

DISSERTATION

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY: HOW UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS AND  
FIRST-GENERATION NON-MAJORITY STUDENTS EXPERIENCE DIVERSITY  
AT THEIR UNIVERSITY.

Submitted by:

James P. Blue

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University,

Fort Collins, Colorado

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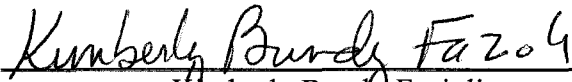
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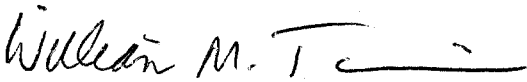
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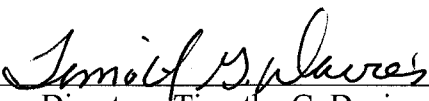
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY JAMES P. BLUE ENTITLED UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY: HOW UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS AND FIRST-GENERATION NON-MAJORITY STUDENTS EXPERIENCE DIVERSITY AT THEIR UNIVERSITY BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Committee on Graduate Work

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kimberly Bundy-Fazioli

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William M. Timpson

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor - Jerry W. Gilley

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director - Timothy G. Davies

## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY: HOW UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS AND FIRST-GENERATION NON-MAJORITY STUDENTS EXPERIENCE DIVERSITY AT THEIR UNIVERSITY.

This qualitative study examined how university administrators and first-generation non-majority students experience diversity at their university. The phenomenon of is this a real true picture of New Hope University was examined through data collected in personal and telephone interviews with five college admission officials and six first-generation non-majority freshman students from one university. Themes emerging from the study were *Attraction*, *Codification*, *Implementation*, and *Diversity*. The theme *Attraction* expresses the positive words and experiences that solidify the participants' desire and willingness to attend New Hope University (NHU). Supporting themes are presented that clarify the participants' excitement, anxiety, and openness to attend NHU. *Codification* is a theme that explains the systematic use of their university's strategic plans, admission standards, and policies that administrators are expected to follow in order to achieve the diversity goals of their institution. Supporting themes are presented that indicate a connection between the accomplishment of achieving the institution's diversity goals, while adhering to the strategic plan, admission standards, and policies of the institution. The theme *Implementation* illustrates the institution's strategies to attract first-generation non-majority freshman students to its campus. Supporting themes will show that these strategies work. The final theme *Diversity* describes throughout this dissertation the importance and relevance it has to achieving a diverse student body. Its supporting themes will show the impact and importance that diversity

has on students making the decision to attend this institution. The findings were interpreted and presented in relationship to the literature.

James P. Blue  
School of Education  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, CO 80523  
Fall 2008

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## DEDICATION

The pursuit and attainment of my doctoral degree is dedicated to my mother and father, James P. Blue, Sr. and Celeste Ann Blue. For without their undying love, support, and strong commitment to the importance of education, the attainment of this degree would not have happened. I love and miss you Mom and Dad. I am blessed to be your son.

Thank you!!!

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Although the progress to racially and ethnically diversify higher education has been slowed by some of the latest court decisions pertaining to affirmative action, the makeup of college and university classrooms is beginning to change (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Not only is the presence of non-majority students more evident amongst predominately White student populations, but also there seems to be an increased sensitivity to diversity related to gender, sexual orientation, and class (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). The national debate on affirmative action, in terms of admissions in higher education and the increased discourse on issues of diversity which include multiculturalism, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and the changing demographics of our society, mandate that institutions take responsibility for the healthy development and achievement of its student body regardless of race or ethnicity (Lett, 2003, p. 1).

According to Orfield & Miller (1998), after a generation of serious efforts by U.S. colleges and universities to reverse their historic exclusion of African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians, these institutions are suddenly facing a frontal attack on the programs, policies, and commitments born of those efforts. Threatened by court decisions, referenda, political attacks, and lawsuits, colleges are struggling to address the consequences of abandoning affirmative action and to devise viable alternatives for promoting and preserving campus diversity.

The communities around these Predominately White Institution (PWIs) are becoming increasingly diverse, while many of the campuses that were forced to end

affirmative action admissions are now becoming whiter (Orfield & Miller, 1998). The admissions of minority applicants are decreasing, and minorities who are admitted choose to go to other institutions for fear of exclusion. Denying the benefits of a college education to groups that are destined to become a majority in many cities and states raises explosive issues. The first troubling examples are already evident. At the leading public law schools in Texas and California, states where the majority of students are now Latino or Black, the enrollment of Blacks and Latinos has dropped dramatically: The University of Texas (UT) Law School's entering class in Fall 1997 was less than 1 percent Black; in California Black enrollment dropped 63 percent while Latino enrollment was down by 34 percent (Orfield & Miller, 1998).

Many universities are making concerted efforts to recruit more professors of color, but they are encountering a major obstacle, a lack of diversity among graduate students. About 7 percent of doctoral recipients in 2003 were Black or Latino, comprising a third of all Americans in the age group typically awarded the degrees, according to a new study by the Woodrow Wilson National Foundation (Cade, 2002). "The Ph.D.s who lead the way in the world of thought and discovery are far more monochromatic than the population" (p. 16), writes Robert Weisbuch, the foundation's president.

The number of Blacks and Latinos awarded Ph.D.s increased significantly during the past two decades, but Weisbuch says, "The fact remains that doctoral programs have made significantly less progress in diversifying than have business and government" (p.18).

Orfield & Miller (1998), diversity researchers on college campuses, argue that the increase of student diversity in higher education will make interactions between students

from varying backgrounds unavoidable. Orfield and Miller (1998) found that the decrease in campus homogeneity could cause situations of disharmony. There is now rich literature on the importance of diversity education as well as various models for understanding student resistance, growth, and development in which their learning is impacted by issues of ethnicity, gender, background, and social class. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995), for example, have long argued for making more equal education opportunity, and for using schools to address societal inequalities grounded in ethnicity, social class, and history. While later Kurlaender and Orfield (1999), built on earlier ideas of Dewey (e.g., 1996) to argue for the fundamental importance of multicultural education and its emphasis on ideas and skills (acceptance, tolerance, critical thinking, and cooperation) for what is necessary for citizenship in a healthy democracy.

Considering the multiple meanings of diversity, multiculturalism, culture, intercultural, race, social bias, and social attitudes, it is important to clarify my choice for using the term *diversity* in my study. Although Jackson and Garner (1998) specifically explored the evolution of race, ethnicity, and culture in communication studies, they argued that communication scholars need to clarify the terms they use in their research. In their article, Jackson and Garner (1998) cite Hall (1959) as criticizing the use of the term *culture* of its “lack of rigorous specificity” (p.44). The term diversity receives similar scrutiny because it can have so many variations of meanings. I see diversity as the state of being different or diverse. To me, when diversity is used to describe people and population groups, it encompasses such factors as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, as well as education, professional background, and marital status.

Institutions of higher education are not inattentive to the fact that they have to make sure they are projecting values of diversity in their dialogue (i.e. marketing material like admission brochures, undergraduate catalogues, and websites) if they want to recruit diverse faculty, staff, and students (Pease-Hernandez, 2004). Many mission statements attempt to communicate to the prospective student that the university values diversity or that the university is committed to enhancing diversity initiatives. It is one thing for an institution to state or reflect the value of diversity in its literature, websites, or admissions recruitment materials; it is another to examine how these values are demonstrated by the faculty and administration, particularly the admissions officials, who are a central part of the institution (Young, 2001).

It is imperative that colleges and universities educate and create avenues in which diversity can be talked about by ways of curriculum, faculty development programs and campus programming. According to hooks (2003), “Without ongoing movements for social justice in our nation, progressive education becomes all the more important since it may be the only location where individuals can experience support for acquiring a critical consciousness, for any commitment to end domination” (p. 37). Nevertheless, school admission officials have an obligation to ensure that all avenues of admissions to achieve a balanced and diverse student body at their institutions. To prepare students for life after school they must be exposed to diverse experiences and to problems that society will present.

It is important to analyze and understand the race-based affirmative action practices used by higher education personnel based on concurrent court rulings and the political climate so that the PWIs can attain and maintain a balanced and diverse student

population. California, Washington, and Florida ceased the use of affirmative action practices in higher education. In the court decision, *Hopwood v. State of Texas* (1996), the court rendered their decision ending race-based affirmative action practices historically used by colleges and universities in the Fifth District.

According to Cross and Slater (1997), analyzing the use of affirmative action practices and policies regarding minority access to higher education are important for the future of our country. Both authors' calculations suggested that if standardized tests become the single norm in admission decisions, African American enrollment at some institutions will drop by at least one half and in some cases as much as 80 percent.

Former higher education administrators Bok and Bowen (1998) concluded in their longitudinal study that race neutral standards would produce troubling results in the proportion of African American students in higher education. Statistics at the University of Texas at Austin's School of Law indicated a decrease in the number of applications from African American students following the Fifth Circuit Court's decision in *Hopwood's* case (Chenoweth, 1997; Cross & Slater, 1997; Henry, 1998).

In the University of California System, following the passage of Proposition 209 (the California Civil Rights Initiative), African American applications and admission declined significantly (Jones, 1998). In the spring of 1998, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 249 to 171 to reject an amendment, which if passed could have barred federal support for public colleges and universities that granted preferential treatment in admissions based on an applicant's race, gender, and ethnicity (Burd, 1998).

Consequently, colleges and universities are evaluating their affirmative action policies and practices used in student admission and retention. If these institutions do not

have an affirmative action program, then they should review their strategic plans for the successful integration of a balanced and diverse student body. For these institutions, lawsuits and political ramifications forced some to defend and to abandon the use of race in their policies (Kurlaender & Orfield, 1999).

Various public opinion surveys consistently found that most Americans valued and embraced diversity whether in the workplace or university setting. Americans are more inclined to modify than dissolve existing race-based policies (Bolden, Goldberg, & Parker, 1999). Universities inevitably understand that having a diverse student body is essential for student growth. This cultural and ethnic educational environment has naturally affected the outcomes of learners in a university setting. In regards to race conscience efforts, decision makers in higher education are left pondering over decisions on what ways to promote inclusion and diversity (Cade, 2002).

Education leaders and policymakers face a difficult challenge. The courts are increasingly responsive to White claims of racial discrimination while dismissing minority concerns over the continuing effects of historic discrimination. Many campuses are therefore trying to determine how to maintain diversity without an explicit consideration of race in admissions. Race overlaps class, educational, and job inequality, and with geographic isolation, giving rise to the hope that one or more of those factors might be an easy substitute. But race, in truth, is unique in its significance and impact, both historic and contemporary (Cade, 2002).

For example, Cade (2002) feels that if a new admission's policy succeeds in admitting many non-majority students with far weaker preparation than those admitted under the old policy, universities would temporarily maintain non-majority enrollment

levels thus finding themselves failing a growing percentage of non-majority students unless they mounted a massive remediation effort. Because highly selective schools have fewer instructors skilled in remedial work, and give no rewards for such work, major problems would be likely.

Stanford Professor Elizabeth Cohen and others have shown that race relations are improved when there is an equal status interaction, that is, when racial differences are not reinforced by class differences and very large achievement differences. Admitting only poor Black or Latino students from very weak schools would tend to reinforce racial stereotypes and diminish the probability of positive interracial contacts. It would be better for developing positive race relations and reducing stereotypes to find a mechanism to admit those minority students most ready for college work.

When race-conscience admission's policies are outlawed, the easiest alternative for colleges seeking to admit significant numbers of minorities is to target high-poverty, low-achieving schools, because very few Whites attend such schools. But students from these schools will also be the least likely to succeed in college. It is extremely difficult to identify, using only nonracial criteria, those African American and Latino applicants most likely to succeed in a selective college, because they are often middle-class students attending more competitive, less impoverished schools. Unfortunately, these students still face a variety of obstacles related to historic and current forms of discrimination - obstacles that affirmative action simply deny (Orfield & Miller, 1998).

The reversal of affirmative action admissions in higher education can drastically reduce Black, Latino, and American Indian enrollment on highly selective campuses. The increased use of tests and grades as entrance standards will tend to intensify the existing

inequalities in U. S. society. If affirmative action were banned nationally, as it has been in Texas and other states, the impact on entrance to leading public and private colleges and universities would become enormous. Many of our most able students would find themselves on campuses overwhelmingly dominated by White and Asian students. The severe isolation characteristic of our more affluent suburbs would become the rule in the institutions that train the leaders of our society and professions (Orfield & Miller, 1998), which poses a threat and challenge to the critical educational purpose of colleges and universities.

#### Purpose Statement

The first purpose of this case study is to discover how administrators implemented the university's strategic plans, policies, and procedures in recruiting and admitting a diverse student population.

The second purpose of this case study is to better understand why these first-generation non-majority students have chosen this particular institution.

#### Focus of the Inquiry

##### Research Questions

Have (PWIs) of higher learning developed strategic plans, policies, procedures, and practices to address the issue of non-majority student admission? The goal of this study is to explore and discover the answer to three specific questions:

1. What strategic plans, policies, and procedures are being implemented by administrators at this predominately White four-year public land grant and Carnegie RU/VH (very high research activity) university to reach out and attract a diverse student population?

2. What strategic plans, policies, and procedures are being implemented at this predominately White four-year public land grant and Carnegie RU/VH (very high research activity) university to increase a diverse student population?
3. What are the specific strategic plans, policies, and procedures used by administrators at this predominately White four-year public land grant and Carnegie RU/VH (very high research activity) university to successfully attract first-generation non-majority students and their parents who choose this university?

#### Significance of the Study

The significance of this study will identify what colleges and universities consider to be obstacles that non-majority students in higher education encounter throughout the process of matriculation, and how these obstacles impact the student population. It is important that PWIs are made aware of these obstacles that non-majority students encounter from the beginning of their experience throughout their entire matriculation process. This study will also demonstrate the need for prominent educational journals, institutions and legislation to re-think affirmative action policies and procedures or strategic plans to address the issue of achieving a balanced and diverse non-majority student population.

#### Researcher's Perspective

My basic background is from a foundation established by Southern Baptist parents. Both my mom and dad were raised in the southern part of the United States. North Carolina was their home until 1938. At that time, they chose to move to the state of

New York. Both parents raised me to believe in, understand, and practice a very high standard in morals and ethics.

I can distinctly remember both parents instilling in me the moral standards of the Boy Scouts of America. My parents believed that I must be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. Coming from a Southern Baptist family, I had no option within their beliefs and practices. I was also taught to respect others, as well as myself. In addition, they taught me to be proud of my racial and ethnic identity and being a male. To be a Black male in this society with its racial stereotypes and prejudices is difficult, to say the least, but my parents' teachings have served me well.

I grew up in the beautiful area of the Hudson Valley located approximately 75 miles north of New York City. Both parents worked which provided me with a middle class socio-economic-status. My sister and I attended a parochial elementary school and public high school in the suburbs where very few Blacks attended. Both elements were a very good test for the beliefs and practices that my parents professed. In both elementary and high school there was a limited number of minority students. There was always a possibility of the threat of discrimination, whether it overt or covert.

During this period of my maturation, I became aware of the foundation that my parents instilled in me. My parents' constant re-enforcement of the importance of living life to its fullest, with respect, has stayed with me to this day.

I am a veteran of the war in The Republic of Vietnam. My training as a United States Marine added to my conviction and beliefs that an individual must maintain a high standard of morality and ethics to be accepted and respected. The Marine Corps taught

me the value of loyalty, leadership, and critical decision-making. I also learned the honored characteristic of commitment through my experience as a Marine. Once again, the Marine Corps re-enforced one of the most important values that my parents taught me. I took pride in my identity and beliefs.

I am a very lucky individual. I survived several action conflicts in The Republic of Vietnam. I am honorably discharged from the United States Marine Corps. The experience of being a member of the Marine Corps and fighting for our country shaped my worldview in a way in which no other experience could. These experiences provided me with the knowledge to seek out facts and try to determine possible outcomes before action is taken. It also made me aware that all things aren't what they are supposed to be. The experience of being aware and away from home taught me to be more careful and cautious about what goes on around me. But it also taught me that once I am committed I stay committed to the end. For example I retired from FedEx after spending 25 years with the company. Nineteen of those years were in different levels of management.

Today, as every other day, I am faced with challenges that test my morals and ethics. I am a partner in an inter-racial marriage. My wife is White; her ethnicity is a combination of Dutch and Irish. My youngest child is eleven and my oldest is fourteen years old. I am trying to raise my children with the same enthusiasm and commitment to maintaining and learning the high moral and ethical standards that my parents bestowed on me. A challenge that I face with my children is racial identity. I am at a constant battle within myself to describe to my children the dilemma that they will be encountering real soon. That dilemma/challenge is the dual consciences that W.E.B. Du Bois brought to light many years ago. We, as members of the Black race, must make sure that we do

understand that we are looking at life experiences through a double lens. Many years ago writer and activist Du Bois realized that in order for Blacks to survive in American society we, as a people, must be able to adapt and function in a White dominated labor market. To adapt is to think and sometimes act as the White majority wants and expects Blacks to act. While being at home, Blacks can practice and maintain their noble traditions and beliefs. The mixed racial identity of my children presents another challenge as they seek acceptance from their peers. For example, they are asking questions about what they should consider themselves as far as their racial identity.

With the ever-changing make-up of our society the challenges of societal diversity and commitments from individuals for diversity are increasingly more difficult. That is why I have such a passion for the subject. My children see the passion. They ask me questions about diversity and why is it so important to today's society and me. It's my parents' fault, God bless them. If it had not been for their intestinal fortitude and commitment to raising my sister and me right, I would not have such a fire and commitment to seeing diversity win.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Early intervention partnerships with colleges provide a significant opportunity for for *at-risk* students to have the available resources, funding, curriculum, and guidance to enter post-secondary education. Beginning as early as kindergarten and progressing through high school, encouragement for students to enter college and receive a baccalaureate degree gives at-risk students the much needed support and extra attention they need. Many at-risk students need this support to successfully apply, to attend, and graduate from college. Early intervention strategies have successful results: boundaries between schools and colleges are eliminated; student dropout is discouraged; and students have more hope to pursue entrance to college. Active participation by school counselors, teachers, school and college administrators, college student support staff, and faculty generates involvement between schools and colleges but also eases the transition from high school to an institution of higher education.

### Non-Majority Students

The term(s) *at-risk* or *high-risk* students are used to define those students whose probability of withdrawal from college is above average (Jones & Watson, 1990). These students, mostly found among the underrepresented in higher education, have a disproportionately attrition rate higher than the general population. Therefore, colleges and universities make special efforts to identify and monitor the admission of these students. Once admitted, many institutions provide special student support services and programs in an attempt to retain these students and increase their graduation rates. Financially, institutions monitor the enrollment of at-risk students partly because the high

rates of non-completion and declines in student population have a direct effect on the increasing average cost per student (Jones & Watson, 1990). Demographic characteristics of students that have been identified as high-risk by higher education institutions and scholars have included: racial and ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged, persons with disabilities, first generation to attend college, international students, women (in traditional male fields), non-traditional age students, athletes, and transfer students. The terms *at risk*, and *high risk* are used over and over again, to describe racial and ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged, persons with disabilities and several other categorizations of students. However, from my standpoint, they are a stereotypical and derogative terms that tend to marginalize individuals and, therefore, I will not be using these two terms within my own study. However, I will honor the respective writers and use the terms that they have cited

#### Types of Intervention Programs

Private philanthropists and private entities first established early intervention programs. *A Better Chance* was created in 1964 by 23 independent schools to focus on improving the enrollment of minority high school students in academically challenging public and private schools across the United States. One of the most successful private programs, established by Eugene Lang in 1981, is the *I Have A Dream Foundation (IHAD)*, which has been established in 63 cities, serving over 13,000 students. Since then, 199 “I Have A Dream” programs have operated in 27 states, Washington, D.C., and New Zealand, together serving over 15,000 students. *IHAD* programs are designed to provide academic support, mentors, guidance counseling, and financial assistance for students to graduate from high school and pursue employment or higher education. In addition to *A*

*Better Chance* and *I Have A Dream Foundation*, many other foundations, community groups, businesses, and professional, civic, and service organizations are also actively involved in the coordination, planning and funding of early intervention programs.

