percent) indicated a positive impact, 10 (20.4 percent) indicated a negative impact, while one (2.0 percent) expressed a very negative impact.

Residence halls. Twenty-one respondents (42.9

percent) indicated a neutral impact regarding residential housing. Thirteen (26.5 percent) indicated a negative impact, 10 (20.4 percent) indicated a positive impact, one (2.0 percent) indicated a very positive impact, and three (6.1 percent) expressed a very negative impact.

Academic curriculum. Approximately 55 percent the total respondents (27 individuals) indicated a positive impact regarding the academic curriculum. Fourteen (28.6 percent) expressed a neutral position regarding its impact, while four (8.2 percent) felt the impact was very positive, and four (8.2 percent) felt the impact was negative.

Interaction with other Black students. Eighteen respondents (36.7 percent) indicated that Black students had a positive impact upon each other. Seventeen (34.7 percent) reported a very positive impact, while 10 (20.4) indicated a neutral impact, and four (8.2 percent) expressed the opinion that the impact was negative.

Black student political involvement. Nineteen of the 49 respondents (38.8 percent) reported a negative impact as the result of Black students' political involvement. The data also showed that 11 (22.4 percent) of the respondents felt the impact was neutral, and 12 (24.5 percent) expressed a positive attitude regarding Black students' involvement.

Minority Affairs. Thirty-two respondents (65.3 percent) indicated that the Minority Affairs Office had a

positive impact on them. Eleven (22.4 percent) expressed a neutral impact, while six (12.2 percent) expressed a negative impact.

Student organizations and activities. Approximately 45 percent of the respondents (22 individuals) indicated that the student activities and organizations had a negative impact on them. Fifteen (30.6 percent) indicated a neutral response, while 12 (24.5 percent) expressed a positive impact regarding student organizations and activities.

UW-L administrators. Twenty-one respondents (42.9 percent) expressed a negative response regarding the impact of UW-L administrators. Thirteen (26.5 percent) indicated a positive response and 15 (3.06 percent) had neutral expressions regarding the impact of UW-L administrators.

Overall UW-L impact. Twenty-two respondents (44.9 percent) indicated that overall, the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse has had a positive impact upon them. Twelve (24.5 percent) indicated a negative impact, and 15 expressed a neutral impact.

Open Questions - Section IV

In Section IV of the questionnaire, respondents replied to four questions specifically designed to identify with student insight regarding their experiences at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Concluding the questionnaire was a question that allowed students to make

additional comments about their experiences at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

The questions asked were:

1. Please comment on the value of your educational experience at UW-L in terms of preparing you for the occupational world.
2. What did you like most about your experience at UW-L?
3. What did you like least about your experience at UW-L?
4. What would you like to see improved at UW-L?
5. Please make additional comments about your experience at UW-L.

The major responses to these questions included the following responses.

Question Number One: Please comment on the value of your educational experience at UW-L in terms of preparing you for the occupational world. The main theme expressed from the respondents indicated that the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse had prepared students to become more flexible and adaptable in their interaction skills, primarily because of their interaction with white students, staff and faculty. The most frequent response identified that flexibility, understanding, and interaction with whites better prepared them for the occupational world.

The second most frequent response was that the

students identified with gaining independence and felt challenged by the University of Wisconsin System. By their being an accelerated need of Black students, faculty, and staff, students were challenged to find themselves and identify with white students and staff. Other comments are as follows: a) excellent career services, b) interaction with whites is essential for success, c) UW-L hasn't prepared me, and d) learning how whites think.

Question Number Two: What did you like most about your experience at UW-L? The two most frequent responses indicated that students established friendships with other Black students, and they established close friendships with white students. These responses occurred with equal frequency. The general concept appeared to be that of establishing sound friendships. Other comments in response to Question Number Two included: a) gaining independence, b) identifying with racism, c) football experience, d) Dr. Pemberton, e) James Lafky, f) white girls, g) academic curriculum, h) Minority Affairs, i) outdoor activities and scenery, and j) basketball experience.

