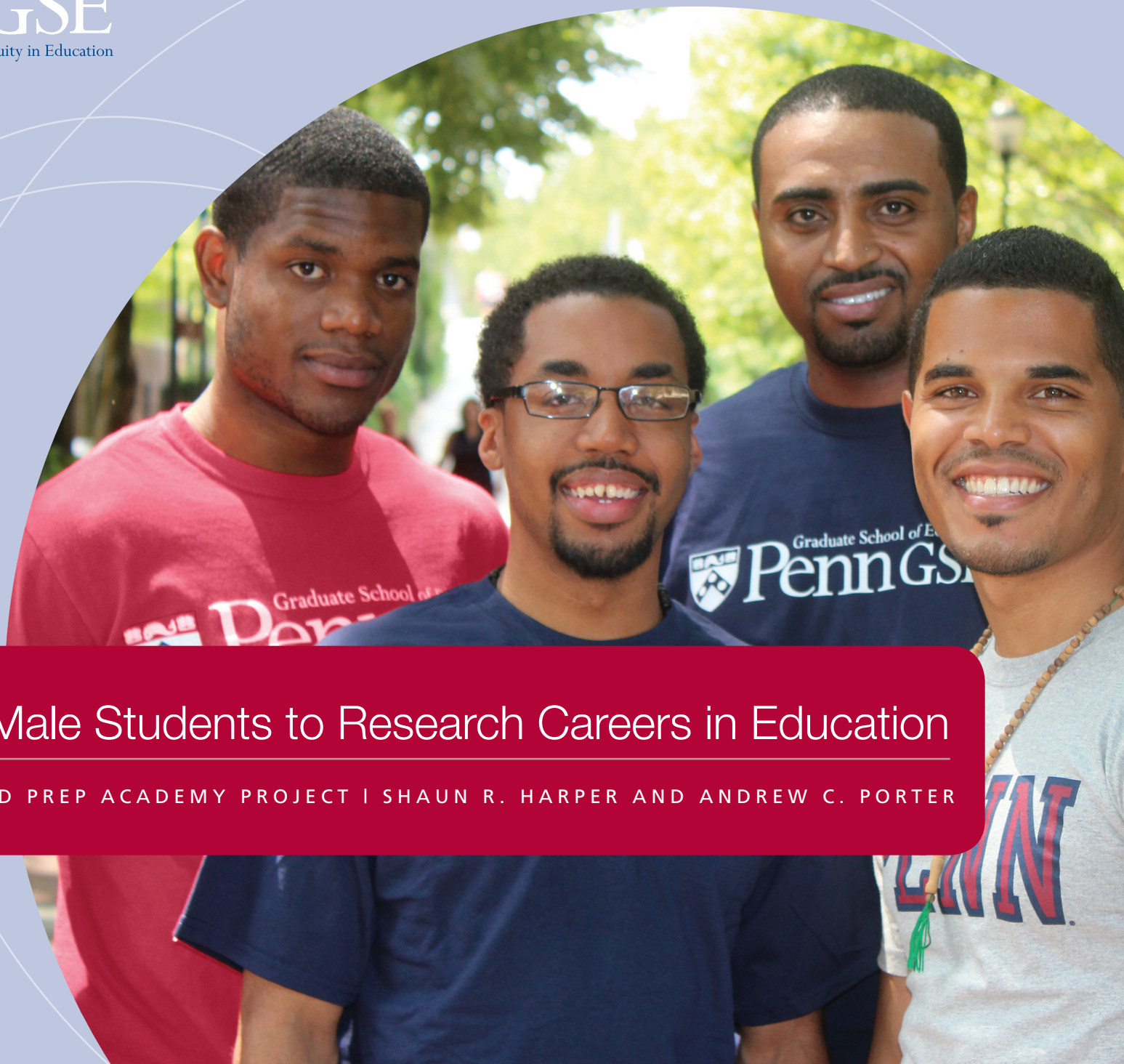




Graduate School of Education
PennGSE
Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education



Attracting Black Male Students to Research Careers in Education

A REPORT FROM THE GRAD PREP ACADEMY PROJECT | SHAUN R. HARPER AND ANDREW C. PORTER

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The report is also available in .PDF for free download at www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/gradprepreport

ON THE FRONT COVER:

Collin D. Williams Jr. and Keon M. McGuire (Ph.D. students, Penn GSE), Jonathan Berhanu (Ph.D. student, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education), and Charles H.F. Davis III (Ph.D. student, University of Arizona College of Education).