Federal, State and Local Government Collaborations: Congress established the National Early Intervention Scholarship Program (NEISP) as part of the 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act that provides funding to states for early intervention programs which specifically target low-income students. In order for students to receive financial assistance, students must participate in student support services, which include tutoring, mentoring, summer programs, academic advising and development, and student employment. The 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act established the GEAR-UP program which will retain most of the components of NEISP and, in addition, will seek to provide services for lower income students as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> grade (Martin, 1999).

School College Collaborations: University-school outreach partnerships provide important opportunities where staff, faculty, and administration of all institutions benefit by sharing resources and working together to increase the participation of at-risk students in higher education (Martin, 1999). According to Martin (1999), an effort to provide outreach services between kindergarten, grade school, high school, and college that are continued throughout the student's academic progression allows for encouragement to pursue a college degree at every level of educational attainment (p. 4). An example is the Brainpower Connection, an ongoing partnership between staff at Incarnate Wood College (San Antonio, TX) and the local high school, grade school, and kindergarten within the same community. This project is designed to provide support and encouragement for

students (many who will be first generation college students) to complete high school and enter higher education (Rose, 1993).

College and University Supported Programs: Once at-risk students enter college, it is important that they participate in student support services. There are several characteristics of successful student support services for at-risk students: 1) a freshman year experience; 2) academic support; 3) student service contacts, (4) recruitment activities and incentives for participation; 5) dedicated staff and directors; and 6) an important role on campus (Muraskin, 1997). College and universities sponsor early intervention programs with many different initiatives and goals for “at-risk” students, including: (1) increasing the high school graduation rates and college attendance, (2) increasing the retention rates of these students at their own institutions, (3) preparing students to pursue particular academic majors and careers, and (4) encouraging students to attend their institution (Perna, et al, 1999).

#### Importance of Early Intervention

Early intervention programs have played a very important and significant role in providing services particularly for minority youth. As the participation rates of African American and Latino students continue to increase, the services that will guide them towards successful entrance and transition to college life will be key determinants for student retention. Although there is a significant increase in the higher education of minorities, this group is predominately concentrated at community colleges with few transferring into four-year institutions (Brewer, 1990). Also, most minority students (83.7 percent) are still enrolled in lower-cost and public institutions (Wild & Wilson, 1998). Early intervention programs can provide college preparation for more African American,

Latino, Asian, and Native American students to meet the criteria of the more selective public flagship and private institutions.

These initiatives can also decrease the gaps between participation of Whites and minorities and address the lack of representation of minorities in certain career fields, including mathematics and science.

Early intervention programs are a key element of providing a solid framework to increase the retention of first-generation, low-income minority students. African American and Latino students are less likely to graduate from college and complete a four-year degree in comparison to White students, especially at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) (Wilds & Wilson, 1998; Brewer, 1990). Therefore, the concern for non-majority students in higher education does not stop with access to the institution but continues with providing the resources to retain these students. By implementing on-going educational programs and student support services at postsecondary institutions, minority student concerns and issues in higher education are addressed at an early stage of college student development.

#### Providing an Early Start

Sherri Anna Martin (1999) believes that effort to provide early college intervention programs initially targeted minority, low-income high school juniors and seniors. Presently, more programs are being established for students at a younger age (including elementary and middle school). Many of these students will be first generation college students and will need preparation and information about higher education (p. 4). Martin (1999), states, "If the emphasis on attending college starts in grade school, students and families have more time to prepare to attend college. Students whose parents

attended college may already have the support and guidance from home. Students from higher economic backgrounds also have the resources available, test preparation courses, private schooling, summer college enrichment programs, and independent educational consultants. However, many at-risk students have to rely on their schools or outreach programs to prepare them for post-secondary education” (p. 5).

#### Recruitment of Minorities: An Important National Concern

Present and future trends in population growth and in particular in higher education reveal that people of color in the United States are dramatically increasing, but are in seriously undereducated segment of society. In 2000, minorities accounted for roughly 30 percent of the population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990c). Twenty years ago, 27 percent of all public school students in the 24 largest city school systems are minorities (Sedlacek, 1999). Yet for nearly all minority groups’ high school graduation rates are significantly lower than for the majority, and entry rates of college-age minorities into higher education are actually shrinking (Sedlacek, 1999).

Government and industry alike have noted the potential economic effect of these alarming trends in education. With the projected increases in the minority population, the situation threatens to affect the national economy; given the present level of minority education, the potential shortage of qualified workers equipped to meet the needs of the market is a serious concern (The Economist, 1995).

Institutions of higher education are being called upon to exercise leadership in helping to address these problems before they take on even more critical proportions. The recruitment of minority students must therefore not only focus on more aggressive

strategies to recruit those students who are already well prepared but also encompass long-term initiatives to improve educational conditions.

#### The Institution's Role in Recruiting for Diversity

Higher education institutions are the traditional centers for scholarly debate, research, innovation, and change in social matters. Increasing the presence of minorities and of minority perspectives in all aspects of the college and university is, in its broadest sense, a question of social change. Universities can provide vision, energy, leadership, and direction to other institutions, from school systems to government to business and industry, first to establish firmly the goal of excellence in minority education and then to pursue and achieve it (American Council on Education, 1988). Through investigation into the subject of minority education and the effectiveness of responses at various levels, higher education institutions can bring the issue into focus. But beyond the social role, colleges and universities need to determine the ways in which diversity will be incorporated locally by identifying what the problems are with regard to their institution. Are minority enrollments and graduation rates low and, if so, why? Do minority students feel welcome and are they part of the college community? Colleges need to evaluate their mission, objectives, and policies, and the allocation of resources with minority education in mind.

#### Differences Among Non-Majority and Majority Groups

Because they share many common concerns, people of color are frequently referred to as a single group. In fact, this population of African Americans, Hispanics, Latinos, Asian Americans, and American Indians consists of an enormous variety of people from different racial, ethnic, language, and cultural backgrounds. As a group,

clear distinctions-social, economic, and educational-can be made between non-majority and majority (Astone & Nunez-Wormack, 1991 p. 3).

With regard to higher education, however, the nature of the problems in each minority community is somewhat different, and each situation calls for solutions that are informed and responsive to the needs of each community. Preparation for college, language proficiency, immigrant or nonimmigrant (refugee) status, time in the United States, gender, cultural influences, and financial condition are only some of the factors that vary from group to group and could have more or less significance in a particular non-majority groups' educational profile. Recognizing and understanding the differences within and among the various non-majority populations are an important preface to the larger goal of achieving cultural diversity in higher education (Astone & Nunez-Womack, 1991 p. 3).

The Recruitment of Non-Majority Students in Relation to Other Institutional Concerns  
Because the ultimate goal in recruiting non-majority students must be graduation, recruitment is not an objective that can be pursued in isolation. The better-integrated recruitment strategies are with the college's educational programs and services, the more opportunity recruitment of non-majority students will have for success. Admissions and financial aid policies, strategies for retention, and opportunities for transfer are some areas intricately tied to recruitment that therefore can share common objectives (Carnegie Foundation 1989; Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980). Organizing strategies for recruitment that combine the human and financial resources of all these areas can be cost-effective. Above all, however, it will disseminate non-majority recruitment throughout the college and university.

### Who Should Recruit? When, Where and How?

Even when a formal structure for recruiting non-majority students exists, the function is commonly located in one of several different areas within a college's organizational structure. The recruitment of non-majority students can be administered through the regular operations of the admissions office by a specially appointed officer, however, it is the institution's commitment to improving the education of non-majority students that will ultimately endow recruitment with its potential to be effective (Christoffel, 1986).

Astone & Nunez-Wormack (1991) feel that, ideally in an institution wide effort conceived as a process rather than a program, recruitment of non-majority students would optimally engage all constituencies of the college (faculty, administrators, staff, and students) in a well developed and deliberate plan designed to achieve specific, reasonable goals. The process should be based on a comprehensive institutional audit reflecting the profile and present educational situation of non-majority students at the institution. It should be cooperatively designed, including the perspectives of those who will implement it, and should delineate the methods and resources designed to achieve its objectives within a stated time. Finally, the process be monitored, evaluated, and periodically modified to reflect changing conditions and to capitalize on aspects that emerge as being particularly successful (p. 4).

### Roles of an Institution

An institution is responsible for the healthy development and achievement of its student body. When students are accepted into an institution of higher learning, the responsibility lies with the university to envelop, develop, and graduate students who are psychologically and academically sound (Schweitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999),

and while providing an atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance. Since the elimination of “dejure segregation”, predominately White institutions are responsible for educating a vast majority of non-majority students particularly students of African American heritage. Healthy student development and successful matriculation must be evident in the institution's mission with evidence of multicultural initiatives. An institution must explore, refine and develop successful models of student development which are both cognitively and psychosocially adept and embrace such, in order to be productive and successful in its efforts to retain and graduate students of color minimizing and destroying barriers in the process. Studies indicate African American students often shared many feelings of isolation, non-acceptance, and rejection in predominantly White institutions.

The primary reasons supporting these feelings are, in many cases, the offices of student affairs, which lack diversity, in terms of administrators, counselors, and mentors/role models. In socialistic cultures, such as that of African Americans, it is important to be sensitive to those needs of African American students. In order to overcome these concerns, universities must focus on both the cognitive and psychosocial needs of the students. African American students are faced with barriers such as hidden racism, alienation, unintentional acts of discrimination, intentional discrimination, forms of intimidation and problems associated with acquiring adequate financial aid. The experience of college should be one of inclusiveness and embracement, to enhance the total higher educational experience.

As a result of these feelings African American students may have problems matriculating successfully. These findings suggest that African American students need

support, inclusion and acceptance in order to fit in the mainstream of college environment. African American students can excel in an environment, which promotes inclusion and acceptance, thus promoting an atmosphere of acceptance, which would be conducive to learning. When African American students are able to be a part of an institution, which promotes institutional warmth, they achieve at higher levels and successfully matriculate through their programs of study (Swchwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas 1999).

The first purpose of this case study is to discover how college admissions officials and first-generation non-majority students experience diversity at their university.

The second purpose of this case study is to better understand why these first-generation non-majority students and their parents have chosen this particular institution.

Racism defined by Katz 1989 (as cited in Reynolds & Pope 1994) as, “both prejudice against people of color and the political, social, and economic power to reinforce that prejudice. Racism always exists at individual, cultural, and institutional levels, which can be both conscious and unconscious” (p. 2). Minority students are faced with many barriers in their quest to obtaining academic and social acceptance in their pursuit of attaining a college degree at PWIs. Problems associated with matriculation are inclusive of “blatant and subtle barriers” related to discriminatory practices (Feagin, Vera, & Inman, 1996).

In 1989 Schlossberg (as cited in Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998) implied that “student’s active involvement in college, where they are made to feel welcomed and respected, can facilitate student development and increase retention’ (p.1). Research indicates that students who are marginalized possess a desire or need to feel involved and

valued in social as well as intellectual matters and development, directly impacting self worth (Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998).

Literature revealed that African American students who had determination and confidence prior to initially entering PWIs were successful in efforts regarding matriculation. Also, DiCesare, Sedlacek, and Brooks 1972 (as cited in Sedlacek, Merritt, & Brooks 1975) indicated, as a result of a study at the University of Maryland of demographically diverse African American students of mixed gender and socioeconomic status, that they often remained in school when they expected environments to be racially hostile, than those African American students who were less prepared to deal with racism. Other traits rendered to be successful for African American matriculating through institutions which were predominately White were revealed as a result of data yielded from a study by Taylor & Olswang in (1997) and were inclusive of: a) strong sense of confidence, cultural pride, and determination, b) adequate academic preparation and study skills and c) tolerance, friendliness, adaptability, and courage.

Christoffel (1986) described research findings about retention efforts in higher education and extracted information pertinent to minority access and retention. She summarized recruitment and retention strategies for minorities concisely in order to form a guide to assist institutions seeking to improve their efforts. She notes that minority students face multiple barriers and express problems that need to be addressed in order to reverse attrition trends. In addition to personal problems such as poor parental education, poor high school preparation, low degree-level goals, need for full-time employment, inadequate financial support, poor study skills, and lack of adequate academic and career counseling in high school, minorities face stressful situations that include racial isolation

and discrimination, language barriers, and lack of minority peers and role models, and lack of understanding and support from staff and faculty. Christoffel (1986) states, "Successful programs occur at institutions that make a campus-wide commitment to improve themselves as they improve their students" (p.6).

Dunston, Richmond, and House devote most of their attention to literature that addresses issues pertaining to retention of Black students at predominately White institutions. The literature surveyed, tends to address the conceptualization of retention of Black students, factors affecting retention, strategies, and remedies that are adopted to increase retention. Initially, they traced trends for the 1960s when the emphasis was on integrating Black students into predominantly White institutions. Next, they examined literature that discusses the federal and state initiatives to increase access for Blacks. And, finally, they turned to studies measuring and/or predicting attitudinal conflicts and dissension between Blacks and Whites as well as attitudinal-intellectual-cultural processes.

Next they address academic preparation as a crucial factor affecting retention and attrition. Less important elements, financial difficulties, personal issues, health problems, family socioeconomic status, motivation, degree aspirations, personal values, self-concept, environmental characteristics, and feelings of alienation and loneliness, also are listed. Expanded efforts in outreach, recruitment, admissions, improved tutorial and counseling services, nonacademic activities/ programs, improved minority faculty representation, community awareness of the issues, and modes of learning for minority students were detailed as remedial strategies in the literature review.

The summary highlights three points. First, institutions report divergent experiences. Second, a complex array of variables explaining the retention exists. And third, present is an inconsistency in the conceptualization of the process for including and correlating variable. Because of these findings, they caution, the successful factors described, may be based on inconclusive evidence.

Haro (1983) surveyed and synthesized literature published from 1969 to 1979 that focused on Chicanos in higher education. He discusses enrollment trends and educational attainment data and deduced that enrollment across educational spectrum will remain low as long as "limited and control entry" (p. 45) for Chicanos exists. He also states "Resources for higher education, including determination of access to colleges and universities, are monopolized by dominate groups in American society such that they are granted to only a few members of subordinate minorities" (p. 45). According to the author, the focal issue of his study is a fundamental issue for Chicanos---- access to higher institutions.

Hampered by selection procedures based upon GPA and achievement on culture-bound standardized tests, the number of eligible students is severely diminished. In the studies he cites, standardized tests do not predict reliably the success of Chicano students at any level. The admissions criteria he outlines involve implementing interim modifications to GPA and standardized test scores interpretations; it involves incorporating socioeconomic, biographical, geographical educational and motivational needs criteria; requires use of nontraditional or culture- sensitive standardized or criterion- based testing; classifies students by race or ethnicity; and, illuminates quotas (p. 48).

Sedlacek (1987) organized his literature review of 20 years of research of Blacks on White campuses using a model based eight non-cognitive variables that he and others deemed critical to success of Black students in academia. Research has demonstrated the importance of positive self-confidence in Black students. A Black student's ability to identify with school or the ability to see oneself as part of an institution and ability to handle cultural biases correlate positively with retention. Communication problems with faculty, faculty stereotyping students, and student belief in the existence of grade-deflection (difference between expected and received grade) are intervening differences.

Students who can identify, understand and effectively deal with racism are more likely to seek to be successful and graduate. They still do respond to racism and what is in their best interest and do not act when they perceive action is of little value. Black students find it more difficult to handle institutional racism, particularly that which is integrated into policies, procedures, and standardized tests; the majority populace perception of biased admissions; or down-grading of standards; and, faculty prejudice than the individual racism and associated negative treatment exhibited by White peers.

Black students need to identify with and participate in on-campus or off-campus community activities, particularly those that are racially or culturally similar. Sedlacek (1987) cited several studies that indicated, "Blacks often believe that they do not belong on White campuses" (p. 488). The need to belong called for a "critical mass" or sufficient numbers of Blacks on a campus to lobby for concerns has been supported by some of the research he reviewed. The Black campus community can provide the kind of support Black students find most helpful. Faculty, administrative and non-administrative staff, family and friends are important sources of support. Students involved in any level of

athletics, student government, and leadership roles tend to persist. Sedlacek (1987) concurred with researchers' finding that Blacks have been found to be more community-oriented than Whites. Successful Black students can organize and influence members of their cultural or racial community. The leadership roles may be manifested in nontraditional ways that are less valued by Whites.

Black students with vague goals and low aspirations tend to leave school. Those with specific goals include college and who can plan beyond the present (defer gratification), tend to persist. Lastly, Blacks seeking independent learning opportunities, and demonstrating the presence of nontraditional knowledge, i.e. gain credit by examination, tend to succeed.

Early in his conclusion, Sedlacek (1987) prescribed more evaluation research focusing on change and analysis of trends. Moreover, he recommended that student affairs professionals implement specific activities and strategies based on non-cognitive differences to improve the Black student experience on predominately White campuses.

Webster (1981) focuses his critical review on Chicanos, a people who came to America from Mexico as opposed to a more broadly defined group. Initially he discusses the difficulty in distinguishing this group from other Hispanic groups and the problems encountered with census information. He points to the belief that census data under represents and misrepresents subgroups of Hispanic peoples because few persons of Spanish-speaking background were included in the census preparation at that point, too few bilingual persons were involved in the education and execution activities, and there was a dearth of information regarding addresses and other particulars about their lifestyle.

When tracing Chicano presence in higher education, Webster 1981 notes that few Chicanos attended college prior to 1970. Because of the low high school graduation rate (around 55%) low ACT scores, low aspirations, and unwillingness to travel far from home, and preference for attendance at two-year programs, the low participation rate continued. He summarized the following obstacles to Chicano success in higher education: 1) Insufficient public institutions close to home; 2) Selectivity of the public institutions; 3) Cost of education; 4) Lack of urban and free access institutions; 5) Minority imbalance and segregated practices; 6) presence of under developed colleges and limited programs; 7) Restrictive transfer opportunities; 8) lack of integrated programming and lack of relations with external institutions and communities; and, 9) Lack of information regarding educational opportunities and dynamics (p. 71).

Next Webster (1981) reviews the presence (rather, scarcity) of Chicanos in higher education. Chicanos are ranked the highest in two-year colleges and senior institutions in enrollment of non-quantitative courses, attrition, acculturation and racism problems, and under representation in the professional schools in the California State University system, in particular. Before concluding with a critique of literature, he writes about Chicano studies and lists institutions with the largest enrollments of Chicanos (p. 73).

Oliver and Brown (1988) comment that agreement and uncertainty regarding effective recruitment and retention strategies as well as an inadequate knowledge base has confounded the problem of minority collegiate participation. Ideological and structural barriers exist that inhibit efforts to diversify the college student population. Several of these barriers arise because of the conflict between those who argue for special efforts to recruit and maintain minorities and those who say that this special treatment

“overrides that rights of the majority populace to equal treatment” (p 41). Others arise because students see a disparity between the words and deeds of faculty and administrators. Students complain that faculty and administrators say they are committed to the idea of improved minority participation but participate in few or no activities. According to these authors, half-hearted commitment and student perceptions of non-support can undermine recruitment efforts.

Oliver and Brown (1988) developed a list of six principles to serve, as guidelines when designing recruitment and retention programs. First, a university’s majority populace must actively participate in minority recruitment activities to ensure success. Second, minorities are not homogeneously committed and should not be solely responsible for minority activities. Third, networks provide emotional support and new social contacts to supplement students “resource deficits” and therefore should be supported by the institution. Fourth, recognizing that recruitment programs are political, faculty and administrators should foster development of effective coalitions and fuse potential allies. Fifth, the recruitment program should be conceptualized in response to the “service delivery problem” (p. 43). As part of the service sector, it can benefit from an association with human service areas because these areas attend to personal needs - a sign of caring.