Question Number Three: What did you like least about your experience at UW-L? The most frequent response from the respondents was the ignorance of the majority regarding minority culture. Students focused their primary response on the lack of openness and progressive thinking on the part of the La Crosse community and the University of

Wisconsin-La Crosse. The second most frequent response was the lack of cultural outlets for the student population. Many Black students expressed the lack of cultural functions as being the second most observation they didn't like. Other comments are as follows: a) no institutional comment regarding diversity, b) lack of Black students on campus, c) food at Whitney, d) lack of Hispanic and American Indian students, e) Minority Affairs have the burden to provide all cultural events, f) passive Black students, g) Uncle Tom Black students, h) Black faculty that aren't Black, i) no Blacks in Admissions, and j) no Blacks in visible positions.

Question Number Four: What would you like to see improved at UW-L? The most frequent response from the questionnaire was to see an increase in Black students, faculty and staff. Most of the respondents identified with having more Blacks visible in various parts of the campus. There was no obvious dominating second comment. All other comments were related to the most frequent response; such as, more Blacks in sports activities, more Black women on campus, and more Black students involved in the mainstream at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Other comments were as follows: a) better Black and white interaction other than sex with Black women and white women, b) more Black student involvement, c) less complaining from Blacks and more action and involvement in

the mainstream, d) more cultural functions, e) more initiative from student activities to provide cultural functions and guest speakers, f) less victim blaming on Minority Affairs in regard to recruiting and retention of minority students, and g) Black or cultural music on WLSU (campus radio).

Question Number Five: Please make additional comments about your experience at UW-L. This concluding question gave students the opportunity to rate their overall experience at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. There were a number of responses to the open-ended question that made it difficult to single out a particular theme. However, the most frequent was the observation of the lack of Black students, faculty and staff.

The results went on to indicate that Black students aren't being involved enough nor assertive enough in addressing issues. Part of the theme addressed the need for Black students to interact more with white students, and that Black students shouldn't peer pressure each other with comments like "He or she is an Uncle Tom," or "He or she isn't really Black," or "Those brothers and sisters have sold themselves out."

The second closest theme that came close to being a frequent observation was that of providing more cultural functions. Students commented about not being a part of the mainstream or alienated because the University of

Wisconsin-La Crosse was not committed to providing diversity. Other comments are listed: a) more effort in retention, b) increase financial aid, 3) racism should be expected, d) overall positive experience, e) more genuine Black role models, g) Black students need to get off their ass!, h) I wouldn't advise students to attend UW-L, i) more Black and white interaction, and white administrators should attend Black student meetings occasionally.

Overall, most of the comments provided good insight into where students are coming from. That is to say, there was a mixture of positive, negative, and neutral comments made. For example, one student commented that "although the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse has not shown a great deal of commitment in regard to cultural activities, I've been able to enjoy myself and have had a valuable educational experience in La Crosse." Another student said, "There should be more of an effort to recruit and retain Black students at UW-L; however, I make use of what's available, and have made a lot of white friends." Several students have expressed interest in continuation of their education at La Crosse; yet, these same students are encouraging UW-L administrators to encourage the La Crosse community to be more receptive to people that are different than they are.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to study and examine Black students' perceptions of their experiences regarding the use of the facilities, campus environment, and the La Crosse community. This study attempted to identify with the perception of anticipated withdrawal from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

In reviewing the data and comments from the questionnaire, descriptives were generated from Black students at UW-L and analyzed. Males responded to the questionnaire by outnumbering females 69.4 percent to 30.6 percent. Thirty-five of these students were between the ages of 18 and 20. However, most students were 19 years of age and were Wisconsin residents.

Black men outnumbered Black women in participation in the research. Previous research by Fleming (1984) supports a different response. Fleming's studies indicated that Black women are more assertive on white campuses and participate more in campus activities than Black men. In a recent study, Fleming (1986) hypothesized a need for special programs for Black men because of their dwindling

presence in higher education. One reason for the higher participation of Black men at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse is the recruitment of football players. Black women athletes are not recruited at the same level. This, in part, is a motivation for Black men to matriculate because of the socialization and involvement through this athletic involvement.