Meet Demetri Morgan

Introductory Message from the Academy Co-Directors

Demetri Morgan felt compelled to do something about the educational inequities he saw at the University of Florida. This political science major devoted considerable energy to awakening consciousness among his peers and administrators about the realities of race in general and various institutionalized threats to Black male student achievement in particular. The gap in six-year graduation rates at the University (81.1% for undergraduates overall versus 62.5% for Black undergraduate men) disturbed him. Moreover, he found problematic that Black men were only 3.7% of the student body, yet comprised nearly two-thirds of the Florida Gators football and men's basketball teams. Throughout his four undergraduate years, Demetri had only one Black male professor. The sum of these problems shaped his interest in pursuing a Ph.D. in higher education. He aspires to become a professor who produces rigorous research that helps faculty, administrators, and policymakers close racial and gender gaps in postsecondary education.

Increasing the representation of Black men in education has emerged as a national imperative. Recent data from the U.S. Department of Education indicate that they comprise only 1.7% of public school teachers. In June 2010, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan discussed in a CNN interview the shortage of Black male teachers. He argued that more are urgently needed to serve as mentors and role models for young men of color in schools. Initiatives like the Call Me MISTER Program aim to prepare Black men for careers in K-12 teaching. Unarguably, these efforts are important and necessary, but on their own are insufficient responses to the problems plaguing Black male students at every juncture of the P-20 educational pipeline. Put differently, Black male teachers alone cannot fix the longstanding social, political, cultural, and economic forces that perpetually undermine Black male student achievement. Also needed are Black men who provide intellectual leadership on pressing educational problems.

We are delighted to share with you this report from our Grad Prep Academy, a project that prepares Black undergraduate men for graduate study and research-related careers in the field of education. The project is also a longitudinal research study that enables us to analyze Black men's trajectories from undergraduate study through graduate degree programs and eventually into their careers. Demetri and 17 other students have participated in our first two cohorts of Academy Scholars. The project described herein, as well as the recommendations we offer, can be instructive for other schools of education and a range of stakeholders who are concerned about the diversity of the

education workforce (including the postsecondary professoriate).

While we present in this report several rationales for expanding efforts to attract more Black men to research-related careers in education, it is not our intent to undermine or diminish the necessity of current teacher recruitment and retention initiatives. To be clear, our nation needs more Black male teachers. However, we argue that progressing through teacher education programs and into K-12 classrooms is not the only route through which Black men can make a difference. The presence of committed scholars like Demetri is also needed in graduate programs that prepare researchers to study policy and structural issues that affect educational opportunities and a range of social outcomes.

Thank you for taking time to read this report; feel free to pass it along to others who may find it interesting and useful. Please direct your questions, feedback, and reactions to us via e-mail at sharper1@upenn.edu and andyp@gse.upenn.edu.

Warmest Regards,
Shaun R. Harper and
Andy Porter

Demetri L. Morgan
Cohort 1

Graduate Student,
Indiana University
B.A., Political Science, 2011
University of Florida