And sixth, Oliver and Brown (1988) note that literature suggests that programs should include activities related to orientation, socio-cultural adjustment, outreach, supportive services, and financial assistance. Therefore many retention efforts should be viewed as part of the central mission of the institution and planned as part of the comprehensive retention programs. Before concluding, they incorporate these findings

into a framework to guide the design of what they believed to be a viable, effective minority recruitment and retention program (Fifth Annual Status Report: Minorities in Higher Education (Carcer, et al., 1987)).

The American Council on Education's Office of Minority Concerns has published annual status reports of 1999 where trends are highlighted and issues that have a potential effect on minority students' educational attainment are discussed. For this report, researchers take an in-depth look at the higher education system, the progress of minorities in higher education, and the progress of individual states and the entire country in addressing the plight of minorities in higher education.

The enrollment data described was collected from 26 states. Another 24 states did not or were not able to respond to the American Council on Education's request for information. The researchers conclude that the problems of access and retention for minorities remained inadequately addressed and unresolved in most states.

Except for Asian and Pacific Americans, who have made enrollment and retention gains at every level of higher education, serious under representation exist for other minority groups. The most frequently cited recruitment methods include secondary school outreach programs, Talent Search and Upward Bound programs, special training coordination efforts between counselors at high schools and two-year colleges, financial aid information sessions, and activities designed to attract graduate students. Less mentioned practices include implementing new admission policies and offering special scholarships and fellowships. States also list programs developed to improve academic proficiency and to provide supportive counseling. Most have not developed strategies to assure continued minority participation. For every four recruitment programs only about

three retention programs appear to exist. American Council on Education (ACE) officials urge state and federal government, education facilities and the private sector to collaborate, develop, and fund new initiatives.

The National Association of College Admissions Counselor's Commission on Minority Participation in Higher Education recruited Corley Lee; Ph.D. to examine "issues in recruitment and retention of underrepresented racial/ethnic students in higher education" (1991, p. 1). In concert with the review of literature, Lee discusses implications of findings and makes specific proposals for policy changes. He urges college officials to develop a comprehensive, systematic plan based on a proactive approach. For instance, as part of the recruitment effort, institutions should form partnerships with secondary schools to develop college preparation programs. Because preparation programs expose students to college environments, high school students should become more motivated and show improved academic performance.

Equally important is a program that provides for the persistence and graduation of underrepresented students. Attention to the activities that encourage perceptions of comfort, faculty support, and curricula that support and promote diversity is reported as paramount. Lee reminded officials to consider the following issues when developing recruitment and retention policies:

1. Dynamics of culture -- level of ethnic identity in acculturation, kinship networks and family influences, sex role socialization, religious and spiritual influences, and immigration experiences;
2. Recruitment issues -- student decision-making processes related to pursuing higher education, college preparation programs and procedures, and special focus on African American males, college recruitment efforts, admission criteria, and financial aid;
3. Retention issues --
  - a. Student perception of the college environment,

- b. Affective institutional policies, programs, and procedures for improving the retention and achievement of students from underrepresented groups;
- c. Implications for educational practices of cognitive/learning style differences;
- d. Non-cognitive variables;
- e. Selection of college majors and academic advising;
- f. Institutional environment;
- g. Curriculum content;
- h. Counseling services; and,
- i. Presence of faculty members from underrepresented groups.

12th Annual Status Report: Minorities in Higher Education Premises (Carter and Wilson, 1993).

In addition to racial and ethnic data on high school completion rates, college participation and enrollment trends, and degrees conferred, this report highlights efforts to improve the retention of students of color in higher education. Information pertaining to students at junior or community and senior colleges is separate. The authors draw attention to the institutional factors and the associated policy changes that improved the retention of African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans as opposed to student characteristics and factors. They acknowledged that student characteristics such as attitude, academic preparation, and socioeconomic status, are fundamental to persistence, but choose to emphasize the institutions' roles. Specifically, they focus on environmental factors and minority college completion, institutional commitment to student retention, faculty involvement, and academic support services. To accentuate their point, authors describe how several institutions improved the retention and graduation rates for students of color.

Regarding environmental factors in minority college completion, a comprehensive coherent process should be institutionalized, that is from the governing

board and president down. All must demonstrate their commitment to ethnic and racial diversity (including diversity of board members, faculty, staff, and student body) and allocate resources and tie faculty rewards to student retention and graduation. This must advertise their commitment and strategies taken. They must foster a culture whose purpose is to support and retain all students. Issues of isolation, racism, and campus tensions can be addressed through educational activities. Commitment is tied to the environment. Since academic performance has been correlated with faculty, and staff members. The satisfaction with regards to the institutions' high level of involving college activities, and positive relations with staff and faculty, institutions must recruit and retain role models and mentors to demonstrate their commitment.

Faculty must actively participate in retention efforts, set high expectations for minority students, and improve classroom experiences. Quality teachers, proactive interventions, small group tutoring sessions, and other activities such as study skill, learning, and test taking techniques improve basic skills and are critical academic support services. Along with academic support, resources should be allocated for financial support for students. Some researchers such as Carter and Wilson believe that “opportunities to pursue higher education are diminishing for low-income students, and there is a high percentage of whom are ethnic and racial minorities (Carter and Wilson, 1993, 5).” Strategies taken to improve the rates for minorities will benefit the majority students on campus. In concluding, Carter and Wilson (1993) admitted that improvement in student retention and graduation rates is a daunting but not an insurmountable task. Faculties, academic freedom and tenure must be respected but productivity and commitment to student outcomes is paramount. Academic quality is not in opposition to

a warm, welcoming, nurturing environment. Institutional policymakers must spearhead necessary changes.

The categorization of groups by the United States Bureau of the Census and the periodic reclassification of groups foster systematic error that cannot be eliminated from this study. This research is limited because of the dearth of empirical information on the meaning of the phenomenon of arrival and matriculation of non-majority students in their first semester of a PWI of higher education.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

### Introduction

This chapter presents the research method selected for this study. In the first section, the research and design are explained. The second section covers the site and participant selection process. Data collection is explained in section three. The explanation of data analysis is in the fourth section. The procedures to be followed for trustworthiness are in section five.

### Research and Design

I have two purposes in conducting this research study: the first purpose is to discover how administrators perceive diversity being implemented at their institution; the second purpose is to better understand why these first-generation non-majority students have chosen this particular institution. To accomplish these purposes I have selected a qualitative case study, which includes an interpretive phenomenological approach. The qualitative paradigm was chosen because I am the instrument through which the data will be collected and analyzed. As the researcher I will be the one conducting in-person interviews with the admissions staff as well as the interviews and focus groups with first-generation non-majority students. Constant comparative analysis was selected as my data analysis strategy. As a researcher I will analyze the strategic plans, policies, and procedures that are appropriate to recruiting and admitting first-generation non-majority students. Furthermore, I will create field notes and a reflexive journal that I will use when interpreting the data.

Secondly, I selected the qualitative paradigm because I have sufficient time and resources to complete my research project. I will have time available to conduct the

research and travel to the campus in order to collect and analyze information contained in the university's strategic plans, policies, and procedures, and conduct in person interviews and focus groups.

Finally, I selected the qualitative paradigm because I will present the findings from the perspective of individuals who are involved in the implementation of the university's strategic plans, policies, and procedures in recruiting and admitting a diverse student population as well as the recipients of those efforts, the first-generation non-majority students and their parents. I will present a holistic picture of the university's strategic plans, policies, and procedures in recruiting and admitting first-generation non-majority students based on how I understand the views of the individuals who implemented these policies and the views of the individual students and parents who chose this university because of the strategic plans, policies, and procedures of the university that was carried out.

In addition to selecting the qualitative paradigm, I also selected the interpretive phenomenological approach within a case study design. My case study is bound by this university, certain admission's officials of the university, non-majority students, and relevant documents. Within this case study a phenomenon has piqued my interest. The overall phenomenon is that this university wants to create a diverse student population. Within this phenomenon, I want to find out how the admission's officials make sense of their role in following the institution's strategies and approaches to attract non-majority students. Within this phenomenon, I want to find out from non-majority students themselves why they were attracted to this campus.

I plan to select 10 individuals responsible for implementing the university's strategic plans, policies, and procedures in recruiting and admitting a diverse student population and 10 students and 5 parents who chose this institution. This study has a two-fold purpose: to discover how this university's strategic plans, policies, and procedures are used and implemented by college admission officials to achieve a diverse student population and to help better understand why these students and their parents chose this particular university.

### Site and Participants

#### *Site*

The site will be a predominately White 4-year public land grant Carnegie RU/VH (very high research activity) University (PWI), located in the Mid-Western region of the United States. The student population is approximately 25,000.

#### *Participants*

Participants will be ethnically diverse male and female college admission officials, and first-generation non-majority students. Participants range in age from 17 to upper age has no limits. The participants will be invited to participate through a letter sent directly to them from me. This letter will describe the project and ask them to contact me if they wish to participate. After they have volunteered to participate, the participants and I will work together to establish times and places for their interviews and focus groups.

At the time of the interview or focus group, they will be asked to sign an informed consent form. I will explain to the participants they can voluntarily disengage from the research study at any time. An estimated total 140 participants will be involved in the study; there will be 80 first-generation non-majority students, and 50 college admission

officials. I classified participants as first-generation students on the basis of their parents' educational level. Any individual whose parent(s) who have some college experience but has not attained a higher education college degree were considered first-generation students. The individuals who will be invited to participate in this study will be 10 members of the 50 members of the College Admissions Department, and 10 students of the 130 unless it is determined that it is relevant and important to interview other individuals from the institution. For example, any one of the other 50 other members who are involved in the recruiting and admitting of a diverse student population might be invited to participate.

#### Data Collection

Data collection will include interviews, focus group tapes, documents, field notes, and a reflexive journal. (Creswell, 1998) points out that the initial procedure for a case study is gaining access to the site. I will gain access to the site by gaining the confidence and trust of a gatekeeper. For this research study, I will have gained access to the institution via an initial contact with the college's Executive Director of Admissions who then arranged for me to become introduced to an individual who has since become the gatekeeper. The gatekeeper by my definition is the individual who has agreed to be my contact and administrator of documents within a specific area. The gatekeeper's confidence has been earned. This has been demonstrated through the gatekeeper's support of gaining permission from the institution's executive director of admissions to send a letter to the members of the admissions department. The gatekeeper is demonstrating continued support by offering to be the liaison and sending the initial contact letter describing my project. To access the students and their parents I will gain

the confidence and trust of the Assistant Executive Director of the Center for Advising and Student Achievement as who will become my initial gatekeeper.

The data collection will continue for this study until one of four criteria for ending it, presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985), occurs. This will take place when one or more of the following occur: there is an exhaustion of resources, there is saturation of the categories, there is emergence of regularities or there is overextension (p. 105).

Exhaustion of sources might occur when not much more information that is relevant to the understanding of this institution's strategic plans, policies, and procedures process might be gained from other resources of information, such as interviews, documents, or focus groups. Saturation or groupings is well established and collection of additional information will add little or no more detail to what has already been learned. Emergence of regularities may happen in this study if the analysis of the data results in consistent information appearing. Lastly, it is possible that overextension could happen in this study if the new information attained from data collection sources begins to distance itself from the central theme of the study and does not add to the emergence of new themes.

### *Interviews*

It is expected and planned that I will be making several trips to the campus conducting at least four or five interviews of college admissions officials at each visit. The college admission officials interviews will be tape-recorded and will be conducted in-person. Interviews are expected to last between 45-60. A professional transcriptionist not affiliated with the study or institution will transcribe the interview tapes verbatim onto a word processor. I will then listen to the interview tapes and check for accuracy of the transcription. After I have determined that the written record is accurate I will begin

the coding and analysis process. In addition, I will be conducting follow-up interviews with participants for member checking to gain necessary clarification or additional information pertaining to the first interview. The second interview of each participant is expected to last between 45-60 minutes.

### *Focus Groups*

It is expected and planned that I will be conducting 4 focus group sessions. I will make at least a couple of trips to the campus to conduct two sessions each trip. I plan to hold one student focus group session in the afternoon and one parent focus group session in the morning of each visit. The number of participants in each focus group session will be between 6 and 8. The focus group session will be tape-recorded and is expected to last 90-120 minutes. A professional transcriptionist not affiliated with the study or institution will transcribe the focus group tapes verbatim onto a word processor. I will then listen to the focus group tapes and check for accuracy of the transcription. After I have determined that the written record is accurate; I will begin the coding and analysis process.

### *Documents*

Documents will be used as a data source. I will be reviewing and analyzing all strategic plans, policies, and procedures of the university that pertain to recruiting and admitting a diverse student population. Other documents and/or reports may be requested and acquired as are deemed useful for the study through data emergence in the interview and focus group process.

### *Journals*

I will be keeping a reflexive journal and field notes of all activities and observations for this study. The records of my research study will be kept in my reflexive

journal in order to minimize my biases. Field notes will record all dates and times that I have spent in the field along with information on how I gained access to the site location and participants. After returning from each observation, interview, or other research session, I will record what happened. I will render a description of people, objects, places, events, activities, and conversations. In addition, as part of such notes, I will record ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches, as well as note patterns that emerge (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Field notes will be my written account of what I hear, see, experience, and think in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in this study.

The data collection will consist of four phases: document acquisition, conducting interviews, conducting focus groups, and field notes. The data analysis process will happen throughout each different phase of my data collection. The planned time frame for my fieldwork that involves data collection will take place between January thru May 2007.

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis will be an inductive process to discover how university admission officials implemented the university's strategic plans, policies, and procedures in recruiting and admitting a diverse student population and to better understand why these first-generation non-majority students and their parents have chosen this institution. Constant comparative analysis will include the data analysis approach used to analyze and interpret these data. Prior to any inductive analysis it will be necessary to transcribe the interview and focus group tapes into a word processing format. The interview and focus group tapes will be coded as they are completed and data analysis will be an on-going process as other interview and focus group sessions are being conducted. The data

from all interviews, focus groups, documents, and journals will be managed by either a word processing program or transferred into a computer software program designed for qualitative analysis such as NVivo.

This study will use the constant comparative analysis method of inductive analysis as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). This method uses three analytical processes to reduce and then reaggregate data: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding is the discovery and generation of categories for concepts. Axial coding is the process of linking categories together. Finally, selective coding integrates the axial codes to form the selective codes for each participant. Once selective codes are developed they will be aggregated across participants to form the core themes describing the phenomenon structure (p. 105).

Analyzing the data using this method allows for the emergence of categories, and pattern will provide rich information which, in turn, directs further development of pattern and theories which result in the interpretation, description, or explanation of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1994; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Using constant comparative analysis as a process of data display, the result will be “an organized, compressed, assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing action”(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11).

Once the data have been analyzed, a conclusion drawing/verification will occur as prescribed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Conclusion drawing and verification is the process where I make the decision of what findings mean and whether they are trustworthy. This component of data analysis will help bring about answering the

question, “What is going on?” Conclusions will be reached about the above-mentioned dual purpose of this study.

### *Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness or verification (Creswell, 1998) of a research design lends credibility to its results. It answers the question: Did I get it right? Extensive verification is necessary for a case study design (Stake, 1995). Creswell (1998) recommends that qualitative research use at least two procedures to establish trustworthiness. This case study will establish trustworthiness through five methods: member checks, clarifying and minimizing researcher bias, rich, thick description, peer debriefing, and triangulation.

### *Member Checks*

A member check is another strategy to establish trustworthiness for a case study. Member checks involve making sure that I check informally with the participants on their views/opinions of the accuracy of information acquired during data collection. This study will bring to light feedback from participants who are part of this case study. I will follow Stake’s (1995) recommendation that the participants review the portion of the written transcriptions that is related to their involvement. The use of member checks in this study will be a valuable tool in avoiding misinterpreting data from a participant.

### *Clarifying and Minimizing Researcher Bias*

Clarifying researcher bias at the very beginning of this study provides the reader with an idea of my position and the impact this might have on the inquiry (Creswell, 1998). This study provides this information in Chapter 1 Researcher’s Perspective and will be discussed further in the Chapter 5 discussion. Following the suggestion of McMillan and Schumacher (1997), I used both a field log and a field journal to minimize

my bias. The information that have been ascertained from the field log and field journal will be used in the process of “bracketing.” This process is designed to assist me in removing my own prejudices and preconceptions during data analysis. I will use it to separate out my bias as the data is collected from the interview sessions, focus group sessions, and documents.

#### *Rich, Thick Description*

Rich, thick description is another procedure that will be used to establish trustworthiness in this study. The detailed description of the participants and setting by the researcher allows for the transfer of information to other settings based on similar characteristics (Creswell, 1998). This procedure may also help in transporting readers to the setting desired and give the discussion an element of shared experiences.

#### *Peer Debriefing*

I will be using the procedure of peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of my study. I will locate a colleague/peer and ask him or her to review and ask questions about my qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than myself.

#### *Triangulation*

Triangulation in qualitative research is the use of multiple and different sources of data in order to provide corroborating evidence. Stake (1995) suggests that when using the case study tradition, emphasis needs to be placed on the sources of the data and points out that each study triangulates differently. This research project will bring together information from many different sources: the university’s strategic plans, policies, procedures, taped interviews from members of the university’s admission department;

and taped focus group session involving first-generation non-majority students and their parents.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of my study *Understanding Diversity: How University Administrators and First-generation Non-majority Students Experience Diversity at Their University*. Through data analysis, themes emerged reflecting the participants' experiences. These themes were *Attraction*, *Codification*, *Implementation*, and *Diversity*.

The theme *Attraction* expresses the positive words and experiences that increased and solidified the participants' desire and willingness to attend New Hope University (NHU). Supporting themes are presented that clarify the participants' excitement, anxiety, and openness to attend NHU. *Codification* is a theme that explains the university's strategic plans, admission standards, and policies that administrators are expected to use in order to achieve the diversity goals of their institution. *Codification* is an act of arranging or systematizing the university's strategic plans and other supporting documents as a guideline to help ascertain a diverse student body. Supporting themes are presented that indicate a connection between the accomplishment of achieving the institution's diversity goals, while adhering to its standards, strategic plans, admission standards, and policies. The theme *Implementation* illustrates the institution's strategies to attract minority students to its campus. Supporting themes will show how the participants' perceived the strategies to have worked or not worked. The final theme *Diversity* described how participants perceived the importance and benefits of diversity. Its supporting themes will show the impact and importance that diversity has on students making the decision to attend this institution.

## Brief Biographies

Because participants' voices relate the story of how they perceive their university's strategic plans and why they have chosen this particular institution to attend, I first provide my participants' backgrounds. These brief biographies are provided as a means for the reader to meet and gain some understanding of each participant whose name is a pseudonym.

Muriel, a Hispanic, is an administrator in the office of admissions. She is married and has a family. She has two inspirational leaders, Barbara Jordan and Barack Obama. Muriel has worked in the office of admissions for several years in a leadership capacity.

Polly, a Caucasian, is an administrator in the office of admissions. She is married and has a family. Polly has worked in the office of admissions for a couple of years in a support capacity.

Meagan, a Caucasian, is an administrator in the office of admissions. She is married and has a family. Leaders who keep their focus on the agenda on hand inspire Meagan who has worked in several different capacities within the office of admissions. She presently is working in the office of admissions in a leadership capacity.

Misty, a Caucasian, is an administrator in the office of admissions. She is married and has a family and holds her religious beliefs very close to her heart. Misty believes her religious beliefs are the foundation of her life. Currently, Misty is working in the office of admissions in a support capacity.

Jose, a Hispanic, is an administrator in the office of admissions. He is married and has a family. Jose is very dedicated to the issues of diversity. For several years he has worked in the office of admissions in a leadership capacity.

Sam, an African American, is a first generation freshman student. She is the older of two children. Her parents are both from Ethiopia where she and her sibling were born. Sam and her family moved to the United States when she was 8 years old. Sam is studying biochemistry.

Lisa, an African American, is a first generation freshman student. She is the oldest of three children. Her parents and siblings live on the east coast of the United States. Lisa is studying business.

Tia, an African American, is a first generation freshman student. She is the oldest of three children. Her parents and siblings reside in the mid-west region of the United States. Tia is studying communication and business.