A majority of students (59.2 percent) reported that they would return to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Reasons cited were their involvement in sports and their academic goals. Twenty (40.8 percent) of the respondents who expressed no desire to return to UW-L expressed their feelings of isolation, lack of cultural activities, and racism. It should be noted that of the 40.8 percent not returning, six (12.2 percent) had graduated.

Involvement on the campus has been demonstrated to be an important facet of a college student's education (Astin, 1984). Students involved in activities, living on campus, and involved with faculty members have a greater chance for completing their college degree than those students that are not involved (Astin, 1984). On the other hand, from a social perspective, white universities are structured to meet white students' needs. From fraternities to polka dancing, minority students often find themselves outside the mainstream of college life. A study conducted by

Centra (1970) of 83 predominantly white institutions reveals a dual environment for Black students that leads to alienation. Suen (1983) confirmed that alienation leads to high attrition.

Other aspects of the questionnaire focused on Black students' use of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse student services. The majority of the 49 respondents indicated average use of Academic Advising, Admissions, the Health Center, Whitney Center, and Student Affairs.

The services used by Black students the most include the Minority Affairs Office, Murphy Library, and the Financial Aids Office. A previous study by the Minority Participation Committee at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse found the highest use of services by Black students was the Library (UW-L, 1988). In addition, Mallinckrodt and Sedlacek (1985) investigated involvement as related to minority students at the University of Maryland. They found that the only academic facility used consistently was the library. The library is a neutral area that is part of the academic progression. Forty-four (80.2 percent) of the 49 respondents in this study expressed that they used the Minority Affairs Office. This expresses the close relationship between Black students and the Minority Affairs Office. To some, the Minority Affairs Office is viewed as a center to pacify or quell the demands of Blacks for a more relevant total environment. To others the

Minority Affairs Office is a temporary bridge to help ease the transition of Black students into the mainstream of college life (Astin, 1986). Perhaps most importantly the Minority Affairs Office is viewed by most Black students as "an island in a sea of whiteness" that offers Black students a sense of identity and cultural enrichment that is not offered anywhere else on campus.

Other services exhibited different patterns. Student Affairs, Career Services, Counseling and Testing, and Student Activities had a much lower rate of use by Black students. Of the 49 respondents, 35 students responded that they have no use of these services. This displayed a lack of trust and awareness of these services. If students are ever going to be involved and feel a part of the campus, these services must utilize their expertise to work with Black students. Part of the problem may relate to the lack of motivation and encouragement for Black students to seek the assistance of these services. Having connection and identification with these services can lead to greater satisfaction and increase a desire to persist on campus. Black students need role models they can identify with. These role models will relieve tension and allow Black students to feel comfortable.

If we look carefully at the Counseling and Testing Office and the Placement Center at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, we find Black students not using the

services in large numbers. In regard to Counseling and Testing, students take their problems elsewhere and caring counselors are wondering why Black students do not come into the Center more often. Counselors should have an understanding of Black students' problems from a Black perspective and then address these problems from both a counseling and instructional perspective. A significant reason for students dropping out was indecision about major/career goals. Some universities do not offer career planning courses to assist students in their decision-making.

In looking at Black students; counselor preference, Thompson (1978) found "the likelihood of going to the counseling center increased as counselor preference increased." He found that Black students preferred Black counselors for both personal and educational/ vocational problems. He also found that student and counselor gender had no effect in increasing Black student use. This is not to say that non-Blacks should not counsel Blacks, but it does imply that non-Blacks should be sensitive and trained to cultural factors to be effective in counseling Blacks and other minorities.

Results also demonstrated mixed feelings regarding the impact the university has had on Black students. Black students made positive comments about Minority Affairs, the academic curriculum, and their overall experience at UW-L.

It was interesting to observe the apathy and lack of motivation that Black students commented about in reference to each other. For example, a female freshman indicated she is sometimes peer pressured from other Black students not to interact with whites. When she interacts with whites, some Blacks make her feel as though she is an "Uncle Tom."