From High School to Graduate School

Black Male Students and Education Attainment Inequities

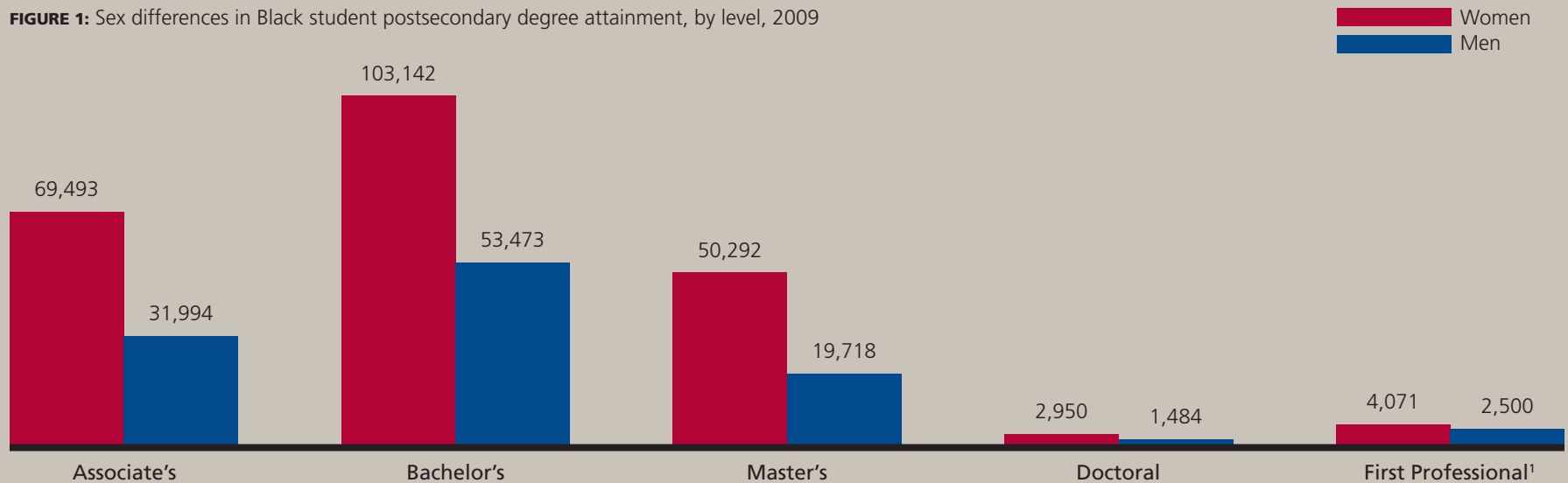
According to a 2010 report from the Schott Foundation for Public Education, only 47% of Black male students graduated from high school in 2008 with peers in their entering cohorts. One consequence of such high dropout rates is that few Black men enroll in college. Over a 30-year period (1976-2006), their share of student enrollments at institutions of higher education remained between 4.3 and 4.5 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The insufficient number of Black male students who persist through K-12 schools and into college is only part of the problem. Once enrolled, fewer than one-third earn bachelor's degrees within six years, which is the lowest college completion rate among both sexes and all racial groups in U.S. higher education (Harper, 2012). Subsequently, Black men's degree attainment across all levels of postsecondary education remains alarmingly low, especially

in comparison to their same-race female counterparts (see Figure 1). As shown, 71.8 percent of Black master's degree earners and two-thirds of Black doctoral degree recipients in 2009 were women.

In addition to within-race educational attainment differences, Black men's representation in graduate and professional schools lags behind that of their Latino and Asian American male counterparts. For instance, during a 30-year period (1977-2007), Black men experienced a 109 percent increase in post-baccalaureate degree attainment, compared to 242 percent for Latino men and 425 percent for their Asian American male counterparts; the comparative rate of increase for Black women was 253 percent (Harper & Davis, 2012). Black male enrollments in Ph.D. programs are especially low, with only 2.1 percent of doctorates awarded to them in 2009. These figures illuminate the

FIGURE 1: Sex differences in Black student postsecondary degree attainment, by level, 2009



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education (2010)

¹ For example, J.D., M.D., and D.D.S. degrees

need for strategic initiatives to increase the presence of Black men in latter stages of the educational pipeline.

Among Black students who aspire to earn degrees beyond the baccalaureate, many have comparatively low Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, which is often a barrier to admission (Nettles & Millett, 2006). Grandy (1999) found that Blacks scored lowest among all racial groups on the GRE. A 2007 Educational Testing Service (ETS) report indicates that Black men account for less than two percent of all examinees and their scores are considerably lower than those of White test takers. Shown in Figure 2 are racial differences in GRE scores between Black men and their White male counterparts.

FIGURE 2: Racial Differences in GRE Scores

	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Mean Verbal	516	404
Mean Quantitative	609	456
Mean Total	1125	860

SOURCE: ETS (2007)

According to the 2011 *U.S. News & World Report* ranking of doctoral-granting schools of education, on average, only 27.7 percent of applicants to doctorate programs at the 40 highest ranked institutions were offered admission. Moreover, the mean total GRE score at these schools (n=1182) was 322 points higher than the average score ETS reported for Black men. Thus, a Black male applicant who seeks admission to a graduate program at one of these highly selective education schools is likely to be disadvantaged by his GRE scores.