Variety, a Caucasian, is a first generation student. She is married with a family. Her family consists of her husband, two daughters, and two sons. Variety is presently residing in the western region of the United States where she is studying communications and business.

Veronica, a Hispanic, is a first generation student. She is the oldest of four children. Her parents and siblings reside in the western region of the United States. Veronica has not decided on a major. She presently is taking classes and utilizing the open field option.

Jorge, a Hispanic, is a first generation student. He is the middle child of three. Born in Germany where his dad was in the military, Jorge's family eventually moved back to the western region of the United States when he was 4 years old. Presently, he is studying communications.

Participants' biographical summaries were presented to place the participants within New Hope University. Themes of college admission officials' and first-generation non-majority students perception of how their university is utilizing its strategic plans to achieve a diverse student body.

#### Attraction

The theme *Attraction* emerged through the participants' explanation of their willingness and desire to attend New Hope University (NHU). As a first generation, non-majority student myself, I could appreciate that their excitement, apprehension, range of feelings and attitudes were determining factors in their decision making. I chose *Attraction* because it illustrated the attitude and behavior that the participants' felt about what attracted them to New Hope University. Supporting themes emerged that strengthen this theme and demonstrated the commitment that these participants had in attending pre-college activities. Participants were attracted through acts of (a) consideration, (b) decision to act and, (c) pay the piper.

These supporting themes are presented in a purposeful succession. *Consideration* started as the first step in *Attraction* because the first-generation non-majority students' consideration demonstrated the positive reaction of the participants towards helping make their decision to attend NHU. High school visits by colleges and universities, and participants' attendance at college and job fairs all help in creating the participants' feelings, emotions, and attitudes towards considering NHU.

#### *Consideration*

The participants perceived that college fairs were very important because these visits often were the first time they had an opportunity to receive information about

colleges. College fairs also were deemed important because they provided a positive first impression of colleges in general.

Jorge was raised in a military family environment in Germany and moved to Colorado when he was in eighth grade. Jorge remembers from his high school days about college fairs.

At the high school level we seldom had meetings with guidance counselors. I cannot remember having too many at all. We always had colleges or universities come to the school and advertise and make their presence known. They had university fairs and such but rarely any one-on-one guidance counseling.

Jorge recollects a void between his needs and what was offered from the high school he attended. Once he received information about colleges from the fairs, he reported receiving very little help from his high school in assisting him in making a decision about attending a college. Jorge also implied that college fairs were vital in providing information to parents. Sometimes parents are naïve about the opportunities that are available to their children. Jorge feels that this important activity is not being utilized as effectively as it could be. He makes his point by saying:

I feel that maybe if representatives, such as school representatives, and politicians would make their presence felt at different events other than college fairs, their presence would have a positive impact. School representatives and politicians should attend minority church services and community events. Often parents and students go to church and community events. This would be a good time to provide information about colleges and what they have to, as parents, and students to consider. Providing information to the families would eliminate their thoughts that they think they cannot afford it or that they are not allowed. Obviously, I am thinking that many don't know everything about the opportunities regarding the choices that they can make. For that reason, they do not encourage their kids to go and I think that if the parents get the idea in their mind that the university is good and something to strive for then that would be the biggest step in their children going to college.

Jorge's statement above reveals that there may be other avenues in addition to college fairs, job fairs such as attending minority church services and community events and

other ways to distribute information are needed in the minority community. It seems that the opportunity to inform the un-informed parents, students, and all community members can be utilized through the community churches, as well as the high schools that presently are being utilized. Jorge feels that utilizing the churches would be a way to change the misconceptions and incorrect information potential college students, parents, and grandparents may have received.

The range of emotions, feelings, and attitudes that these participants felt throughout their *consideration* on attending NHU are illustrated below. Jorge had an unexpected but refreshing attitude about his position in attending New Hope University.

Well, I was looking for a fairly diverse setting. I don't think I had much luck looking for a dominant minority. Having more people of color was important to me. The mid western city I grew up in is majority White. Everywhere I went in high school, for the most part, was majority White. I am not uncomfortable in that setting because of that. I was looking for something fairly close to home where I don't have to be there every weekend or every two weekends, but once a month at least. My sister goes here [NHU] and is graduating and it was nice to know that she was here and I had someone to lean on.

Really, NHU has a lot of programs and opportunities available. There is always something to do. The academic community is very diverse with advocacy groups. If you go there [advocacy offices] you are greeted with friendship. That atmosphere is very welcoming.

Although Jorge revealed that he was comfortable being in an environment that was predominately White, he was looking for a more diverse college environment. While Jorge was talking he crossed his arms over his heart. His voice became very mild and soft. His eyes began to wander almost like he was looking for someone, perhaps his mom or dad. To me these mannerisms suggested that he really wanted to stay close to home but not too close.

Sam moved to the mid western region of the United States at an early age. She had a somewhat different thought.

My first college campus visit to NHU was great, although I was a little apprehensive. I didn't know what to expect. It just introduced my parents and me to what the college environment was and what it had to offer, and especially what it had to offer me in particular being African-American and a female. My first visit to campus I experienced a great fellowship, and so I learned how to socialize. It was just a great learning opportunity.

After my first visit, I thought it [NHU] was a great place. I didn't know exactly how it would be, but I thought it was a good place. I liked it better than other schools that I visited.

I didn't like the east coast atmosphere. I didn't like the place located in New York. Diversity wise, it looked similar to this [NHU], but I don't know, I felt at home here. I really did.

As I mentioned earlier the participants assumed a feeling of excitement, apprehension, and a wide range of feelings. Sam expected a diverse east coast campus. Her experience was just the opposite. Her assumption about a diverse campus was incorrect. She found that the publicity about the diverse student population of the campus located on the east coast was not what it was hyped up to be. In comparison, she felt very much at home at NHU's campus. It also was interesting to hear from Sam how much of a positive impact the first visit to NHU's campus had on both her and her parents. Apparently, the first visit was so positive for her parents that this helped in the consideration to attend NHU.

Choosing a particular institution can be a very difficult decision. There are various reasons for someone to either attend or not. Sam felt that NHU was a good fit for her.

Oh, part of it is it's a great school; I got into all but one of all of the colleges that I applied to and NHU was the best position for me. My parents really wanted me to stay in state for my first 2 years. From all of the in state colleges I got into all of them. But NHU's campus was amazing. My major program is bio-chem. And it is

a very good program. I met my advisors prior to attending [NHU]. I realized then that I just felt really comfortable here.

Anyone who has experienced the excitement, anxiety, and apprehension of going away to college knows exactly what Sam and the other participants have experienced. The impression students receive from their first meeting with their adviser(s) probably would have a meaningful impact whether positive or negative. This meeting could impact the consideration of a student to choose to attend college or not. Sam's first meeting with her adviser(s) prior to attending NHU sounds like it was a positive experience. I only can imagine the apprehension seniors in high school who are starting their journey into a new world of college would feel. Remembering how apprehensive I felt the first time I had to fill out an application, I wish my experience was as smooth as Sam's. Sam mentions:

I felt pretty good at [NHU]. I mean high school is pretty hard at first because there was just so much I had to apply myself to. A lot of homework and paper work had to be done. But when I applied to NHU and there was so much to fill out I became a wreck but particularly with just NHU I thought it went pretty smooth.

Tia experienced similar emotions, feelings, and attitudes as Sam. But she also had different reasons for her consideration to attend college and in particular NHU.

I looked at Syracuse, Columbia, New York University, and NHU. I chose NHU because if I wanted to go home I could. But I was far enough away from home to be independent from my family.

I really liked their [NHU] communications program and that by coming to NHU I would be able to change and learn how to evolve my writing skills better.

The eastern seaboard seemed to be Tia's target for researching colleges and universities. Her choice of NHU was somewhat similar as Jorge's. Tia's desire to stay close to home did not appear to be prevalent in my research. She wanted to be closer to home, but not too close to home. Throughout our conversation, I could perceive that Tia wanted to establish her independence. She also was willing to stay and attend NHU because of the

communications program offered, which was very important to her. Throughout this conversation Tia was telling me that she liked the fact that she was on her own. The tone in her voice became assertive. It seemed like her voice was screaming, “ I am independent! I am living alone! I am self-sufficient!”

As a middle-aged White female, Variety’s decision varied from the other participants. She researched other institutions such as University of Wyoming, University of Northern Colorado, and New Mexico State University. Her attraction to decide on attending NHU was the accessibility of the campus.

I have to be honest. It is because this is where I am and it is accessible. And also, I enjoy the educational process. I feel I had missed out when I was younger and to advance my career.

Actually, I feel that this institution is really trying to progress and open up different programs. I really think they are on an upswing as far as what they are trying to do to make NHU’s campus diverse. I really do believe that NHU is a very good school.

During our conversation, Variety’s demeanor and expressions were quite different from the other participants. When she voiced her thoughts about accessibility, which was a motivating factor on her attraction and consideration to decide on going to college and in particular NHU, her eyes and expression showed confidence and conviction. It was obvious that her motivation to make that step towards deciding to act was her career. She realized that in order to advance in her career, she had to get a degree. While working at NHU she had witnessed an effort on the part of NHU to become more diverse by implementing different programs to help in the progression of achieving a diverse student body. Even though NHU was accessible for Variety, and I do not mean to downplay the importance of it, her conviction to advancing her education was demonstrated through expressions and eye contact. And no matter what, she was going back to school.

Veronica's experience was different from Sam's, Tia's, and Variety's. When she talked about her first visit to NHU, I could see the change in her mannerisms and hear the fluctuation of her voice. She felt reluctant when she first considered attending NHU:

I thought it was really in the middle of nowhere, and I felt a little bit out of place because its [NHU] campus was majority White. My family and I were researching schools in the mid west and NHU was actually on the top of the list for Hispanic students, so that really motivated me to come here [NHU] and then pretty soon you felt welcomed.

I know I kind of came here like a deer in the headlights. I had no clue what was going on. I didn't like coming to school here [NHU] for about the first two months until I discovered the advocacy office for Hispanics. The advocacy office is the reason why I stayed. The preview [campus tour] helped. There were students of color around the campus. There was a session set aside for the students to ask a representative of the admissions office questions. I felt good about coming to NHU. But then as soon as school started none of those resources were there for me and I was kind of left alone.

Veronica experienced negative feelings of being left alone. My interpretation is that she felt she was misled and alone. She seemed to feel like she was misguided by the campus tour. During her campus tour there seemed to be all the resources she needed for support. And then when she arrived on campus she did not feel those resources were there. The resources referred to are support for students, admission office help, and representation of her own ethnicity. Although she experienced this initial barrier, Veronica found positives about NHU's campus and surrounding area. The school may have given her an initial negative shock, but she recovered with the discovery of an advocacy office.

The people and the campus for some reason felt more like a home to me. I guess especially the area itself because of the Old Town and I felt like I pretty much fit.

I was always, even if I wanted to go to college, I planned on moving back to California. I don't understand why, but my senior year I took tours of college campuses and I just decided at the last minute. All my friends had already gotten into college and I hadn't even applied yet. I came to NHU a few weeks before I graduated and applied here [NHU], got an interview at my high school with people from admissions, and it all just fell into place.

During our dialogue, it seemed that Veronica's consideration on attending school was because she had feelings of being left out and alone. All of her friends were going on to college, and she had no such plans. It seems like she felt forced to go to college. She initially had no intentions of going to school. But because all of her friends were going to school, she felt the pressure to keep up with them. Veronica seemed to anticipate what life might have been like had she not gone to college. She would be sitting there with nothing to say. That is peer pressure as she experienced it. NHU was again convenient and fortunately for her provided a way out of being left out or behind.

These participants have illustrated the different feelings, emotions, and attitudes towards college fairs and school visits they experienced while making a decision on attending a college or university and in particular NHU. Veronica shared two experiences, which reflected her feelings. First, she felt like a deer in the car headlights, frozen, not knowing which way to go. Second, she felt used and left alone because she perceived the school presented a false picture of its environment during the preview tour of the campus. Variety had good feelings because of the direction the school is heading with the different diversity programs being initiated. Sam mentioned that the campus felt like home, and her attitude towards school was positive. And lastly Jorge's experience with college fairs seemed to be status quo, meaning they had no impact. The illustration of the varied emotions indicates that in some instances the college is doing a good job in effectively helping new students feel comfortable and at home, which in turn may help in their consideration on attending NHU. The positive direction NHU personnel feel the school is heading was noticed by at least one participant. NHU did create a negative

perception that affected one participant. There may be more students who have experienced the same feeling about not knowing which way to go and being used.

*Decision to act*

The second supporting theme of *Attraction* is the participants' *decision to act*. Within this supporting theme I will illustrate the positive impact that parents, teachers, peers, college administrators, and advocacy groups had on assisting these participants to make their decision to act on attending New Hope University.

Parents, teachers, peers, college administrators, and advocacy centers/groups were resources within the supporting theme *decision to act*. The participants' words speak volumes about the encouragement, pride, and full support they received from their parents, teachers, and peers. This support helped motivate and encourage these participants to decide to act. The participants had been thinking about attending college. They had researched other colleges and universities and NHU ended up seeming to be their number one choice. Now it was time for the participants to take the initiative and make a decision on which college to attend. Veronica often mentioned the support that she received:

I guess it was never really a big deal in my family because I'm the very first person in my whole family to go [to college]. My senior year in high school a lot of my teachers were really concerned. Why I wasn't interested and they pushed me and said I could do a lot; I'm really smart and that I could go really further my education so mainly that's the reason I came to college... They (teachers) just pretty much gave me the reality of what am I'm going to do with my life and that I have such great potential that I would really be putting myself back if I didn't continue on with my education and then my parents never forced it upon me. I've seen how proud they are of me and it's not that hard, it's really not. I'm glad that I've taken it upon myself to come to school here [New Hope University].

They [parents] are very supportive. Right now they live in California. Knowing that I'm in school, my father is just so excited and praises me all the time. What great motivation, knowing they care so much that I'm going to school.

Actually I met with Vio from admission and he was very helpful and covered financial aid. I don't remember their names, but they were there and helpful. They were welcoming and that motivated me. The admission staff was informative and they let me know that I didn't have to choose this institution. But encouraged me to go to school. I just thought that was awesome because they're not pushing it upon me to attend New Hope University.

Mentors are a really big deal. I had a mentor and it was a real benefit. I know some of my friends aren't involved in that. They don't have the connection with upper class persons. These upper class persons can help them out and let them know what is going on. They are someone you can talk to if you have any questions.

Veronica's voice sounded her appreciation and thankfulness throughout the entire dialogue. At the very beginning of our dialogue Veronica mentioned how college was not a big deal in her family. No one in her family had ever attended college. But she received encouragement from her high school teachers. They brought it to her attention that they felt that she was too smart not to go to college, and she would be squandering away an opportunity to further her education. Her teachers really gave her a reality check by helping her realize that she was intelligent and smart. Veronica not only felt pressure from her peers, but she also experienced an implied pressure from her teachers. Both types of pressure seemed to encourage and motivate Veronica on her decision to act on attending college. Veronica was extremely pleased to share with me that after she was accepted in college mom and dad's support became evident. Her father's support shows in his excitement and praises he extends to Veronica. Her father's praise is an instrument of motivation for Veronica. The continued support for Veronica came by way of Vio and other staff members in the admissions office. They provided valuable, needed information about financial aid to Veronica. The admission staff motivated Veronica by their encouragement to go to college, and it did not have to be NHU. And Veronica felt

that mentors were a great support resource. She realizes that many of her friends do not utilize the opportunity and support that upper class persons have to offer. Her parents, teachers, admission personnel, and mentors appeared to have an impact on her in her decision to act and attend NHU. There was true sincerity in her voice.

Jorge's mother and father also were very supportive both overtly and covertly.

His experiences with support are not unlike Veronica's but still a difference was evident.

Jorge also found support by having his older sister in attendance at NHU. Jorge reflects:

My mom supported my ambitions about going to college. For me to go to college meant more to her than anything else. She recognized that with college came opportunities. She was always encouraging me to go to school. People view a college degree and education highly in the job market. Obviously, my mom wanted me to pursue that for whatever reason. She really wanted me to go to college and she always let us know that. I am sure my dad felt the same but he wasn't as verbal about it.

When I visited New Hope University for the first time, it was during my junior year of high school. I stayed in the dorms with my sister for a few days.

My sister showed me a lot of places around campus and a lot of opportunities and stuff that they had.

Here again the family support was very important. Jorge's mother's support was more vocal than his father's. Mom's support came through informing Jorge that life after college could offer more opportunities. I got the impression through Jorge's changing voice levels he could tell that his father was proud of him. Jorge's father is a career military person. My experience being in the Marine Corps has led me to believe many military career-oriented personnel are extremely supportive of their families. Their demonstration of support may be non-traditional compared to civilians. They may not readily show or express their emotions. Knowing that his father supports him without saying so seems to be an intangible contribution. Jorge's sister was another valuable

support. Her support is perhaps the most important because she is attending NHU. She has experienced all of the new feelings that Jorge will or already has experienced. Jorge's sister was his sounding board by supplying him with information on opportunities that became available, where to go and where not to go.

All of the participants received support from advocacy offices at New Hope University. There are several advocacy offices located on NHU's campus. These offices provide academic, cultural, personal and social support to non-majority students. The advocacy offices were created through the establishment of The Group Advocacy Program in the late 1970s to enhance NHU's commitment to diversity. The responses were similar. By the discovery of different advocacy offices available to students Lisa and Tia share their experience:

I was thinking about leaving here [NHU], you know what can you do to help me, to make me want to stay. They [NHU] have organizations like, the Black Student Services [BSS] and they have the Latino Student Services [El Centro] and things of that nature, so that was one way that helped. (Lisa)

And Tia added.

I am actually a very active participant [BSS]. I feel like we try to do as much for the members as we can. We have to be able to support in order to do things for them also. (Tia)

Both were pleased to have available the different advocacy centers. Whenever we spoke about the advocacy centers, they seemed to become more engaged in our conversation. Their eyes lit up and even their sitting posture became more erect. When we engaged in conversation about the advocacy centers, a calming effect became evident. The advocacy office seemed to have a calming effect on Lisa. She was ready to leave NHU until she discovered BSS. Lisa used the BSS as a safe haven to get away from her troubles. She could go there and feel at ease. Tia on the other hand uses BSS as a tool to relieve

tension. Tia is a very active member of the BSS, and with her focus and dedication to help provide support to the Black students, she uses her focus and dedication as a source to release tension.

For these participants the support they received whether it was communicated verbally or implied by their family, teachers, or admission personnel guided them towards making their decision. I do not believe that any potential college student, especially first-generation non-majority student can take for granted the power of influence that family, teachers, and other resource support can have on their decision making process.

### *Pay the piper*

The last supporting theme of *Attraction* is *pay the piper*. I chose *pay the piper* to illustrate the participants' willingness to endure and handle a culture or campus environment that does not fall within their individual comfort zone. They were willing to deal with a new experience of college life at a predominately White institution. The participants' dialogue will provide evidence of their awareness. One of my first questions to the participants was, "How did you feel during your first visit at NHU?" Sam's responded.

My first visit was my junior year of high school. I came here for the Black Issues Forum [BIF] program. I loved the campus. It was during the summer so I didn't see that many people on campus. There were just a few African Americans from local schools so I thought it was great. I loved the campus and everything.

After BIF, I thought it [NHU] was a great place. I didn't know how it would be, but I thought it was a good place. I liked it a lot better than other schools that I visited.