According to Charles Taylor (1986), some Black students are into "Black nationalism," and they feel their energy and time should be spent with their particular racial group. However, the Black women whom I interviewed expressed concerns that Black students will never mainstream if we have an attitude such as this.

In addition, several of the Black students expressed concerns about interracial dating on the campus. In fact, one particular male student responded on the questionnaire that he liked "white girls and basketball" the most while being a student at UW-L. This student is not returning and will be transferring to a school in the South. This concept gives some significance to Black men being able to survive longer on the campus than Black females. This data is contrary to some related studies. Findings from Hughes (1987) suggested that Black males are more at risk in their adjustment to college than Black females. However, for this study and school, adjustment patterns are different. It appears that Black men at UW-L are more flexible in

interracial dating than are Black women. This gives Black men more social outlets than Black women. Some Black women date interracially; however, not in as large numbers as Black men. Black women are more reluctant and conservative in dating. This exhibits one reason why Black men have been observed to matriculate more than Black women at UW-L.

Smith (1985) studied life stress, social support, and mental health and concluded that stressful stimuli for Blacks and other ethnic minorities include prejudice, discrimination, and hostility encountered from the social environment as a result of their ethnic identity. This study related partially to the negative comments expressed about the La Crosse community. The La Crosse community does not appear to reach out in a pro-active manner to provide acceptance to new ethnic peoples in the region.

Faculty and staff, including minority members, did not receive the positive responses from the questionnaire that existing research would tend to indicate. Students described minority faculty as not being accessible enough. Other student responses questioned their commitment to the Black students. This is very significant. Almost every major study involving retention cites caring and sensitive faculty as one of the key ingredients for student persistence. Astin (1977) concluded that student/faculty interaction was the most important factor in assessing student satisfaction with their campus. Pantages and

Creedon (1978) reached similar conclusions. Beal and Noel (1980) found the retention factor cited as most important by both two year and four year institutions was the caring attitude of faculty and staff. Nettle's (1982) research concluded that the majority of faculty members at predominantly white schools have made no special adjustment in terms of their time allocation, manner of teaching, or curriculum, and most admit they interact less with their Black students than with their white students.

Students tend to hold professors in high esteem. Black students attending predominantly white campuses especially need reassurance up front from faculty. If a composite was drawn of the American professor, the portrait that would emerge would be that of a middle-aged, white male with limited experience in interacting with minority students. This professor's life experiences and educational preparation traditionally place him at odds with students of color. When minority students enter his classroom, more than likely they are the ones who are expected to change (Nettles, 1982).

Most students believed that graduating from UW-L would assist them in relating to whites in the occupational world. Many believed the challenge is to maintain their cultural identity while struggling to come into the mainstream. Students expressed the importance of gaining good friendships at UW-L, including both Black and white

students. Concerns were expressed with the lack of cultural openness and cultural outlets for Black students.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this research was to study and examine Black student perceptions of experiences regarding the use of facilities, campus environment and the La Crosse community. This study is intended to identify causes of anticipated withdrawal from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

The instrument used to compile this information was designed by the researchers, with assistance and guidance from the questionnaire, "Students use of campus services at the University of Maryland" by Dr. William Sedlacek (date). Entitled "Black student's perception of their experiences at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse", the questionnaire was developed into four sections: Background and personal information, students' use and evaluation of services, impact of environment and community, and open end comments and suggestions.

Seventy Black students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse received the questionnaire. Forty-nine students (70 percent of the sample) responded.

Section I generated demographic and personal data about the respondents. The ratio of males to females totalled more than two to one. Data indicates males outnumber females by a percentage of 69.4 to 30.6. Most of the respondents were Wisconsin residents (53.1 percent) with the majority of students between the ages of 18 and 21. Respondents to the questionnaire were classified almost equally. Fifteen freshmen (30.6 percent), three sophomores (26.5 percent) twelve juniors (24.5 percent) and nine seniors (18.4 percent) responded to the questionnaire. Of the 49 respondents, 10 (20.4 percent) had participated in the Summer Academic Institute, 15 (30.6 percent) participated in Freshman Orientation, eight (16.3 percent) were transfer students, four (69.4 percent) were involved in student organizations (Black Student Unity), and 29 (59.2 percent) expressed an interest to return to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Most students chose the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse because of "not having to pay out-of-state tuition," "the football program," "Summer Academic Institute," "word of mouth recruitment," and "academic programming."