Students who do not complete high school and college are ineligible for admission to graduate school. But the number of Black men who finish undergraduate degree programs only partly determines how many will persist onward to post-baccalaureate study. Attainment data presented in this section of our report signify a serious need not only to increase these students' transfer rates from community colleges to four-year institutions and improve the rates at which they earn bachelor's degrees, but also to strategically shape their interests in graduate school. We believe it best to do so while they are still enrolled in college. Two-thirds drop out before completing their bachelor's

degrees (Harper, 2012), but one-third actually graduates within six years. For sure, some have competitive grade point averages and other attractive indicators of intellectual merit and academic accomplishment. Some even have GRE scores that are above average for Black male examinees. Getting more of those men into graduate school is important – attracting them to graduate programs in education fields and studying their educational and career trajectories are aims of our Grad Prep Academy.

In the next section of this report, we describe the Academy and provide details about the applicant pools and scholars in our first two cohorts. We acknowledge that our project is not comprehensive enough to address all the forces that cyclically disadvantage Black male students in U.S. schools, colleges, and universities. Nonetheless, we believe that preparing more Black male intellectuals who are committed to conducting research on these and other educational issues is both necessary and important.

Justin A. Coles
Cohort 1

Graduate Student,
Penn GSE

A.B., Political Science and
Education Studies, 2011
Brown University



About the Penn GSE Grad Prep Academy

This project identifies undergraduates at postsecondary institutions across the U.S. and aims to prepare them for admission to graduate degree programs at leading research universities, including the University of Pennsylvania. Applications are invited from college juniors across all majors, not just education. However, only those who articulate intellectual interests that are somehow related to education are encouraged to apply. This includes the study of teaching and learning, human development, educational psychology and counseling, history of education, K-12 or higher education leadership, sociology or philosophy of education, language and literacy, educational inequities, education finance, research methodologies applied to education, and K-12 or higher education policy. Academy participation does not guarantee admission to Penn GSE. The most important goal is for every academy scholar to enroll in an education graduate degree program at a research university immediately after completing his undergraduate studies.

Participation in this project begins with an all-expense paid four-day visit to Philadelphia. During their time on the Penn campus, academy scholars attend workshops on searching for graduate programs, writing effective application statements, and crafting research agendas. Moreover, they interact with Penn GSE faculty, graduate students, and Black male GSE alumni who are presently professors of education elsewhere. The project also pays for each participant to take a three-month Kaplan course valued at \$1,200 to prepare for the GRE. Additionally, each academy scholar is paired with a Ph.D. student in education who mentors him through the graduate school application process, offers feedback on essays and other application materials, and advises his selection of graduate programs.

Over 300 applications were received from Black undergraduate men for our inaugural cohort of Grad Prep Academy Scholars. These applicants were juniors at 209 colleges and universities across the country. Some

demographics of the applicant pool are provided in Table 1. Noteworthy is that only 34 were pursuing bachelor's degrees in the field of education. At least one student applied from each of the eight Ivy League institutions as well as other highly selective private research universities (e.g., Stanford, Duke, Northwestern, MIT, Johns Hopkins, and Emory) and the five highest ranked public research universities (UC Berkeley, University of Virginia, UCLA, University of Michigan, and UNC Chapel Hill). Also, 73 applicants were enrolled at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Applications were received from 39 states, the District of Columbia, and Yaoundé, Cameroon.

TABLE 1: Inaugural Cohort Applicant Pool

		N
	Total Black Male Applicants	304
	Mean Undergraduate GPA	3.14
	Undergraduate GPA Range	2.05 – 4.00
Undergraduate Institution Type	Community Colleges	8
	Historically Black Colleges and Universities	73
	Liberal Arts and Small Private Colleges	45
	Public Baccalaureate/Master's Universities	38
	Public Research Universities	81
	Private For-Profit Institutions	4
	Private Research Universities	48
	Other	7
Undergraduate Major	Business	33
	Education	34
	Humanities	67
	Journalism, Media and Communication	26
	Life, Physical, Technical and Natural Sciences	28
	Mathematics	13
	Social and Behavioral Sciences	94
	Other	9

In addition to submitting copies of their resumes and undergraduate transcripts, applicants wrote up to 650 words in response to these essay prompts: “What are your intellectual interests and long-term career aspirations relative to education, and how were they developed? If you had a Ph.D. in education, what would you do in response to the educational problems or social phenomena that concern you most?”