Sam made a couple of visits to NHU's campus. She was attracted to visit NHU through a diversity program aimed at African American students. As she was talking I could see the

excitement and smile on her face. Sam's eyes and smile reminded me of the first time I saw my oldest child take his first step. His eyes were wide open with a sparkle that is hard to describe. His face was full of nothing but a smile. I could just see from his eyes and smile that he was proud of his accomplishment. Seeing Sam's facial expressions while she was describing her first campus visit reminded me of my son's first step to walk. The first impression of seeing a few more African Americans on campus during her visit also helped in providing a comfort zone. After Sam's visit she had a reality check. The reality check was that there were not as many Blacks or students of color as she thought there would be. She was under the impression that because she encountered a few African Americans on campus during the summer that there would be a proportional increase of the numbers of Black students and students of color when fall semester started. Even with the awareness of the lack of anticipated students of color, Sam still fell in love with the campus. The disproportionate number of students of color compared to the entire student population did not meet Sam's expectations. Even with this short fall, Sam still fell in love with the campus even though the campus ethnic diversity wasn't what she desired and was willing to *pay the piper* by not being in a comfort zone that she is used to.

I didn't like the east coast atmosphere. I didn't like the place at Cornell. Diversity wise it looked like: [NHU], but it wasn't. I felt at home here [NHU], I really did.

NHU is a predominately White campus and everybody knows that. I don't see too many African Americans, or any other ethnic backgrounds in any of my classes. I'm probably maybe one of two or three students of color in each of my classes. NHU has different advocacy offices, which puts on programs throughout the school year. BSS is sponsoring Black History Month right now. You do not have to be a student of color to attend. Everyone is welcomed to participate in these programs. I think they [NHU] are trying to do the best they can, but I don't know if it is succeeding in any way.

Through Sam's voice I got the impression that she was disappointed in the atmosphere of Cornell University. It almost seemed like she felt betrayed because the campus was not as diverse as it was advertised to be. I was not surprised when Sam mentioned that there were not many students of color in her classes at NHU. She is studying bio-chem and that historically is not a popular subject matter studied by students of color. The piper is being paid with the realization that she may be the only African American student in a class. Yet, she is willing to take on the isolation and loneliness of being perhaps the only African American in her classes. Sam is willing to deal with isolation and loneliness because of the rewards of achieving a degree in bio-chem from NHU, and the possibilities that may open up for her. If she is fortunate there may be two or three other students of color in her class. But with that in mind, Sam is willing to *pay the piper*.

Another participant talked about her and her friend's first experience on campus at NHU. Tia first spoke with disappointment about the campus culture. As the interview went on her voice changed to that of hopefulness.

My friends and I discuss how it [culture] is changing on campus and how we have seen it evolve. Especially when we first got here there weren't many African American students here, or other students of color. In general there was not much of a diverse student population. We have seen an evolution in the diversity of the school's population this year with them [NHU] taking in so many different diversities and different students.

As I mentioned when our conversation first started, Tia was speaking about her first experience on campus as a disappointment. Her disappointment came when she said, "When we got here there weren't many African Americans." I sensed that she and her friends were expecting larger number of African Americans. She seemed like a shy little girl experiencing her first day in school. But as our dialogue continued, and she started to reflect on the changes that she and her friends had noticed on NHU's campus, Tia started

opening up like a closed flower that feels the sun shine. She was vibrant and excited to share the evolution of diversity on campus. She became upbeat moving around in her seat and animated with her hand gestures. This evolution involved the increase of the population of students of color and also the addition of new diversity programs. The initial lack of African American students and diversity itself did not deter Tia from attending NHU. She was prepared to take on the challenge of being one of a few African American students attending school. She accepted the reality that she was going to be out of a familiar environment and her comfort zone. By her willingness to take on this challenge, of being one of a few minority students and working towards achieving a degree, Tia is paying the piper.

Yet another participant had an entirely different perspective on her first visit to New Hope University. Veronica reflected on her first visit by saying:

The classes I am taking are interesting to me, and I feel that these classes will help me in the future. The teachers and professors are very helpful and great. I think the students just need to take the initiative and get to know the professors even if it's in a big lecture auditorium of 200 plus students. I've really gotten to know a few of my professors and they've been very helpful in my first year here.

Veronica's honesty was quite apparent. Visiting a school that she considered being in the middle of nowhere was a major stepping-stone for her. And probably in her mind adding insult to injury NHU was a predominately White college. But she persevered, made the visit, and fell in love with the campus and its surroundings. The Hispanic advocacy center located on NHU's campus also was a contributing factor to the feeling of comfort. The campus was great, the town and its surroundings felt like home, and the teachers and professors were willing to help. With the possibility of being alone and isolated Veronica found comfort in the surrounding area and the readiness of her professors and teachers to

help her. Veronica is paying the piper by her willingness to experience loneliness and isolation in her pursuit of a college education. Veronica realizes that the isolation and loneliness she is experiencing is worth the education she is receiving. This education in turn, will help Veronica in the future.

The impression from a first visit of any sort is vital to the survival and maintenance of organizations such as colleges. Not only is it a great *Attraction* feature, but also a positive advertisement for the college/university. Jorge shared his thoughts about his first visit and experiences at NHU:

When I visited NHU for the first time, it was in my junior year of high school. The environment is very different from high school, more laid back. I did not see many minorities. Even when my sister showed me a lot of places around campus the minority students were not visible.

While Jorge was sharing his first visit to NHU's campus with me, his body language demonstrated the "laid back" manner he had felt. Instead of sitting in a more direct manner with his shoulders square and upright, his hands located on the edge of the table, he slumped his shoulders and lazily leaned back in the chair with his hands in his lap. I got the impression that this laid back atmosphere of the campus was calming and inviting for Jorge. I sensed a little hesitancy from Jorge about attending NHU because of the lack of minority representation on campus. This hesitancy became evident to me while he was describing his campus tour with his sister, and he started scratching his head and rubbing his thumb and index fingers along his chin. Jorge is not unlike the other participants in his willingness to accept the small representation of minority students on campus, and the possibility of isolation and loneliness to pursue an education. Jorge feels the education he is receiving and the possible opportunities that may open up to him, once he has achieved his degree is worth experiencing isolation. In his way he is paying the piper.

This supporting theme had no negative experiences expressed. There were concerns mentioned. For instance, the lack of minority representation on campus, the location of the school seemed “to be in the middle of nowhere”, and the perception of being left alone without any support. It is apparent from the dialogue that the participants experienced a variety of feelings, thoughts, and perceptions of their first visit to NHU. The participants shared that NHU’s campus felt like home, NHU was a great place, one participant liked the surrounding area of NHU, and the admission staff made them feel welcomed.

Throughout the first core theme of *attraction* I provided the rich voices of student participants. I shared the three supporting themes: *consideration*, *decision to act*, and *pay the piper* that were part of the core theme of *attraction*. The reasons for the participants’ attraction to NHU varied. College fairs and school visitations had a partial influence on some of the participants. Family members, teachers, and peer support were influential factors the participants used to help them in their consideration to attend college and in particular NHU. The ability of some of the participants to accept the challenges of being left alone, feeling left alone, and being used demonstrated the willingness they had to endure the range of emotions they encountered attending a predominately White institution for their pursuit of a college education.

The voices heard in the core theme *Attraction* were from students only. As I move in to the next core theme of *Codification* the participant’s voices will be from both administrators and one participant who is both an administrator and student.

## Codification

The *Codification* theme emerged through administrative participants and one participant who is both an administrator and student voices by describing the system in which the offices of admissions arrange their strategies to follow the guidelines of NHU's strategic plan as administrators in order to achieve the diversity goals of NHU.

*Codification* is an act of arranging or systematizing NHU's strategic plans. The administrators are codifying their institution's strategic plans and implementation of procedures in order to achieve the diversity goals of NHU. These administrators were careful and cautious in how they acted and how they expressed their attitudes and beliefs. They tried to avoid negative perceptions by providing guarded responses about how they understand and follow NHU's strategic plan in order to achieve their diversity goals.

This theme emerged because it demonstrated the importance the participants placed on following the strategic plan in order to achieve a diverse student body. I chose it because participants characterized how they followed guidelines of the system while wanting to achieve NHU's diversity goals.

*Codification* is introduced through the supporting themes of (a) strategic plan, (b) enactment, and (c) assessment. The supporting theme strategic plan describes the understanding the participants have of NHU's desire to achieve diversity goals. Within this supporting theme, strategic plan and policies will also be discussed.

### *Strategic plan.*

The strategic plan emerged as a supporting theme for *codification* because it explains the systematization that the participants follow in order to achieve the diversity goals established by NHU. The complexity and broadness of NHU's strategic plan emerged as well. Muriel works in the admission's department at NHU and throughout our

dialogue she mentioned the value and importance of NHU's strategic plan aimed at diversity:

I can tell you that the university has included diversity and the value of diversity within the strategic plan. I can also tell you that it seems this strategic plan has been superseded in part by some additional goals that have been brought forward by the board of governors that have given me more leeway than what we have found in the strategic plan. I believe in the strategic plan; it speaks to the value of diversity and something that is important for the institution and important not only in the number of the students but also in the numbers of faculty members and staff and things like that.

During this dialogue Muriel became very excited. She started using more hand and arm gestures while she was talking. Muriel sat up straight on the edge of her seat and in a whisper started talking about the additional goals that were introduced by the Board of Governors. The gestures of her hands and arms, along with the whisper in her voice, indicated that she was excited about the new goals. Muriel believes in the value and importance of the diversity goals. She seemed pleased that the university included diversity within the strategic plan, she was elated that the Board of Governors provided an opening for the Admissions Department to become even more creative in their ways to achieve diversity goals of the university. Muriel seemed to be dedicated and mindful of the University's achievement of diversity goals.

... [our] strategic plan is so complex. It is so broad. I think the process was cumbersome. I think that it is terrible. I think the people on campus just became disenchanting with it. I think that initially, everybody thought okay, here is another strategic plan, which I think was fair. But then it just went on and on and on and on.

A strategic plan is important, but it can create challenges and perhaps frustrations to the people who need to follow it. Muriel seemed to me to be a person who expressed her feelings whether they were feeling of frustration, cautiousness, or even excitement. As she was talking about the strategic plan and how big and cumbersome it was, the volume

in her voice once again became soft and almost sheepish. I received mixed feelings from Muriel. At one point she was excited about the strategic plan and what it could do for the university. And then on another point she felt that it had too many barriers, although she did not mention any barrier specifically. Ultimately, I thought that even though the challenges were there, Muriel's focus was on taking the necessary steps to address the university's strategic plan in attempting to achieve the diversity goals.

Muriel, who has been in admissions for over five years, has a unique outlook on policies. I asked Muriel if she felt that policy was the same as a strategic plan. And her response was as follows:

When I think strategic plans, I think of the future. These are almost missions in what we want to see in the future and that kind of thing. When I think of policy, I think of it as more what we do day-to-day. And we can do this because of the particular policy or we cannot do this because of the particular policy that affects our daily lives. Without a doubt, we made some policy adjustments because of the national decisions. You know those kinds of things.

I found it interesting to hear Muriel refer to a strategic plan as a plan for the future. When I heard her say that, it brought to mind a 5 year timetable, and policy is more of what she can do day to day. I am assuming that she is referring to the department. The national decisions to which Muriel refers are the court decisions on race-based admissions in higher education. The court decisions referenced were decided several years ago. The court decisions *Grutter vs. Bollinger* and *Gratz vs. Bollinger* had a direct impact on how colleges and universities conducted future admissions of potential students who were non-majority. Public universities and other public institutions of higher education across the nation are not allowed to use race as a plus factor in determining whether a student should be admitted. While race may not be the only factor, the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Grutter vs. Bollinger* allows admissions bodies to take race

into consideration along with other individualized factors in reviewing a student's application. The Attorney General of this mid western state supported this decision.

Muriel continues:

The Attorney General was one day in the newspaper and was announcing in big headlines that we could not use race in making admission decisions. We met with legal counsel of the university and legal counsel said, "You cannot admit students due to their race alone." And if you continue admitting students based on race, the university may be sued. And if the university is sued, you will be personally responsible. So believe me you think okay I will not admit students only because of race.

I think that forced us to be creative in the way things are and that is why we created things like Partnership Awards and things like that, but policy wise it forced us to change our procedure.

So, those policies make it more difficult. There were times when I think we had the feeling that we were charged with increasing diversity, but we were not supposed to recognize that somebody was diverse, so that was frustrating.

Due to the court decisions not allowing colleges and universities to admit students based on race alone, and meeting with university legal counsel, Muriel felt she and the admissions office's hands were tied. I detected a small tremble in her voice, indicating that there was a little fear of failure. But because of the leeway the admission's office got from the Board of Governors, Muriel and the admissions office utilized their creativity in establishing partnerships for meeting the diversity goals of this institution. Muriel has a job to do. I sensed that Muriel feels that she is receiving mixed messages about what she feels is best to do from her understanding of some of the policies. As our dialogue continued her voice became noticeably softer and lower. I found myself inching towards the edge of my chair to hear her. I noticed that she lost eye contact with me. It seemed like Muriel was searching the ceiling to find the words she wanted to say. I had the impression that she wanted to do her job the best she knows how. But I could tell in her

voice and the searching of her eyes that this was a sensitive subject. And I could also feel that she is following the guidelines within the policy to the best of her ability. Although the Board of Governors created a leeway for the office of admissions to become creative in the way they attract non-majority students, indications are that Muriel still is not comfortable with the new attraction processes. She showed an attitude of let's wait with cautiousness and see what the results are before becoming too elated.

The next participant also has been in the admissions arena for several years. She would like to be known as Meagan and was interviewed earlier. I asked Meagan about the university's strategic plan. This was her response:

I have read the strategic plan and being in admissions, of course, we are on the front line of that [strategic plan]. We have goals that we are striving to meet as far as increasing our diversity in student population. Currently, we have more females [Black] than males [Black] here at the university so we look at programs that appeal to males [Black] or females [Black] in engineering programs. We have recruiting efforts in place in engineering and information systems [computers] and we are trying to recruit more females into those programs. I look at that as part of our diversity plan, whether it is age, gender, or, of course ethnicity. These are all pieces of the strategic plan.

I think, and honestly Jim, I should have looked at the strategic plan but this is what I am remembering that we have goals per year that we want to increase. And because there are small numbers of eligible minority students. The increments also need to be kept in line with that, so perhaps 1% or 2% of eligible Black students should be admitted per year, something like that, until we reach a point where we are representative of what the population looks like. That is how I understand it.

This participant had me a little bewildered. She first stated that she had read the university's strategic plan. And then in another statement she said that she should have read the strategic plan. As our dialogue continued it became apparent that she had read the strategic plan and was very familiar with the plan itself. I found it interesting that she stressed the need for more Black male and female students in the fields of engineering

and computer science. I should have asked Meagan if she had any thought of ways to attract not only more Black males and females but also any diverse group into the fields of engineering and computer science. She seemed quite familiar with the demographics of the Black population and the realistic ratio the university should have to achieve a diverse student body.

Misty was my next participant. She has worked in admissions for several years as well. As our conversation started, Misty seemed careful and cautious to participate. When I asked Misty a question, it took her quite awhile to answer it. I do realize that it is a good practice to listen to the question being asked, wait for a moment to gather your thoughts, and then answer the question. It seemed like Misty took 15-20 seconds to answer, and I felt Misty's timing on answering was quite long. I reassured her that our conversation would be held in confidence. I asked Misty if she would share with me her knowledge of NHU's strategic plan and goals on diversity. She responded by saying:

I work in the admission's office. We have several programs that are specifically geared toward diverse students. One of them that I physically work with is called Discovery Day. We hold discovery day every year. This program is held for high school students and diverse and underrepresented students. We bring them to campus for a day, supply them information about college, NHU in particular. But it is really geared towards getting them thinking about just attending college in general. Another program that we have is called Black Pride Week. This program was developed to realize our [NHU] initiative to diversify enrollment. This program is held in April and it is for Black students who have been admitted to NHU. It is a two-day orientation program on campus.

Indirectly Misty connected two of the different programs created by the university for achieving diversity demonstrating her understanding of the strategic plan. Misty seemed reluctant while sharing her knowledge of the two diversity programs with which she was familiar. I assumed her reluctance was because I am a person of color, and she was embarrassed to talk about the diversity programs with me. Her reluctance was evident by

her hesitancy displayed while voicing her thoughts. During our dialogue Misty also shared with me in a guarded, cautious voice what she felt was a disadvantage of the diversity programs. I sensed her cautiousness by the sheepish way she responded to me. Again, her voice was very soft and low in volume and we lost eye contact.

One of the disadvantages is that I think with programs like that [Pride] where we are focused so heavily on diverse students we tend to present a little bit of a biased picture of the campus because you are coming to a program and you know 95% of the participants are diverse and then you come on campus and what maybe less than 5% of the population are students of color. We are promoting diversity, we want to get more students here who are diverse, but I don't know that it's an accurate picture to say come to NHU, look how diverse we are.

As a first-generation non-majority student myself, I applaud Misty's candor and concern over possibly providing an inaccurate portrayal of what NHU's student population really is. The perception of having a campus that is more diverse than it actually is could possibly cause a problem for students. It may affect their desire and motivation to stay enrolled at NHU, and it could also possibly create a harder adjustment to college life. I interviewed six students. Four out of the six students participated in at least one of these two programs if not both of them. However, the perception of being misled was discussed by at least one of the student participants that I interviewed.

Jose looked at and presented NHU's strategic plan with a different outlook. Jose talks about the various programs connected to NHU's strategic plan, but he also mentions several partnerships and the importance that they have in connection with the strategic plan.

We have come up with a number of ways to attract students of color. We have a trip in which we have students come up to the school. We have partnered up with certain organizations, and programs, such as The National Hispanic Institute and Upward Bound. Through organizations and programs such as these we are finding very talented academic students of color. One of the other things that we are doing is ...partnering up with schools We will find schools in Denver, Aurora,

and Colorado Springs etc. and have a staff member visit the schools to speak about financial aid and to speak about the application process. We are also trying to build partnership with schools in Louisiana and other states. Building partnerships with certain schools, those are some of the things we have done.

Jose's views of NHU's strategic plan is connecting on-going partnerships with organizations, programs, and schools as another creative undertaking of the Office of Admissions towards addressing the strategic plan of NHU. Having the insight to create and establish partnerships suggests to me the Office of Admissions at NHU is staying in touch with the mainstream of what achieving a diverse student population is all about.

The benefits that NHU can gain from the implementation of goals of a strategic plan were mentioned above. First, one participant and I talked about recognizing the changing societal environment that took place after the two Supreme Court decisions of *Grutter vs. Bollinger* and *Gratz vs. Bollinger* and the changes in admission's policy based on an individual's race that needed to be adapted by NHU to stay within the legal guidelines for admitting students of color. Second, during our dialogue the creation of partnerships with such organizations as The National Hispanic Institute, programs like Upward Bound, high schools within the mid western region that participate in the Schools Targeted for Admissions and Retention Today program (START), and other schools that are located in other regions of the United States. START is an outreach program created by NHU to discover and prepare students of color for college. START will be mentioned again further on in the study. These partnerships identify the potential opportunities that are available and Jose's understanding of NHU's strategic plan. Lastly, the growth of the student population in relation to diversity can be improved. They recognize the value of having different programs and organizations involved in a collaborative partnership. Those values relate to providing investment into educating and

providing college life experience to these students. NHU has taken the initiative to incorporate and follow through with strategies pertaining to collaborative partnerships and the creativity used in making the necessary adaptations of their admission strategies to abide by the changes required by law in relation to race-related college admission decisions.

### *Enactment*

*Enactment* emerged as a supporting theme for *Codification*. Within this supporting theme, the participants and I examined actions used by NHU and their administrators to accomplish their commitment to the strategic plan. Muriel feels that the first step is to make sure the right people are in place as administrators in the Office of Admissions. She states:

It really starts at the time the individual is hired. Diversity questions are common. If a person cannot answer diversity questions well, it sends a huge red flag. The person doesn't have to answer questions from my perspective, because experience is unique. Everybody's perspective is different. But they have to be able to answer it. We have had people who will say, "I went to an all White school" or I have never worked in a situation where there are diverse populations, but they have to have the philosophy about it. They have to have an understanding.

Also I do an orientation for all new staff. Everybody who is hired is scheduled to take part in this orientation. I think we have 5 new staff members who have not yet come to that orientation. They will, and at that orientation I speak very candidly about issues related to racism, sexism, or people who have problems with gender issues and all of that.