Section II asked students to indicate their use of services and evaluate that use. Significant use came in the area of the library (91.8 percent), Minority Affairs (80.2 percent), the Financial Aids Office (100 percent), the Student Health Center (65.3 percent), Cartwright Center

(68.5 percent), and Academic Advising (71.4 percent). Minimal use was served in other area. Approximately 61 percent had no use of Student Affairs, over 69 percent had not used Career Services, about 61 percent had not used Student Activities, and over 71 percent of the student respondents had not used the Counseling and Testing Center.

Respondents that expressed use of student services, positive comments were calculated with Student Affairs (50.0 percent), Career Services (60.7 percent), Minority Affairs (72.1 percent), Murphy Library (75.6 percent), the Financial Aids Office (67.5 percent), the Student Health Center (75.0 percent) and Cartwright Center (60.0 percent). Student Activities received split reviews. Of the total respondents that used Student Activities, nine (45.0 percent) expressed a positive reaction, while eight (40.0 percent) expressed negative reactions.

Section III asked students to comment regarding the impact of the La Crosse community and campus environment. Of the 49 respondents, 26 (53.1 percent) identified the La Crosse community as having a negative impact. In addition, the social and cultural environment at UW-L, student organizations and activities, Black students' political involvement and UW-L administrators had less than 50 percent of a positive impact. Areas that made a positive influence were Minority Affairs, the academic curriculum, interaction with other Black students, and their overall

experience at UW-L. Students tended to be neutral in respect to the impact white students, faculty and staff, minority faculty and staff, and residence halls.

Section IV allowed students to make open-end comments to four questions. No data was compiled in this section, only the general themes. Question Number One invited students to make comments on the value of their educational experience at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The most frequent response showed students gaining flexibility and adaptable skills due to interaction with whites. Others expressed how they had been challenged and had gained independence. Question Number Two found the respondents developing meaningful friendships with other Black and white students. Students indicated in response to Question Number Three that they least liked the ignorance of the majority regarding minority culture. The lack of cultural events and social outlets were the second most frequent responses. Question Number Four provided an opportunity for students to recommend improvements at UW-L. The most frequent suggestion from the respondents was to increase the number of Black students, faculty and staff on campus. There was no other dominating theme. Most comments related to increasing the presence of Blacks in every area of campus.

The concluding question, Question Number Five, resulted in expressions of concern about Black Student

Unity. Students expressed their concern about the apathy and lack of interest in Black students, as evidence by their lack of participation in not only Black events, but also in campus-wide events. Other reactions were centered around the area of students mainstreaming with the majority and utilizing campus resources. However, the bottom line resulted in a desire for increased commitment to the recruitment and retention of Black students, faculty, and staff. If positive Blacks are hired on the campus, all other suggestions would fall into place.

Attention needs to be focused on the data and analyzed tabulations that have been generated by this study. An increasing effort must be implemented in allowing Black students to have a sense of belonging at UW-L. Few students have the ability to mainstream and utilize the resources, while most do not. Faculty dissatisfaction, high feelings of racial discrimination, and little opportunity for social interaction are significant predictors of student commitment to the University.

There is no doubt, the need for Black faculty throughout higher education and is central to the desegregation process, even though it does not appear to have an effect upon student performance. The purpose of role modeling and the importance of racially diverse faculties are justified on other grounds, such as improvement of Black student attitudes, behaviors, and satisfaction with

their university.

When campuses create the right atmosphere it seems that Black student interaction falls in place. A supportive environment is one in which student growth is expected and fostered. When there is advocacy for Black students on campus the results are students helping to bring in new students and helping each other make it through.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the data analysis, suggestions, comments, and related literature. These recommendations are made for serious consideration and implementation.