Ten Black male scholars were chosen for our inaugural cohort; eight were selected in 2011 for the second cohort. The 18 students who have participated in the Academy thus far were pursuing bachelor’s degrees in fields ranging from sociology, history, economics, and political science to philosophy, biology, and engineering. All but one graduated from public high schools. Table 2 includes additional demographic information about our first two cohorts of Grad Prep Academy Scholars.

TABLE 2: Grad Prep Academy Scholars, Cohorts 1 and 2

		N
	Mean Undergraduate GPA	3.25
	Undergraduate GPA Range	2.90 - 3.59
High School Type	Predominantly Black Public	7
	Predominantly Black Private	1
	Predominantly White Public	4
	Racially Diverse Public	6
Undergraduate Institution Type	Historically Black Colleges and Universities	4
	Liberal Arts and Small Private Colleges	2
	Private Research Universities	4
	Public Research Universities	8
Family Structure	Single Parent	9
	Two Parents	8
	Caregiver/Other	1
Socioeconomic Background	Low Income	4
	Working Class	7
	Middle Class	7
	Affluent	0
Mother’s Education Level	No College	6
	Some College	4
	Bachelor’s Degree	3
	Master’s Degree	4
	Doctoral Degree	1
Father’s Education Level	No College	6
	Some College	6
	Bachelor’s Degree	4
	Master’s Degree	1
	Doctoral Degree	1

Tremendous diversity was represented in both applicant pools and our first two cohorts. No scholar we chose had earned a perfect 4.0 cumulative undergraduate GPA; only a few were students at highly selective private colleges and universities. Clear commitments to research careers in education and persuasive articulations of one’s intellectual interests were most important in our selection process.

Academy Scholars
Cohort 2



Academy Research and Publications

This project is a longitudinal study of Black men's trajectories to and through graduate school. We are systematically tracking how many academy scholars apply, are accepted to, and ultimately enroll in graduate degree programs in education at Penn GSE and elsewhere; meanings they ascribe to participation in our project and its impact on their competitiveness for admission to and success in graduate school; and how their GRE scores compare to the national average for Black men. In the longer term, we will use Harper's (2007) trajectory analysis method to track scholars through graduate study and into their careers. A subset of applicants who were not selected for participation in the Academy will be used as a comparison group.

During their visits to Penn, we conduct a series of focus groups with academy scholars to more deeply explore their career goals, as well as the development and clarity of their intellectual interests. The first research paper from our project is published in *Educational Foundations*, a peer-reviewed academic journal. In this study, Shaun R. Harper and Charles H.F. Davis III (2010 Penn GSE alumnus) analyzed 304 academy applicants' essays and focus group data from the first cohort of scholars to explore what shapes Black men's career interests in education, despite popular reports of their supposed disinvestment in schooling. Professor Harper and three doctoral students presented another study based on Grad Prep Academy data at the 2011 American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting. Other publications will be produced from this research project.

Scholar Publications

In addition to studying the academy scholars' trajectories, we also provide research and collaborative publication opportunities to them. Here are some publications co-written by students in our first cohort:

Mauriell Amechi co-authored with Shaun R. Harper and others a chapter for the forthcoming book *Beyond Educational Disadvantage: Black Male Students from Pre-school to Graduate School*. The chapter focuses on within-group diversity and unique experiences across six subgroups of Black undergraduate men at four-year colleges and universities: fraternity members, gay men, achievers and campus leaders, student-athletes, academically underprepared and disengaged low performing students, and men at HBCUs. In addition to this publication, Mauriell co-presented a research paper at the 2012 AERA annual meeting with Ohio State University Professor Terrell L. Strayhorn.