I talk to them about our office image, and how we are the Office of Admissions and we represent the institute. Everybody who walks through the front door gets to be treated with dignity and respect, and I don't care what your feelings are, but the way you treat people has to be reflected appropriately.

Muriel indicated to me the potential dangers that individuals could create or face if they do not have the right understanding. During our dialogue she said that she realizes there may be differences from individuals' backgrounds, which was accepted as long as they

had the right philosophy, attitude, and understanding. As we were talking, Muriel stared directly into my eyes, and she balled up her fists at the edge of the table at which we were sitting. I sensed a determination and conviction from Muriel's eyes and hand mannerism about having the right person in place. While sharing this information with me, Muriel's eyes became very fixed on mine. I felt as though she was trying to show me how committed she was not only to the orientation process but also to the segment of the strategic plan that pertains to the Office of Admissions. I could definitely tell that she was in full support of NHU's strategic plan. During our conversation I perceived a subtle implication that if a staff member did not have the right understanding, he or she would not meet the expectations of the Office of Admissions. The importance of what Muriel feels about the admission's department is reflected in her statement above mentioning the fact about how important the image that the staff members portray. Muriel understands the importance of the Office of Admissions staff and the first impression that individuals' perceive when they interact with the staff members. She seems to be very strong in her beliefs about what the Office of Admissions should be.

Polly shared a different perspective with me. She has tied her willingness to be open, receptive, and encouraging together in order to help enact NHU's strategic plan on achieving a diverse student population. She states:

I am not sure I can even say what the policy is. I think I see it more from an emotional perspective rather than a law.

I think the feeling I portray is an open, receptive, encouraging feeling that we want to keep our standards at the university to be academically set to succeed. We still must maintain rigid criteria, but also a welcoming environment. My attitude is we love you for who you are and once you are here, we want you to be welcomed and to academically succeed.

Well, it is not just the office of admissions but we have to answer to the MWSCHE [Mid Western States College of Higher Education], as we have standards we have to uphold. Occasionally, we may go review an essay or the student sits under the “window”, and they will look a little deeper. If the student has not done well in high school, to bring him here would be a disservice to the student and institution no matter what color, sex, or anything.

Polly is keeping in mind that there is an academic standard mandated by MWSCHE that must be maintained by the university. But also the atmosphere created by the Office of Admissions should be one of openness and welcoming. This atmosphere is conducive to the reassurance of first-generation and all students that they have made the correct decision in attending NHU. I asked Polly if she saw the Office of Admissions guarding against the stereotypical perceptions that the type of people who are coming in can't work. Her response was as follows: The office of admissions understands and must set apart the value of maintaining the standards set by the university and MWSCHE. My perception of Polly is that she felt and understood the needs of the student by saying “that it would be a disservice to the student and institution no matter what color, sex, or anything.” She would not jeopardize the integrity of the institution or provide a disservice to students by admitting them under false pretenses. I understood the phrase “under the window” to mean students who are just barely achieving the minimum entrance scores for admittance into NHU.

While analyzing data, I found that categories under *Enactment* such as *Marketing*, *Recruitment*, *Students*, and *Programs* emerged. Their emergence was so obvious that *Implementation* became a core theme. I will continue the discussion of *Implementation* as a core theme further in the analysis.

*Enactment* plays a key role in the success of an organization such as NHU. With all of the planning involved there needs to be *Codification* and *Enactment* is one of the

steps in this process. By enacting strategies are placed in order of importance. I am not saying that one strategy is more important than the others. In my opinion it is common sense to prioritize. There are several key areas that encompass *Enactment*. These key areas are: marketing, recruiting, students, and programs. *Enactment* is like change, it is an on-going process and colleges seem to demonstrate their willingness and adaptability to engage in the *Enactment* process to successfully make the necessary changes in order to stay within the mainstream of society i.e. when the Supreme Court decisions of *Grutter vs. Bollinger* and *Gratz vs. Bollinger* were passed down, NHU used its creativity and adjusted to the change in admission's policy on race.

#### *Assessment*

I feel that assessment is an important strategy that is used to determine the need, success, and value of any strategic plan or policy that is in place. Assessment is used to track trends that are established over a period of time. The assessment matrix will provide a college or organization the information needed to make a determination whether the strategic plans and goals are successful. This instrument also can be used to help make a determination on which avenue to follow if the strategic plan or goal is not completely a failure. Only one participant addressed this supporting theme. Her response had a significant impact on me. I asked Muriel, "Why are we (NHU) not attracting more people of color particularly to attend predominately White institution (PWI), such as NHU?"

Muriel's response to this question was as follows:

I think part of it and, in fact, a big part of it starts in the high schools because if you are looking at 4% in the schools, of that 4% what percent is eligible to continue. And if 2% is eligible to continue and we are getting 1.8%, it's not so bad what we are getting. What's really bad is that there are only 2% eligible. That is eligible to go to college or to come to NHU.

I would call [Muriel] when the university or the state put together some admission requirements. We calculated that there were not sufficient numbers of diverse students to meet all of our goals in the state. That is the number of minority students who are eligible to continue. They simply do not exist and so that is part of the problem. I think each individual school also has challenges.

My understanding was that and I don't know how old this information is. I heard it probably at the end of last year, meaning a few months ago or that every department on campus was to develop goals related to diversity and then those goals would be tracked and monitored more centrally and when I say the department, it would have meant the Office of Admissions, for example, or any academic department within a college and everybody was supposed to develop at least three goals related to increasing the numbers of, maybe I shouldn't be as specific to say increasing the number, but addressing issues related to diversity, so it could be dealing with programs that would increase the numbers of students or a that would recognize the special needs of students of color. So, every department is supposed to do that. I have not seen any kind of announcement that says, "Where are they?"

As we were having this discussion, I could sense in Muriel's voice the sense of urgency and frustration that she was feeling about the availability of eligible students in local high schools. She knew the numbers, and she wanted to achieve a higher number than what NHU had enrolled. But she realized that there is a systematic problem of not having enough eligible minority high school seniors within the local high schools. Muriel understood what was required of her and her department. She was requested to establish three goals that would address diversity needs. She fulfilled the request even though she received the request a short time ago. As our conversation continued about the three diversity goals that each department was supposed to submit, her eyes rolled back as a sign of frustration because she had not received any announcement or request asking for the three goals. I had the feeling that she felt that it was a waste of her time to fulfill a request and then not being asked for it. The manner of which the assessments were made was not made available to me. But the assessments that were revealed to me were there

are not sufficient numbers of diverse students in the state to meet the goals of NHU and diversity goals would be tracked and monitored.

NHU has created a program to help address the academic needs of younger minority students through a program called NEW STARS. This program along with others will be discussed in the next core theme of *implementation*.

### Implementation

The *Implementation* theme emerged through the administrative participants and describes different strategies which administrators used to help achieve the diversity goals within the strategic plan at NHU. Through their words and expressions I realized they were willing to share the various strategies used to attract non-majority students which include White females. NHU considers White females as a minority even though the White female population is of the majority at NHU. I chose *Implementation* because it demonstrates how relevant the participants believed this particular core theme was in attracting non-majority students to NHU. Supporting themes emerged that strengthen this theme and provide description of the various strategies used by administrators and NHU to initiate the attraction to consider attending college and in particular NHU.

*Implementation* is introduced through the supporting themes of (a) programs, (b) marketing, and (c) students. The supporting theme of what NHU has to offer describes the various strategies used by the administrators and NHU to initiate the attraction to decide on attending college and in particular NHU.

#### *Program*

Under this supporting theme I found that *programs* were a source of appeal, and the first step or strategy of *Implementation*. *Implementations* are an integral part of a

strategic plan. There are so many ways in which an institution can attract or persuade an individual to decide on matriculating. The participants shared their information of what value programs have to potential students and which program strategies helped attract non-majority students. *Programs* were a valued strategy used in the supporting theme for *Implementation*. Muriel who has a leadership role in the Office of Admissions told me,

We created a program called START. The acronym stands for Schools Targeted for Admissions and Retention Today. We identified, I think the original number was something like 40, high schools in the state that had high numbers of diverse students...we directed a number of sources to get those names of high schools with the highest numbers, and they needed to have at least a relatively high number of their students diverse, and high schools who had high numbers of students on free lunch or reduced lunch. So they identified those schools that have a whole series of things that we are doing with the school. We made additional visits to the school. They, the students, can come to campus so that they can learn about going to college. We were successful in convincing the administration that we should offer scholarships to students from those schools before making admission decisions.

In the admission's office, we are having a high school counselor program at the end of January. The counselor day is high school guidance counselor in the state, but the day before we will bring those START counselors up and share with them the kinds of thing that we are doing.

Muriel's disclosure of the program START, piqued my interest during our dialogue. As we were discussing START, the pride she had for this program became evident. A smile illuminated her face. Her chest started to swell as if she were expecting to have a badge or medal pinned on it. Her eyes became misty as if she were going to cry. Demonstrating her pride that she felt. She wanted me to know that the university was targeting a number of high schools with relative high numbers of diverse students, as were as high schools that have a high number of students on free lunch or reduced lunch. Another prideful moment came about as Muriel and I were discussing the topic of START when she revealed her success (Admission's Office) in convincing the administration that they

should offer scholarships to the students from START. The foresight to have high school counselors directly involved with college campuses was a special piece of the process. It's important to have a couple of days set aside each year not only for the START high school counselors, but for every high school counselor across this mid western state. I was impressed with her leadership and creative abilities.

Meagan expressed similar thoughts about the importance of having diversity programs in place to help NHU support the theme of *Implementation*. She shared the following with me:

I like that we have a specific diversity mission. NHU has a pre-collegiate program currently in place to help first-generation non-majority students. There are other programs held in conjunction with each other that are available and can bring students of color to campus and showcase what NHU has to offer. I think it is much more difficult to go out on the road and really portray a true picture of a college campus and in particular NHU to any student diverse or not.

I do think that important avenues for us are the pre-collegiate programs because students apply for those and they have to meet criteria, you know the high achieving students, and I think it is really important that we view this program as a viable option for these students. We now have our new START program that we are putting a lot of energy into and developing that, and working with students in the younger grades and trying to get them to see that college is an option for them. We work with a lot of the low income schools that have a higher diverse population and if we can get them earlier and steer them in that direction they will be ready for college and we will have provided support and guidance with them all along the way.

Meagan brings another vision of what NHU diversity programs have to offer and the first impression that may influence a potential non-majority students' decision to attend NHU. Programs such as a Pre-Collegiate and other programs that are available to the minority student population. These programs offer students an opportunity to come to NHU's campus and experience a taste of what the university can offer them. These programs showcase the office admission's staff implementation of NHU's strategic plans for the

achievement of a diverse student body. As Meagan says, “we have those programs available and can bring students to campus and showcase what we have.” Meagan feels there are other programs that are very essential to the success of implementing NHU’s strategic plans. Meagan acknowledges the importance of having and utilizing programs to attract non-majority students. To hear that NHU had the insight to establish programs like (NEW START) which addresses the needs of younger students is another demonstration of the importance being placed on the implementation of NHU’s strategic plans. To start, these programs will be introduced to present and upcoming students. The numbers will increase as the population of this state grows. The intangible result of so many minds being positively impacted adds value to these programs. The benefit that colleges will receive in attracting academically eligible students to their campuses is another value.

Jose expressed similar thoughts about the importance of diversity programs. He told me that he felt his expertise was working in conjunction with other schools and organizations to form partnerships and programs. I used the following statement from Jose earlier in the analysis. I feel it supports the value of programs and partnerships. He states:

We have created a program in which we have students come up to NHU. We have partnered up with an Hispanic Institute and a national program called Project Upward Bound. Through these programs we are finding very talented academic students of color. One of the other things that we are doing is we are...partnering up with high schools. So we will find high schools in our region and have a staff member attend the school and speak about financial aid and to speak about the application process. We plan to have students come to campus, just so they can experience and become familiar with NHU’s campus. We are looking to target sophomores in high school who seemed to be interested in NHU.

Oh, they [diversity programs] have been successful, they have helped increase diversity, but I think there is always some work to be done. They are pretty new, so it is a learning phase and I think this is something that is definitely going to help increase diversity in the next few years.

During this conversation I could see a gleam in Jose's eyes. This gleam gave me the impression that he was proud of the work he and his colleagues were doing in conjunction with the Hispanic Institute and Upward Bound. These two programs afford academically talented minority students another viable option of experiencing small part of college life. Another program NHU is participating in is the creation of partnerships with local high schools. This program provides a staff member of NHU to participate in an information session which provides information about financial aid and the application process to perspective students. However, his voice and expressions still seemed to be guarded. Before he would speak, he would look around the room as if to see if anyone else was trying to over hear our conversation. I felt that Jose wanted to keep this information he just shared with me a secret.

The voices of the participants have expressed the value diversity programs bring to the core theme of *Implementation*. Increase in the numbers of a diverse student population is one of the benefits that programs can bring to an institution. While achieving those increased numbers, programs are helping support NHU's strategic plan. Another benefit institutions such as NHU can possibly receive from innovative approaches is the process of making younger students aware of their options on attending college, while also providing support to enhance their learning skills. So, when they have reached their senior year in high school, they will be eligible academically and prepared to step out into a new endeavor of college.

### *Marketing*

The supporting theme *Marketing* emerged through the voices of the participants as another valuable and essential segment to the core theme of *Implementation*.

*Marketing* is a strategy used to attract and perhaps persuade first generation non-majority students to attend college. The participants shared their understanding of the value *Marketing* has on attracting all students including first-generation non-majority students to attend NHU. *Marketing* is another valued part of the *Implementation* core theme. Jose provides support for this statement by saying:

I believe any type of exposure is going to be helpful, but I think the partnership with high schools is the best type of exposure and is going to be most effective, because the one thing is at college fairs you have about, let's say anywhere between 50 to 150 schools that these students are speaking with. You know they will be filling out cards, getting materials and any other publication all in one shot. You know as a representative of NHU you will probably only see a student once. And that meeting will probably be at the college fair. But, I think these partnerships are a constant reminder. Hey, NHU will help you [student] out with regards to learning more about financial aid, learning more about the college experiences or bringing the students to campus. This is the most effective tool in recruitment.

During our interaction Jose once again voiced his commitment to the partnership programs that are being conducted at NHU. He brought to my attention what he felt was a big drawback of college fairs. The drawback is that there are too many college representatives at college fairs, which impedes or limits interactions between school representatives and potential students. He then introduced his feeling on how effective partnerships can be. These partnerships keep a constant vigil on potential students. There is not a one-chance encounter as takes place at college fairs. These partnerships have the possibility of establishing long-term relationships with students. He also tied the partnerships in with recruitment and how the partnerships are a most effective recruiting tool. While Jose was talking I noticed he would continually rub his hands together as if he was really happy to share this information. He reminded me of a child anxiously waiting to see what was in the new present. Jose connected *Marketing* as an effective tool

for recruitment. Jose mentions college fairs, learning about financial aid, and learning about the college experience is all part of the *Marketing* strategy.

Meagan mentions that college fairs and open houses are used appropriately to help in the *Marketing* segment of *Implementation*. I asked Meagan if NHU's recruiters are domiciled at NHU or do they actively go out and recruit. Her response to this question is as follows:

Yes, they attend lots of college fairs, open houses, etc. We invite perspective students to our information sessions. We do have target areas, I don't know if you have talked about that with anyone else. Because we have a limited number of staff we cannot go everywhere, but we do have targeted areas that we work.

Meagan also adds:

The recruiting department is the folks that are out recruiting from coast to coast and they identify schools to visit and we have a lot of statistics that go into that. They are looking at geographic areas that would produce viable students for NHU.

We have recruiting efforts in place in engineering and information systems (computers) and are trying to recruit more females into these programs. I look at that also as part of our diversity plan, whether it is age, gender, or, of course ethnics, as those are all pieces of the strategic plan.

It seemed to me that Meagan was embarrassed to tell me that there was a limitation on the number of staff members dedicated to the recruiting process. She started to blush. Her facial cheeks became a rosy red color. Her voice became a whisper, as if she did not want anyone else to hear. From the blush of her facial cheeks, to the whisper of her voice I received the impression that she felt that NHU was missing out on potential students because of the recruitment staff limitations. While Meagan seemed to be embarrassed about the limited staffing within the recruitment area, she demonstrated through her hand actions that she was happy with the direction NHU was taking towards the recruitment of minority students in the fields of engineering and information systems.

Even with the recruiting staff limitations and their drawbacks, she feels the Office of Admissions is doing the best they can with the limited resources available. It seems like NHU may be tying the hands of NHU recruiters by not increasing their recruiting staff size. I was not privileged to see what the Office of Admissions budget was. So, they may have financial limitations on being able to hire more staff members. I got the impression from Meagan, potential students are being accidentally overlooked or missed due to the limited recruiters, and their participation in visiting targeted geographical regions. The staff personnel assigned to the task of going out into the field and marketing NHU in the targeted areas almost seems insurmountable. The value of recruitment and NHU's exposure is a key to its *Marketing* strategy. My interpretation that emerged from the participants' voices concerning *Marketing* is that of a key-supporting theme for the core theme of *Implementation*. The data showed that recruiting emerged as a key factor within the *Marketing* strategy. The implied message that I received from the participants is that *Marketing* and recruiting are synonymous with each other. Needless to say, this core theme *Implementation* is vital to the university. Not only does *Marketing* generate revenue through tuition, it also provides an advertisement avenue that NHU can capitalize on in the future.

### *Students*

*Students* emerged as the next supporting theme for *Implementation*. The progression from *Programs* to *Marketing* to *Students* seemed natural. The participants provided me with some different perspectives on the support theme of *Students*. I will be providing the perspectives from the administrators' voices. I was interested in finding out

what type of eligible *Students* NHU is looking for statewide and what are the realistic numbers for eligible non-majority *Students*. Muriel who is the first to respond:

I think part of it and in fact a big part of it starts in high schools because if you are looking at 4% non-majority representation in high schools, you need to ask of that 4% what percent is eligible to continue in higher education. And if 2% is eligible to continue and we are getting 1.3% it's not so bad what we are getting. What's really bad is that there is only 2%. We calculated that there were not sufficient numbers of diverse students to meet all of our goals in the state that is the number of eligible students to continue in higher education. They simply do not exist and so that is part of the problem. But the diverse students that we are getting are bright, intelligent, creative thinkers, and seem to be over achievers.

Polly works in the office of admissions and she was the second to respond. She said:

We still want to keep our standards at the university to be academically set up for students to succeed, so that is still a criteria. We love you [students] for who you are and once you are here, we want you to academically succeed. If the student has not done well in high school, to bring he or she here would be a disservice to the student and institution.

Jose looks at the type of student differently than the other two participants. He says:

I think diversity is something that is very important; you know it is not only ethnic. I think it is geographic in regards to the college setting. If the student is an athlete, he/she is different type of student. You just do not want to have the same type of students. For example you know we can take all students with 3.85 grade point average and score in the 90 percentile on the SAT's, but that will all be the same type of student. Having students from different backgrounds, different experiences, and different cultures makes more of a learning experience for a college environment.

We heard from three of the five administrative participants. Each had a different outlook or type of student NHU should be attracting. The range of qualities that they were looking for varied. I was under the misconception that all administrators were looking for the same type of student, the student who was intelligent and low maintenance. There were other qualities for which they looked. Muriel is looking at the available eligible

number of non-majority senior high school students. She shared with me there is approximately 4% non-majority students in the local school systems. Out of that 4% approximately 2% are academically eligible for college. From the 2% NHU has approximately a 1.8% enrollment of Black students. Muriel was not specific with a particular ethnic group. I am assuming that the percentages she provided me with are for Black students only. Muriel seemed satisfied with the percentage of Black students enrolled at NHU. Given the fact that there are only 2% academically eligible for college and NHU has an enrollment of approximately 1.8%. Once again Muriel exuded a feeling of pride.