1. In most predominantly white institutions, there is a lack of leadership at all levels on the matter of changing America's colleges to better reflect the ethnic and racial composition of American society. There is a need for more action by the administration at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse to implement strategies to recruit, hire, and retain Blacks and members of other minority groups as part of the campus populace. UW-L administrators need to be sensitive and take a humble posture to their own socialization. They need to realize that it is impossible to grow up in this society without being covertly racist. Black or white, it is fed into us from the day we were born. UW-L administrators need to take a humble posture to assist all students in

matriculation.

2. An emphasis needs to be put on providing diversity and multiculturalism.

3. Black students are encouraged to be more active and less apathetic regarding campus activities. Black students must understand and recognize that it is relevant and important to interact with all racial groups.

4. Mainstreaming of minority students is important for student development to occur and to enable students (all students) to learn about multiculturalism, even though Black students understand multiculturalism better than white students simply because of the struggle of minority students to come into the mainstream.

5. Black students are encouraged to mainstream with Black awareness. Black students should be aware of Africa and the contributions made by African Americans /Black Americans. This must be said due to the conspiracy and intent by white America to discredit and not teach Black students as well as white students the realities of the contributions made by Blacks to this country as well as to the world.

6. UW-L must provide African History in its curriculum. Black students grow up believing in the conspiracy that anything from Africa is backwardness, darkness, primitiveness, and ugliness. And to come from Europe is to be from the civilized part of the world. This

country has a lack of appreciation of Africa and the realities of Africa. Black students must know who they are! It's like a tree without roots! Every American has linkage with another country. Blacks need to know that the dawning of civilization began in Africa and that the Greeks were students of Africans. Students then will develop confidence in themselves and increase their self-esteem. Then students will believe that there is a valid place for them in higher education.

7. The minority awareness seminar that was held in the spring of 1987 should be held on a consistent basis. This allowed students to meet and interact with individuals that are representing different support areas on campus. Black students view this as a pro-active step by the university.

8. The argument is often advanced that Black students need a sufficient number of Black faculty and staff on campus to serve as role models and allow Black students to have strong relationship with faculty on campus. It is recommended that the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse take an aggressive role in searching for Black faculty and staff. The shortage of Black faculty and staff reduces the opportunity for Black students to have strong relationships with faculty and, thus, lowers the quality of their college experience.

9. It is recommended that the Offices of Student

Development and Student Activities take proactive measures to increase their programming to address Black students. Student Activities should promote more cultural programming for all students. It should not be up to the Office of Minority Affairs. Both offices should have a Black full-time employee.

10. Based on the consistent comments from the student questionnaire, the Admissions Office is encouraged to establish an aggressive minority recruitment plan. The same efforts that are put into encouraging whites to attend the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse should be applied to the recruitment of minority students.

11. Administrators and staff members from the various support services are encouraged to attend the Black Student Unity organization. It is important that students know there is a sincere commitment and interest in their organization and the activities they initiate. Although it is unrealistic for administrators to attend all minority oriented programs, it is devastating to student morale if administrators do not attend anyway.

12. As much as Blacks are encouraged to mainstream and involve themselves in white organizations, these organizations must make themselves available to Black students and encourage Black student participation.

13. The Minority Affairs Office should continue their academic advising and begin a student early warning system

where a report is sent to instructors to identify minority students who are in need of assistance. If Black students make it past the freshman year, the data indicates they are about as predictable as their white counterparts as far as retention goes.

14. Admissions and Minority Affairs are encouraged to accelerate the participants in the Summer Academic Institute. This is an excellent program that assesses students' academic strengths and weaknesses. Students become familiar with college during the summer and are able to identify with key resources much better than students without the program. Students involved in this program increase their matriculation chances. This recruitment effort should not be left for Minority Affairs only. Admissions must share this responsibility as well.

15. It is recommended that the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse radio station, WLSU, provide Black music on their station. Comment from the questionnaire indicates that this is a major concern. Considering the La Crosse community and other communities within a 150 mile radius do not address Black music, this could be served by the campus radio station. Music is a part of all students' heritage and they need to hear music that they can relate to. It is time for a change.