Demetri L. Morgan co-authored with Shaun R. Harper, Collin D. Williams Jr. (Ph.D. student, Penn GSE), and David Pérez II, "His Experience: Toward a Phenomenological Understanding of Academic Capital Formation among Black and Latino Male Students," which is published in Volume 26 of *Readings on Equal Education*. The authors present three case examples of how various interventions (including the Penn GSE Grad Prep Academy Project) enriched the educational pathways of young men of color and enabled them to amass academic capital that was useful to themselves, their same-race peers, and family members.

Cameron C. Wardell co-authored with Shaun R. Harper and Keon M. McGuire (Ph.D. student, Penn GSE) a chapter that is published in *Masculinities in Higher Education: Theoretical and Practical Considerations* (Routledge, 2011). Ways in which masculinities intersect with other dimensions of undergraduate men's identities (race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc.) are explored and discussed in the chapter. The authors introduce the term *Complex Individuality* and argue the following: "Understanding the complexities of individuality is essential for those who aim to construct educational environments and conditions that foster productive developmental change in students."

Bobby R. Williams wrote the epilogue for *Students of Color in STEM: Engineering a New Research Agenda* (Jossey-Bass, 2010). Therein he describes his experiences as one of few Black undergraduates in engineering at the University of Oklahoma. Bobby explains how personal, academic, and financial challenges, as well as the valuable resources and relationships that ultimately helped him persist through baccalaureate degree attainment in Industrial Engineering, shaped his interest in pursuing a Ph.D. in education and doing research that helps create the conditions necessary for students of color to succeed in STEM fields.

Recommendations for Schools of Education

Penn GSE presently has two Black male professors and only a handful of Black male Ph.D. students – in our view, this is insufficient. These demographic realities compelled us to create the Grad Prep Academy as a pathway to graduate study at Penn GSE and other leading schools of education. We are encouraged by the response our project has garnered. For example, we received over 4,000 inquiries in response to our call for applications for the first cohort. Numerous undergraduate men were excited to learn how they could use their academic preparation in majors outside of education to research problems pertaining to P-12 schools, colleges and universities, education policy, and social contexts that influence educational opportunities and outcomes. Most indicated that no one had previously informed them of career opportunities in education fields beyond classroom teaching. That 304 students submitted applications for 10 slots in our inaugural cohort confirms there are Black men who could be easily recruited to careers in education. While some may find P-12 teaching unappealing, others might be interested in graduate programs that would enable them to study education-related topics that align with their personal backgrounds, intellectual interests, and prior disciplinary training. In this section we offer four recommendations for schools like ours that wish to attract more men of color to graduate programs and research-focused careers in education fields.

Launch an Information Campaign

Admissions officers, department chairs, and other administrators who oversee graduate programs in schools of education should target undergraduates and encourage them to consider graduate study in education fields. This could be done by hosting information sessions specifically for men at the Black culture center on campus or at meetings of predominantly Black student organizations. Schools of education should also send representatives to national conferences of the five historically Black fraternities and race-specific academic organizations (e.g., the National Society of Black Engineers) to recruit students who may have never thought about ways to couple their prior undergraduate training with an interest in education. Most of these conferences have graduate fairs at which talented students could be recruited for post-baccalaureate study in education. Undergraduate research programs (e.g., McNair Scholars and Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows) are other sites in which Black male intellectuals with education-related research interests may be found. Sending materials to groups for Black male college achievers

such as the Institute for Responsible Citizenship, the Gates Millennium Scholars Program, and Student African American Brotherhood would also be effective; most maintain e-mail distribution lists through which information could be instantly disseminated to thousands of Black undergraduate men. Current Black male graduate students who came to education from other academic disciplines should be featured and invited to serve as ambassadors for this information campaign.

Inform Academic and Career Advisors of Options Beyond Classroom Teaching

Undergraduate students often consult academic advisors and staff members in campus career centers when making decisions about majors, graduate school, and potential careers. It is therefore important to ensure that professionals in these offices are aware of the wide array of career options in education beyond P-12 teaching and school administration. We are not suggesting that anyone dissuade Black male students from teaching. But an economics major, for example, who has no interest in becoming a teacher should at least be made aware

Chauncey D. Smith
Cohort 1

Graduate Student,
University of Michigan

B.A., Psychology, 2011
Morehouse College



of opportunities to study the economics of education in graduate school. Again, most men who inquired about our Grad Prep Academy indicated that no one on their campuses had informed them of the assortment of research opportunities and graduate programs in education fields. Academic advisors and career counselors could be helpful.