Polly on the other hand looked at the student who could meet the academic standards of the university. She reflected that she also took into consideration how students would or would not be able to succeed in their collegiate endeavors. Her statement "If a student has not done well in high school, to bring him or her here to the university would be a disservice to the student and institution." The sincerity displayed by Polly was reflected in her eye contact with me. She had her hands positioned in what I would describe as a position for praying. And Jose looked at students who were diverse from a geographical standpoint. I gathered from our conversation that he was looking for student athletes as well as the intellectual student. I believe that Jose was saying no matter what type of student whether he or she is studious, athletic, outgoing, or introverted, the difference among them adds to a diverse student body. From my understanding of what Jose was saying the different types of student adds to the quality of diversity. The differences expressed gave me a new resolve that office admission staff is not all the same. It destroyed the stereotype I had that admission's personnel were

looking for the same type of student. My interpretation of the progression that takes place within the core theme of *Implementation* is natural and valuable. *Programs, Marketing, and Students* are all necessary segments to the success of a college or university such as NHU. Each supporting theme shared an equal importance in the *Implementation* theme. Supporting themes of *Programs and Marketing* helped in the student participant's attraction to consider, attraction to act, and also the willingness of the students to pay the piper. While the supporting theme of *Students* illustrates that administrators are looking for perspective students with a diverse background. At least one of the administrative participants mentioned how important and valuable he felt diversity had on attracting perspective students. My interpretation is that these three supporting themes are all are all needed segments for the overall achievement of the *Implementation* of NHU's strategic plan for a diverse student population.

### Diversity

The theme *Diversity* emerged through the student participants' voices and describes their desire to experience a college environment that meets the needs of all students. It described participants' approaches to their emotions or feelings about the environment and culture on NHU's campus. They expressed their concerns about what they felt maybe causing their perception for the lack of *Diversity* on NHU's campus. I chose *Diversity* because student participants shared with me what they felt were the restrictions and limitations to the achievement of having a diverse student population as well as their perception of the benefits of having a diverse student population.

*Diversity* is presented through supporting themes of (a) emotions or feelings, (b) reasons for failure, and (c) benefits of diversity. The supporting theme *emotions or*

*feelings* described how participant's initial reactions were to their first experience to college life on NHU's campus. Some of the participants wanted interactions with college faculty and students to be similar to what they had known as high school students. Likewise, in college they wanted social interaction to be with people who were familiar to them.

### *Emotions or feelings*

The student participants had a desire to go to college but were naïve in what to expect going away to a PWI such as NHU. Emotions or feelings emerged as a supporting theme of *Diversity* because it explains why some participants remained geographically close to their family and friends. Other participants shared their experiences while performing the job responsibilities. Variety explains:

Because of this unique situation where I am, yes we do talk all the time about how to handle situations pertaining to diversity. Within the workplace, being in the college here, it is inherent that our office is diverse; it does have a wide range of a diverse staff. The schoolwork that I am doing now involves a lot of communication and business classes and these classes delve into the topic of diversity quite a bit. I agree that unless you can accept and understand, or try to understand everyone around you, you are not going to go anywhere. We have had discussions in the office how different nationalities, different genders understand and think differently, communicate differently and you have to have an understanding. You need to try to empathize with them.

Variety's has positioned herself in a unique situation that is different from all the other administrators and students. Her unique situation is that she is a full-time employee as well as a full-time student at NHU. She has provided me with insights from two different perspectives. During our conversation she shared with me her workplace environment was diverse. And in the classroom, the topic of diversity is discussed quite intently. From our conversation, my understanding is that Variety feels that you must try and accept or at least understand a person's differences no matter if it is a difference in gender, or

language order to be successful. Variety also stressed the need to demonstrate empathy towards differences.

Tia experienced something a little different from Variety. Tia is an active participant with her ethnic advocacy group. Even as an active member she has experienced an emotion that she was not quite ready for. Tia states:

I am actually a very active participant in the Black Advocacy Center. I feel like we are trying to do as much for the members as we can. We have to be able to have support in order to do things for them also. A lot of the members of BSS don't like to come to meetings and so that also makes it harder on us, the active members, because we want to be there for them and support them and when they don't come to meetings it is frustrating at times.

Tia is a volunteer worker at the Black Advocacy Center at NHU. Unlike Variety's work environment where the conversation and support for diversity is noticeable, Tia is experiencing something different. In our conversation she tells me of how she feels that the Black Advocacy Center is trying to do as much as they can for the Black students of NHU. But some of the Black students do not show their support of the center by not attending meetings. While we were talking about the lack of Black student support Tia's voice became noticeably softer and her eyes looked down at the table where we were sitting. Her softer voice and her eyes looking down towards the table gave me an indication that the lack of support seemed to be frustrating to Tia.

Veronica, like the other students, is a first-generation non-majority student. In high school her teachers realized the Veronica's potential. They provided verbal support for her to continue on to college. The teachers' support is what motivated Veronica to go to college. But once she got to NHU, this is what she had to say:

I thought NHU was really in the middle of nowhere and I felt a little bit out of place because the majority of the student population is Caucasian. But once I

discovered the Hispanic advocacy center it helped motivate me. And pretty soon I felt welcomed.

Veronica also voiced her concern about what she felt was a lack of support for diversity from the President of NHU:

I know that the President of NHU is trying to help in the cause of diversity. I know because I'm involved with the Hispanic advocacy center's activities on or about diversity. But I have never seen him being a part of any of them. It is a big deal to me because he or she is promoting diversity but at the same time he or she doesn't seem to contribute by being in attendance to at least some of the activities. I understand he or she is busy, but he or she could attend one or two. So, I ask the question. Why is diversity so important to my school but the President doesn't attend any of the programs? I think it's kind of hypocritical of the President to say our institution is diverse and we are promoting diversity and the President wants more minorities to come to our institution but at the same time I feel like I am being used because of his lack of demonstrated support.

Veronica later added:

I kind of came to NHU like a deer in a cars headlights. I had no clue what was going on. I didn't like coming to school here for about the first two months until I discovered the advocacy office. The advocacy office helped me adjust to the new environment of campus life that I was not used to. Before the discovery of the advocacy office I felt left alone.

At the very beginning of our conversation Veronica expressed through her raised pitch in her voice the surprise and amazement of the lack of a diverse student population and her perception of how remote the location of NHU's campus is. She also talked about how she felt clueless and lost about what college life was all about. It was interesting to hear I Veronica described it. She said "I kind of came to NHU like a deer in a cars headlights." But she also quick to add, with the discovery and eventual help of the Hispanic Advocacy center her feeling of being alone and lost was eliminated. During our conversation Veronica also talked about how she felt used because of her perceived lack of support that the President of NHU was demonstrating towards diversity. My interpretation is due to Veronica's involvement with the advocacy center's different activities and events on

diversity and because she has never seen the President at any of these activities or events, she feels that she is being used. I got the feeling that Veronica was telling me that she felt that the President of NHU “was talking the talk but not walking the walk”.

The participants expressed different emotions or feelings from one to another. Variety not only works at NHU but also is a full-time student. Variety is in a unique situation that separates her from the other participants. She is in a workplace environment at NHU that seems to encourage employees to discuss ways of handling *diversity*. The classroom is another means which Variety has an opportunity to address and discuss *diversity*. With the availability of having discussions on *diversity* in both classroom, and workplace settings, realization has come to Variety that she needs to be able to accept, understand, and demonstrate empathy towards people of differences. Tia ‘s emotion was one of frustration. She discussed how difficult it was for her to understand why members of her ethnic group would not support their own advocacy office. During our dialogue I could see the frustration in her eyes because she starting tearing. Her emotions surfaced.

Veronica, on the other hand, shared several different emotions. She felt out of place because of the location of NHU and the Caucasian population. But after a period of time and the discovery of the Hispanic advocacy center she felt welcomed. She also felt lost and alone. I arrived at that perception from her comments, “I felt like a deer in the headlights” and “I felt left alone.” Interesting enough, Veronica shared with me her feelings about the President of NHU and how she felt about being used and that he was hypocritical in his policy on *diversity*.

After Veronica and I spoke, I raised the question to myself as to why Black students did not support the Black advocacy center. Maybe it was because they were so busy with

schoolwork. Reflecting back on my first days in college, I felt overwhelmed from the amount of schoolwork. The feeling of being overwhelmed and needing to keep up may be a reason. During our dialogue I could see the frustration in her eyes because her eyes became watery. Veronica, on the other hand, shared several different emotions. She felt out of place because the location of NHU and the Caucasian population. But after a period of time and the discovery of the Hispanic advocacy center she felt welcomed. She also felt lost and alone. I feel the reason why she felt lost and alone was due to the lack of support that she envisioned she was going to have once she started at NHU.

My summarization is she felt she was not receiving support because she did not know where to look. Interesting enough, Veronica shared with me her feelings about the President of NHU and how she felt about being used and that the President of NHU was hypocritical in his policy on diversity. I can understand how Veronica could feel being used. I can only assume that a freshman student being exposed to a new environment such as a college campus would have high expectations. One possible expectation is for the President of the college or university to be able to show support in what he is preaching. Not that I agree with Veronica on her assessment that the President of NHU is hypocritical because she has not seen him at any of the diversity activities in which she has participated.

The position of President of any college or university must be very demanding. There is only so much one person can do in a day or evening. The President of a university or his representative may be participating in events that she has not attended. I would feel that he is supporting diversity initiatives to the best of his ability.

### *Reasons for Failure*

The supporting theme *Reasons for Failure* illustrates the participants' reaction as to why they feel the *diversity* issue is not as successful as it could be. Their voices revealed a concerned need for a positive change. They had chosen a four-year college they thought was similar to what they were used to. Sam's revelation was as follows:

Well, you know NHU was my choice in college. I wasn't really looking for a diverse college campus because I came from a very diverse high school. They had like over 12 languages spoken at the high school I came from and so it was very diverse. There wasn't any major groups what so ever. So, I really wasn't too much like interested in seeing the diversity of any of the colleges that I researched and I may have found out that I should have.

Sam added this statement in support of the above statement:

I feel the reason for the failure of diversity on NHU's campus is because I just don't think there is any non-majority student interest. I mean many people are here trying to pursue a higher education, trying to pursue a degree, trying to secure a place in the future. I don't think diversity is such a big deal for anyone to take time out of their schedule and try to participate or attend any activity that relates to diversity. I'm part of the Black advocacy office and we do a lot trying to get the word out there and trying to have as many people as we can get involved. I just don't think there is interest out there on campus.

Variety believes that the lack of diversity is a contributing factor to the failure of diversity. She says:

If you don't have diversity, if you go to an institution, workplace, high school or any environment that is monotone or have just one type of individual, you are not going to expand what you know about the people and world around you. I think that NHU presents a totally different picture from what is real. Sometimes I feel like NHU really doesn't care about minority students.

Lisa a student participant also voiced her concern about the lack of support as a possible reason for the *failure in diversity* on NHU's campus. She states:

I think it is a lack of support. You arrive on campus and you do not see many students of color or staff members of color promoting diversity. This makes it hard for students to identify and find someone that they can talk to. It was difficult

for me to find someone to talk to about my considering leaving NHU. Sometimes I think that NHU doesn't care about diversity.

Sam mentioned a couple of reasons why she felt contributed to the *failure of diversity*.

Her high school background may have been a contributing factor towards her outlook towards a diverse campus. She came from a diverse high school where there were over 12 different languages spoken and didn't seem to have any major ethnic group. She admits to not looking for a college campus that was diverse, and she indicated that she may have regrets not doing so. Another reason that was raised is the lack of interest that non-majority students display. She indicated that some non-majority students place their achievement for a higher education and future security in life above diversity. Sam feels that diversity is not a big deal and she should not take time out of her busy schedule to attend activities on diversity. Variety feels that if an individual is not exposed to a diverse environment, this will limit their life experiences. She indicated that perhaps a reason for the failure of diversity at NHU is that NHU presents a different picture from what the campus life really is. This false impression of NHU's campus can be perceived by some students as a lack of support from the school. Lisa also indicated to me that she felt a reason for the *failure of diversity* at NHU was due to the lack of support. I gathered from our conversation that she felt whenever she needed help or to talk to someone of her own ethnicity, there was no one there. It seemed to be very important to Lisa to have that support mechanism. Lisa mentioned due to the lack of support she feels that NHU doesn't care about diversity.

### *Benefits from Diversity*

The supporting theme *benefits from diversity* emerged through the participants' voices as to what they thought were the personal gains they experienced from being

involved with a diverse campus. They talk about the positive and richness of the learning experience, and they discuss the comfort they feel in the classroom and campus environment. They also shared with me the support they felt from diverse campus environment.

Meagan talks about the *benefits of diversity* through the lenses of the campus environment. This is what she said during our conversation:

I believe it is important for the students to experience the campus and the city that surrounds it. The city is very White, we just are. I like for them [non-majority students] to come here and see what the environment is like. Even though the surrounding city itself is very White, we still are warm and a welcome campus and we like what the diverse students can bring to us. We are a caring campus and we take care of the student. A diverse campus brings a great deal of different life experiences. It also adds to the learning experience for the students.

Variety mentions the fact that the benefit she gets from *diversity* is realized both in the classroom and environment.

Diversity impacts me in the classroom environment or in the learning environment. I come in contact with many different people and getting to know them helps me to broaden what I know about the world around me.

Jorge experienced a campus environment that was totally different from what he was accustomed to coming from high school. He stated:

The campus environment is very different from high school, more laid back.

Tia feels that one of the benefits of having a diverse classroom is that the diversity adds a difference to the learning experience.

I think that if schools are very diverse you will get a different learning experience and if they aren't the learning experience will have a totally different feel. You will not get the full experience of learning.

Tia has also witnessed an evolution on campus through *diversity*.

My friends and I ... discuss ... how the environment is changing on campus and how we have seen the campus environment evolve, especially when we first got

here, there weren't many African-American students or the sense of diversity at all. We have seen that evolve this year with NHU accepting ... many different ethnicities.

The participants' views about the environment, whether they were about the classroom or the campus and surrounding areas were gratifying to hear. They talked about the warmth, the welcoming atmosphere, and the "laid back" feeling that was present. Someone mentioned how diversity broadens ones outlook on life. One participant shared her witnessing of the campus environmental evolution. All of these are benefits of what *diversity* can bring. Diversity can have a positive impact on other areas.

According to Mitchell J. Chang's article, "Who Benefits from Racial Diversity in Higher Education?" most educators view a diverse student body as an important educational resource that enhances the environment for learning. But "public opinion, however, regarding the educational 'benefits' of diversity has been mixed"(Chang, 1996).

I agree with Dr. Chang and other researchers such as Octavio Villalpando and Alexander Astin, in believing that the benefits of having a diverse student body enhances all students' educational experiences which in turn contributes to the educational environment. Through the voices of some of the participants whether administrators or students it has been expressed that they feel the need and importance of having a diverse environment.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

This chapter contains three sections. Section one I discuss how my findings are consistent with or deviate from the findings in the current research literature on strategies college admission officials use to attract first-generation non-majority students to their respective colleges and universities. This section also discusses and how first-generation non-majority students perceive that these strategies are implemented. Section two I suggest some implications for institutions of higher education. Section three I provide recommendations for further research.

### Discussion

The eleven participants shared how they experienced the phenomenon of being a part of a diverse student body. Some findings were consistent with prior research on college admissions standards. Unfortunately, there is a scarcity of research pertaining to why first-generation non-majority students chose this particular university, but the findings did support what limited previous research was available.

This study had two purposes. The first purpose was to discover how admission officials implemented their university's strategic plans, policies, and procedures in achieving a diverse student population. The second purpose was to better understand why first-generation non-majority students chose this particular predominately White institution (PWI).

#### *First Purpose*

In this section I will explore the ways admission officials implemented their university's strategic plans, policies, and procedures in achieving a diverse student

population. Demographics are provided to illustrate the limited number of eligible minority students available. I will provide information as to why recruitment of minorities is an important National concern. I will then relate this institution's role in recruiting for diversity to the National concern. The challenges that admission officials have encountered are discussed in light of the population of this mid-western university's community.

*Demographics.* The reality every college, university, and state higher education coordinating board has to face is the demographics of its population. In some cities in the United States, minorities are becoming majorities, and the importance of gaining an understanding of other cultures becomes much more evident. Page (2003) found that "by looking at the current trends in the way higher education implements plans for cultural diversity, it is possible to forecast where cultural diversity in higher education may be heading. Finally, one may consider what new innovations higher education may see in the years to ahead in response to the nation's cultural diversity" (p. 80). The literature from experts such as Page, Tinto, Cox and others, supports my feeling that this country, more than any other, is blessed with cultural diversity, but I also would say that there are still diversity goals to be achieved. Traditional minority groups will be increased numerically, which will increase their respective proportions of the population. It is beneficial to consider how host institutions view their diverse student populations and strive to make them more diverse. Page (2003) states,

Educators are at a crucial moment in time in this nation's history---a time when national policies concerning cultural diversity can truly affect the stability of the country---and colleges and universities should plan accordingly. There is a lot riding on how well the citizens of the United States handle the characteristic cultural diversity of the country.

Colleges and universities across the nation are experiencing dramatic changes in their student populations. As a new minority student arrive on campus, they bring new expectations regarding the relationships between higher education institutions and themselves (Page, 2003)

What had been considered a traditional student is no longer the majority on today's college campuses. Gone are the days of a majority student population described as White, male, middle-class, single, 18-22 years old, residing on campus and working less than 10 hours a week (Levine & Cureton, 1998). Today's college students are racially and ethnically diverse, 25 years of age, female, attending school part-time while working full-time, or commuting from campus (Holzer & Neumark, 2007).

Higher education leaders pay attention to the U.S. Census projections regarding the number of 18-24 year olds in each state in order to anticipate and plan enrollment increases and decreases (Barton, 2005). These higher education professionals note that the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the College Board anticipate significant increases in the enrollment of underrepresented populations in public, private, four-year, and community colleges. Utilizing the demographics of students taking college entry exams each year, ETS estimates an increase of over three million college students by 2015. Underrepresented students will make up two million of that increase (Barton, 2005). For definitional purposes, underrepresented students in these reports are identified as African American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and other diverse racial and ethnic groups (Barton, 2005).

*Recruitment of minorities: an important National concern.* Present and future trends in population growth and in particular in higher education reveal that people of

color in the United States are dramatically increasing, but are a seriously undereducated segment of society. In 2000, minorities accounted for roughly 30 % of the population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990c). Twenty years ago, 27 % of all public school students in the 24 largest city school systems were minorities (Sedlacek, 1999). Yet for nearly all minority groups' high school graduation rates are significantly lower than for the majority, and entry rates of college-age minorities into higher education are actually shrinking (Sedlacek, 1999).

As the country's racial/ ethnic minority representation increase, colleges and universities increasingly have sought to diversify their enrollments in order to better prepare all students to live and work in a diverse democracy (Malaney & Berger, 2005). Institutions of higher education are being called upon to exercise leadership in helping to address some of the problems of feeling isolated, not having support, and being left alone before they take on even more critical proportions. These three problems emerged and were discussed by some of the students in Chapter 4. Minority student recruitment must focus on aggressive strategies to recruit those who are well prepared (p. 451).

*The Institution's Role in Recruiting for Diversity.* Higher education institutions are the traditional centers for scholarly debate, research, innovation, and change in social matters. Increasing the presence of minorities and of minority perspectives in all aspects of the college and university is, in its broadest sense, a question of social change. Colleges and universities can provide vision, energy, leadership, and direction to other institutions, from school systems to government to business and industry, first to establish firmly goal of excellence in minority education and then to pursue and achieve it (Breivik, 1998).

Through investigation into the subject of minority education and the effectiveness of responses at various levels, higher education institutions can bring the issue into focus. Achieving diversity on college campuses does not require quotas. Nor does diversity warrant admission of unqualified applicants. According to the American Council on Education (1998-2001), “the diversity, the future of this nation requires that colleges and universities continue to be able to reach out and make a conscious effort to build healthy and diverse learning environments. The success of higher education and the strength of our democracy depend on it” (p. 7).