16. We must discourage racial polarization by helping Black students understand that student development occurs

when we identify with other cultures and develop flexible and adaptable mainstream interaction skills. Black students must understand that one is not selling out their values when they interact with whites; they are only broadening their horizons.

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APPENDIX
RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

BLACK STUDENTS PERCEPTION OF UW-L EXPERIENCE

Please complete the following questionnaire. Remember, your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

SS# _____ Age _____

Female _____ Male _____ Classification: Freshman _____

Sophomore _____ Junior _____ Senior _____ College:

A.L. & S. _____ Bus _____ H. & H.S. _____ Ed _____

HPER _____ Residency: City _____ State _____

Why did you choose UW-L? _____

Did you participate in summer academic institute or pre-collegiate program? Yes _____ No _____ Year _____

Why? _____

Do you plan to return in 1988-89? Yes _____ No _____

Why? _____

Did you attend freshman orientation? Yes _____ No _____

Why? _____

Are you a transfer student? Yes _____ No _____

Are you involved in student organizations? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please give name of organization _____

If no, why? _____

Please indicate how many times per year you used the following services. Evaluate your experiences with these services by using the following scale: 1-very negative, 2-negative, 3-neutral, 4-positive, 5-very positive.

<u>Service</u>	<u>Time Used</u>	<u>Evaluation Scale</u>				
Academic Advising	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Admissions	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Student Affairs	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Minority Affairs	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Career Services	_____	1	2	3	4	5
UW-Library	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Student Activities	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Counseling/Testing	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Financial Aid	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Health Center	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Special Services	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Whitney Center	_____	1	2	3	4	5
Cartwright Foods	_____	1	2	3	4	5

Please rate the following categories regarding their impact on your experiences at UW-L. Evaluate your experiences by using the following scale: 1-very negative, 2-negative, 3-neutral, 4-positive, 5-very positive.

LaCrosse Community	1	2	3	4	5
Social and Cultural Environment at UW-L	1	2	3	4	5
Faculty and Staff Interaction	1	2	3	4	5
Minority Faculty and Staff	1	2	3	4	5
Interaction with White Students	1	2	3	4	5
Residence Halls	1	2	3	4	5
Academic Curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
Interaction with other Black Students	1	2	3	4	5
Black Students Political Involvement	1	2	3	4	5
Minority Affairs	1	2	3	4	5
Student Organizations/Activities	1	2	3	4	5
UW-L Administrators	1	2	3	4	5
Overall Impact of UW-L	1	2	3	4	5

Please comment on the value of your educational experience at UW-L in terms of preparing you for the occupational world.

What did you like most about your experience at UW-L?

What did you like least about your experience at UW-L?

What would you like to see improved at UW-L? _____

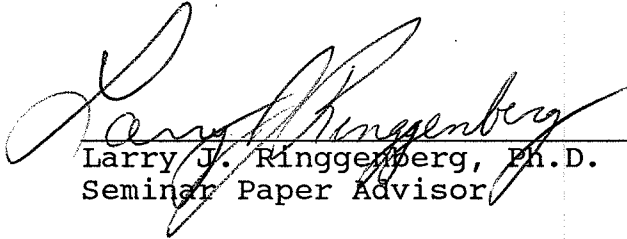
Please make additional comments about your experience at UW-L.

Thank you for completing this survey.

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
College of Education

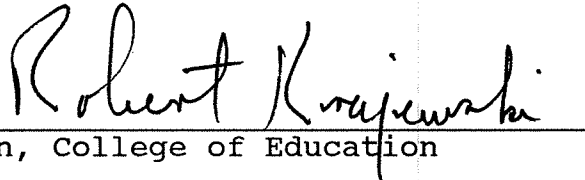
Candidate: Ronald Frank Miller

I recommend acceptance of this seminar paper in partial fulfillment of this candidate's requirements for the degree Master of Science in Education, College Student Personnel.


Larry J. Ringgenberg, Ph.D.
Seminar Paper Advisor

4/13/90
Date

This seminar paper is approved for the College of Education.


Dean, College of Education

5 - 7 - 90
Date