Engage Black Undergraduate Men in Research Opportunities with Faculty

One compelling finding in Harper and Davis's (2012) study was the enthusiasm and passion with which Black undergraduate men articulated an interest in doing educational research. Many cited funding inequities in the neighborhood schools they attended, recalled how their same-race male peers were misdiagnosed for special education and overrepresented in school suspensions, believed it unfair that few of their childhood friends completed high school and matriculated into college, and expressed frustration about having so few professors of color and so many racist experiences at predominantly white postsecondary institutions. The possibility of using interdisciplinary frameworks to study these and other structural problems that disproportionately disadvantage communities of color and students from lower-income backgrounds intrigued them.

There are faculty members in schools of education who already research these and other topics that would be intellectually appealing to Black undergraduate men. Engaging these students in collaborative research opportunities with education professors could engender among them a serious commitment to becoming professionals who do research that makes a difference in education policy and practice.

Partner with Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Nearly a quarter of applicants to our Grad Prep Academy and 22.2 percent of scholars in our first two cohorts were undergraduates at HBCUs. These institutions enrolled 100,550 Black male students in 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Hence, they are sites from which men could be recruited for graduate study. Because only a few HBCUs are research universities, it is unlikely that undergraduates on those campuses are aware of the expansive array of research opportunities and career options in education beyond classroom teaching. Establishing collaborative relationships with education deans and others on HBCU campuses, and including them in the information campaign we recommended earlier, could result in a pipeline of Black male alumni from HBCUs to graduate programs at research universities.

Mauriell Amechi
Cohort 1

Graduate Student,
The Ohio State University
B.A., Communication, 2011
University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign



Conclusion

More Black men are needed everywhere in education: teaching in K-12 classrooms, in school- and district-level leadership roles, on Capitol Hill and other venues in which education policy decisions are made, and in various professional capacities on college and university campuses. However, often overlooked in efforts to attract more Black men to these roles is their underrepresentation among scholars who conduct research, publish books and scholarly articles, and are consulted as experts on education policy and practice. A necessary first step is to introduce them to the range of options beyond becoming a teacher or school principal. In addition to recruiting and retaining more Black male teachers, the national campaign to improve Black male student achievement in P-12 schools and postsecondary education would be greatly enhanced by a larger cadre of Black male intellectuals who enroll in graduate programs and ultimately pursue research-focused careers in education. We invite colleagues elsewhere to consider Penn GSE as a clearinghouse for prospective Black male graduate students. Recruiting every Grad Prep Academy scholar to our school would be ideal, but we recognize that some will find a better fit with other institutions. Additional cohorts of Black male undergraduates will be selected for inclusion in our longitudinal study. We would be delighted to have colleagues at other schools of education seriously consider these talented men for graduate programs and eventually for tenure-track faculty positions.

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About the Authors/ Academy Co-Directors

Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D. is a tenured faculty member in the Penn Graduate School of Education, African Studies, and Gender Studies. He also is director of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education and author of more than 90 academic publications.

Andrew C. Porter, Ph.D. is dean of the Penn Graduate School of Education and the George and Diane Weiss Professor of Education. He is a past president of the American Educational Research Association and a member of the National Academy of Education.

About the Center

The Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education unites University of Pennsylvania scholars who do research on race, racism, racial climates, and important topics pertaining to equity in education. Center staff and affiliates collaborate on funded research projects, environmental assessment activities, and the production of timely research reports. The Center's strength resides in its interdisciplinarity – professors from various departments in the School of Arts and Sciences, the Perelman School of Medicine, the School of Social Policy and Practice, the Wharton School of Business, Penn Law School, and the School of Nursing join Penn GSE faculty as affiliates. Principally, the Center aims to publish cutting-edge implications for education policy and practice, with an explicit focus on improving equity in P-12 schools, colleges and universities, and social contexts that influence educational outcomes.

Phone: (215) 898 - 5147

E-Mail: equity@gse.upenn.edu

Website: www.gse.upenn.edu/equity

Twitter: @RaceEquityEd