*Challenges.* The challenges for admission officials to achieve a diverse student population are as diverse as diversity itself. One problem brought to my attention through this study is the lack of eligible non-majority students. The demographic numbers of the non-majority population for this mid-western state are as follows:

Estimated total population of 2006: 4,753,377		
African American	194,888	4.1%
American Indian & Alaska Native	52,287	1.1%
Asian	123,587	2.6%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	4,753	0.1%
Persons reporting two or more races	85,560	1.8%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin	926,908	19.5%

The source used for this table is from the U.S. Census.

The demographics of the United States and in particular this mid-western state, coupled with the selective admission’s requirements of the university make it extremely difficult for the institution to significantly increase the number of minorities in its student

body. As an example the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education points out that in 2005, there were only 289 African American high school seniors who had achieved the necessary qualifications for admission to an institution of higher education in this state. Of these, only 120 Black students applied to the university and only 41 eventually enrolled (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006).

According to Jay P. Greene, PhD. Senior Fellow, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, and Marcus A. Winters Research Associate, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research (2002), “in the United States there is a large difference among racial and ethnic groups in the percentage of students who leave high school eligible for college admission. About 40 % White students, 23 % Black students, and 20 % Hispanic students who started public high school graduated college ready in 2002” (p. 1). In my review of NHU’s strategic goals pertaining to admission, retention, and graduation efforts, I found that they have a goal to increase new non-resident undergraduates by 200 per year through 2014.

The estimated present student enrollment demographics at New Hope University are as follows:

	Men	Women	Total	%
Non resident Alien	551	280	831	2.9%
Black Non-Hispanic	255	259	514	1.8%
Hispanic	703	789	1,492	5%
Asian / Pacific Islander	334	441	775	2%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	143	207	305	1.2%
White Non-Hispanic	10,638	11,643	22, 281	79%
Race Unknown	826	904	1,730	6.1%

The source used for this table is Student enrollment demographics NHU.

Through interviewing administrators within the admission's office (Muriel, Meagan, and Jose), I found that the demographic evidence supports their opinions that the percentage of the minority population is small in this mid-western state. And, of those demographic numbers, the number of eligible high school seniors is minute.

Another challenge that may impede the work of admission officials in achieving a diverse student body is the systematic problem of minority students' performance in high school. According to Pedro A. Noguera who is a Professor in the graduate School of Education at Harvard University and Antwi Akom who is a doctoral student in Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania (2000),

The appearance of a racial gap in student achievement is by no means a new development. For years, evidence of disparities in achievement have shown up in test scores, drop-out and graduation rates, and almost every relevant indicator of academic performance. However, more often than not, the presence of significant differences in measures of performance among Black, Latino, and Native American students who generally fall on the lower end of the achievement spectrum, with large numbers of White and Asian students more likely to be found at the higher end, has been accepted as normal and unproblematic.

The number of Black students participating in the AP program has increased to 80,444. Of which 22,376 received a score of 3 or above which qualified them for college credits.

There is still a disparity with Black students' performance on AP tests because Blacks remain far below that of White students. Therefore with a greater pool of Black students taking AP examinations in recent years, the racial scoring gap on AP tests has increased (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006). Nationwide, the mean AP score for White students was 2.95; for Black students it was 1.91. This means that the average Black Student's score is a full letter grade below the White student's score. This gap has widened slightly in the past several years (JBHE, 2006). At the very highest level of AP test scores, the Black-White scoring gap is even greater. Some 13.3 % of White test

takers received a score of 5, equivalent to a college grade of A. Only 2.6 % of Black test takers received a score of 5. Blacks, who took 5.8 % of all AP tests, made up only 2.6 % of all students who became eligible for college credit and only 1.2 % of all students with the highest score of 5 (JBHE, 2006). Unfortunately, research indicates that the numbers are very similar between the racial scoring gap of Hispanics, and Native Americans between White students. The racial scoring gap between Asian and White students is considerably lower.

In the mid-western state where New Hope University (NHU) is located the approximate minority population is 29.2 %. For example, there is a 4.1 % Black population, 19.5 % Hispanic or Latino population, and 2.6 % Asian population within the 29.2 %. The estimated number of Black seniors in high school is around 4 %. Out of the 4 % Black high school seniors only half of the 4 % are college-ready. The numbers are similar with Hispanics and Native Americans. The present Black enrollment at NHU is approximately 1.8 %, Hispanic enrollment is approximately 5 %, and Native American enrollment is 1.2 %.

NHU is committed to enhancing its diversity in all forms: through age, different ideas and perspectives, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, national origin, race, religious and spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, and the socioeconomic status. Given the historic and legal discrimination that has existed in American society, particular emphasis needs to be placed on the inclusion of individuals who are members of groups that have been excluded, i.e. racial/ethnic minorities, women in non-traditional areas and persons with disabilities. The university strives to foster in its members recognition of their role as citizens in the global community with greater understanding of cultures and

perspectives different from their own so that diversity will not only be encouraged and sought after, but also enhanced within the its campus community.

### *Second Purpose*

The second purpose provided a better understanding as to why these first-generation non-majority students chose to attend NHU. Three supporting themes emerged during my interviews that seemed to have had an influential impact on why some of the student participants made their decision to attend NHU. The three supporting themes that emerged are campus climate, collaboration, and pipeline.

*Campus Climate.* Throughout this study campus climate emerged quite often. What is meant by “campus climate”? M.J. Chang provides a definition for campus climate. Chang states (Chang in press), “campus climate is a measure---real or perceived---of the campus environment as it relates to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions. In a healthy climate, individuals and groups generally feel welcomed, respected, and valued by the university” (p. 2). Chang adds (Chang in press), “not all aspects of a healthy climate necessarily feel positive---indeed, uncomfortable or challenging situations can lead to increased awareness, understanding, and appreciation” (p. 2). Some of the student participants talked about how comfortable the campus felt to them. While other student participants expressed their initial feeling of uneasiness of NHU’s campus climate but eventually they experienced a welcoming campus climate at NHU. Sam referred to her experience at NHU as being at home. Jorge said that he liked the “laid back” atmosphere that he felt at NHU; Tia even noticed an evolution on the campus. While Veronica’s initial reaction about NHU’s campus was that she felt like it was in the middle of no-where. She was willing to ignore her initial reaction and

eventually came to the realization that the location of the school is not in the middle of no-where, and the campus climate was inviting and friendly.

The contribution that the different minority programs such as Black Pride Week, Black Issues Forum, STARTS, NEW STARTS, Lorenzo DeZavala (LDZ) and other programs are coordinated through the office of admissions and their administrators. The number of first-generation non-majority students who attend and participate in these programs is an indication of the commitment and effectiveness of the admissions office at NHU in their university's quest to achieve a diverse student body. Campus climate is a multifaceted reflection and manifestation of diversity. Campus climate is about moving beyond the numbers (Hurtado, 2007). According to Chang (Chang, in press), "the very presence of individuals from different backgrounds result in diversity. Climate, on the other hand, refers to the experience of the individuals and groups on a campus---and the quality and extent of the interaction between those various groups and individuals" (p. 4). Addressing climate benefits all campus community members, not just historically under-represented students, faculty, and staff. Research shows that a hostile campus climate directly impacts a student's ability to transition successfully into college (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson & Allen, 1999). In an unhealthy climate, students are less likely to adjust academically and are less likely to develop a sense of belonging on the campus. Furthermore, positive inter-group interactions affect academic outcomes positively. Research demonstrates the link between climate and educational outcomes for both minority and for majority students (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005). Patricia Gurin, Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan states "a racially and ethnically diverse university student body has far-ranging and significant benefits for all students, non-

minorities and minorities alike. Students learn better in such an environment and are better prepared to become active participants in our pluralistic, democratic society once they leave school. In fact, patterns of racial segregation and separation historically rooted in our national life can be broken by diversity experiences in higher education”(Gurin, 1999).

The climate of a campus directly impacts student learning, and therefore the very mission of the university. Similarly, climate impacts the recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty, and staff (Chang, in press).

*Collaboration.* Collaboration was another supporting theme that emerged. The continued work of organizations and programs such as Upward Bound, National Hispanic Institute, and the various regional high schools that were designated to be involved, combined to give minority students an experience of college life. The collaboration was a good resource to provide students with information that they may not have on their own. This theme became evident in what the administrators were striving for in accomplishing their university’s diversity goal of achieving a more diverse student population. University-school outreach partnerships provide important opportunities where staff, faculty, and administrators of all institutions benefit by sharing resources and working together to increase the participation of minority students in higher education (Martin, 1999). According to Martin (1999), an effort to provide outreach services between kindergarten, grade school, high school, and college that are continued throughout the student’s academic progression allows encouragement to pursue a college degree at every level of educational attainment (p. 4). An example is the Brainpower Connection, an ongoing partnership between staff at Incarnate Wood College (San Antonio, TX) and the

local high school, grade school, and kindergarten within the same community. This project is designed to provide support and encouragement for students (many who will be first-generation non-majority college students) to complete high school and enter higher education (Rose, 1993). According to Dr. Louis J. Agnese Jr., President, University of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas “this program proved to be a win-win situation. Hispanic student enrollment increased 155 % over the past 12 years ” (p. 10).

Private philanthropists and private entities established early intervention programs as another form of collaboration. There are two similar programs that were founded between 25 – 45 years ago that are still operative. *A Better Chance* was created in 1964 by 23 independent schools to focus on improving the enrollment of minority high school students in academically challenging public and private schools across the United States. Since 1964, *A Better Chance* has been transforming lives through educational opportunities. And the promise is being realized—nearly 12,000 students have completed its program. One of the most successful private programs, established by Eugene Lang in 1981, is the *I Have A Dream Foundation (IHAD)*, which was established in 63 cities, serving over 13,000 students. Since then, 199 “I Have A Dream” programs have operated in 27 States, Washington D.C., and New Zealand, together serving over 15,000 students. *IHAD* programs are designed to provide academic support, mentors, guidance counseling, and financial assistance for students to graduate from high school and pursue employment or higher education. In addition to *A Better Chance* and *I Have A Dream Foundation*, many other foundations, community groups, businesses, and professional, civic, and service organizations also are involved actively in the coordination, planning, and funding of early intervention programs.

Other programs involving collaboration are the Federal, state, and local governments attempt to assist in the goals of helping minorities. Congress established the National Early Intervention Scholarship Program (NEISP) as part of the 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act that provided funding to states for early intervention programs specifically targeting low-income students. In order for students to receive financial assistance, they had to participate in student support services, which include tutoring, mentoring, summer programs, academic advising and development, and student employment. In 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act established the GEAR-UP program which retained most of the components of NEISP and, in addition, provided services for lower-income students as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> grade (Martin, 1999).

Early intervention programs have played a very important and significant role in providing services particularly for minority youth. As the participation rates of Black American and Latino students continue to increase, the services that will guide them towards successful entrance and transition to college life will be key determinants for student retention (Brewer, 1990). Early intervention programs can provide college preparation for more Black American, Latino, Asian, and Native American students to meet the criteria of the more selective public flagship and private institutions (Wild & Wilson, 1998).

*Pipeline.* The emergence of the path minority students traveled from high school to college has been a factor in the effectiveness the admissions office administrators has utilized in their university's strategic plan to achieve a diverse student body. The office of admissions has implemented pre-collegiate programs to assist non-majority students to succeed. The office of admissions is working diligently to create new partnerships and

maintain the partnership established with the present schools in different regions of the United States to enhance the awareness and opportunity that New Hope University has to offer. Early intervention programs and continual collaboration with federal, state, local Governments, along with private philanthropists and private entities, businesses, community groups, and professional and civic, and service organizations are excellent pipeline sources to direct and assist first-generation non-majority students towards institutions of higher education.

As I started this study, I was under the impression that NHU was not diverse enough and that the office of admissions was not doing an effective job. This study has helped me become aware that my initial impression about the office of admissions not doing an effective job in trying to achieve a diverse student body is incorrect. Through the information and emergence of themes from the rich description of the participants' passion and dedication to the goal of working for improving diversity in this campus community became evident. I now understand that due to the wide disparity in graduation rates of White and minority students, and the large difference among racial and ethnic groups in the percentage of students who leave high school eligible for 2 or 4 year college admission in this mid-western state contribute to the deficient number of eligible minority students who are seniors in high school cannot be held against the school or its admission staff. I have found in my research that these two problems along with other problems exist nationwide. When there are only 2 % eligible Black high school seniors available and NHU has 1.8 % Black enrollment, this may be an indication that the admission officials at NHU are effective and are utilizing all the resources that they have.

The few number of non-majority students on campus led to some student participants feeling of being socially isolated. Tia states “when I first got here there weren’t many African American students that were noticeable.” Veronica acknowledges that she was startled because of the lack noticeable non-majority students she almost felt like she was a deer looking in the headlights of a car.

The stress of racial tension and inadequate social lives borne by Black students in White schools generates feelings of alienation that often lead to serious adjustment problems. These stresses lead to psychological withdrawal that impairs academic functioning. The factors that provide a positive climate at predominately Black colleges are largely absent or unavailable to Black students in White schools. Consequently, Black students perform below ability levels (Fleming, 1984, p.3).

The number of academically eligible minority students is at a level that is unacceptable in some academic experts’ opinions. Due to the small number of eligible minority students available on the national, state, or local level this dilemma creates difficulties for PWI’s to meet some of their institutions diversity goals. Allen (1998) determined that Black students had higher attrition rates, weaker educational backgrounds, less satisfactory relationships with faculty, lower grade point averages, and lower enrollments in post-graduate programs. These factors were attributed to the fact that “Black students experience considerable difficulty making adjustments to an environment which is culturally different, academically demanding, and socially alienating” (Allen, 1998, p. 96).

At the time of this study, there was little, if any, data explaining why first-generation non-majority students chose to attend a predominately White institution. It is

extremely difficult then to gather and analyze information about first-generation non-majority students who chose to attend a predominately White institution such as New Hope University.

In light of the three supporting themes of campus climate, collaboration, and pipeline that emerged from the participants. Student participants' responses to interview questions generated four more areas of interest. Student participants seemed to have an overall positive experience: they felt the encouragement and support from their mom, dad, and teachers, and peers; they felt a need to be close to home and family; they recognized that the existence of different advocacy offices was an important factor; and they decided to attend this university because the university offered the academic major that each one wanted to pursue.

Throughout my study some of the student participants alluded to the importance of having the support from their mom, dad, teachers, and peers. The following statements from the student participants demonstrate the support they received. Lisa believes she has always received inspiration from her family. Through her family's inspiration she knew even as a child what she wanted to do. Lisa recalls, if, it wasn't for her family's inspiration she may not have decided to pursue college or a higher education. Tia admits that because her mom did not go to college, she received encouragement, inspiration and support for her efforts to go to college and strive for a higher education. Veronica believes that it really wasn't a big deal for her to go to college from her family's viewpoint. But she realized some of her high school teachers were concerned about her lack of interest in going to college. Veronica's high school teachers encouraged her and stressed to her that she had the ability and intelligence to go a long way. Veronica freely

admits that know that she in college her mom and dad are very supportive. And that her dad is very excited and praise her all the time for making the decision to go to college. Jorge believes that his mom wanted him to go to college more than anything else in the world. She passed on to him the importance of what an opportunities a college education could possibly bring. His mom is a great inspiration for him.

Although there is no connection to my literature review, I feel the participants' responses were a very good indicator about how important the support and encouragement that they received from their families and teachers were to them. One participant had not even thought about attending college until she received encouragement and a "wake-up" call from her high school teachers. The other participants seemed very humbled about how their families viewed the importance for them to go to college.

The second area of interest to emerge along with the major core themes and supporting themes for some of the student participants was to stay close to home, but not too close. Jorge admitted that he was looking for a college close to home. He liked the idea of being able to go home on the weekends or once a month without traveling a great distance. Tia on the other hand investigated and visited several colleges and universities on the east coast of the United States. But she chose NHU because she wanted to be away from home but yet close enough to where she could visit home without too much travel. Sam also visited several colleges and universities around the United States. She admits to choosing NHU because it put both her and her parents in a position where they were most comfortable in. Sam also acknowledged that her parents really wanted her to stay in the state in which NHU is located.

There were several opportunities for these participants to go to other schools out of the mid-western region. But they chose to stay within the state for the convenience of being able to go home when they wanted. My perception of their decision to stay close was an implied demonstration of being independent because they chose to stay close to home but not live at home. Another example of their independence would be their opportunity to choose when to visit home.

Another area of interest to emerge was the student participant's recognition of the value of having different advocacy offices available for them. Lisa believes that such organizations like the Black Student Services, El Centro and other ethnic services and advocacy centers has helped her and her friends adjust to college life. Lisa asserts that these centers and services are a good resource for minorities. Tia is an active participant in the Black Student Services. By being an active participant she feels like she is providing support to the Black student. Tia asserts that the advocacy centers are very important because they provide support to the minority students. NHU was on the top of Veronica's list because of the Hispanic student population. She points out that when she first arrived on campus she thought NHU was in the middle of nowhere and she felt a little out of place. She explained that once she discovered El Centro, which is the Hispanic student advocacy center, she felt at home. Jorge asserts that the advocacy centers definitely try to make their presence known. He told me that each advocacy center has research leaders that visit dormitories and use e-mail to make their presence felt. Jorge feels the different advocacy centers and in particular El Centro do a good job in making their presence felt to the minority student population.

The student participants voiced their gratification over the importance of having a network of advocacy offices. Having these offices available to them for support and a place to go and socialize with their own ethnic group seemed to be a key factor to them. My perception is that some participants were a little frustrated because of the lack of participation that some members of their ethnic group has demonstrated towards the different advocacy offices.

The final area of interest to emerge was the academic offerings at New Hope University. New Hope University offered the major fields of study these students wanted. Veronica describes one of her reasons for choosing NHU was because of the academic fields offered at this institution. As we talked, she mentioned that when she first arrived on NHU's campus she had not decided on a major. NHU provided an option of studying under an undeclared major or an open field option that certainly appealed to her and provided her with a sense of ease. Variety seemed to feel that NHU was really trying to progress and open up more areas of academic study. She feels due to the progression of adapting to academic needs NHU is a very good school. Tia asserts that a reason why she decided to attend NHU was because of the communications program available. She conveyed to me that the communications program at NHU would help evolve and improve her writing skills. Lisa describes her academics as being the most important thing to her. She indicated to me that she knew NHU was the right school for her because during her research she found that NHU has a very good program in the field of study she wanted to pursue which is communications and computer science. And Sam shared with me that she thought NHU's campus was amazing and NHU has a very good academic program in her field of study which bio-chem.

Reflecting on my experience. Making a decision to attend a specific school can be very trying. Knowing that college has an academic program that will fit students' needs and expectations is very rewarding and comforting. From the voices of the participants it is clear that the academic programs offered at NHU had a positive impact on their consideration and decision to attend NHU.

### Implications

The information presented in this study illustrates that campus diversity and a positive campus climate provide an environment that is conducive to attracting more first-generation non-majority students. This illustration is made possible through the use of the several different minority programs and advocacy offices. This illustrates the effort that New Hope University's administrators put into creating a diverse campus, which can provide educational benefits for all students, no matter what their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual preference, or gender. I have found that what New Hope University's admission administrators are doing is in accordance with many other colleges and universities. The information should accelerate a renewed look at ways colleges and universities can increase diversity on their respective campuses.

What are the implications? Implications are that if colleges and universities want a diverse campus and the campus is racially and ethnically diverse there are far-ranging and meaningful benefits for all students, non-minorities and minorities alike. Students learn better in such an environment and are better prepared to become active participants in our society (Gurin, 1999). There are certain programs and procedures that should be implemented that have proven to be successful at New Hope University. But there may

be certain programs and procedures that colleges and universities might do that New Hope University have found to not be successful.

Another implication is that colleges and universities need minority programs to help in recruitment and show casing their campuses. But, they must be careful that students do not get the idea that this representation of the campus is the true racial make up of the university. Another implication is for the university or its representative not to dupe the students. What I mean my duping the student is that the university or its representative should try with all earnest not to indirectly misrepresent the true make up of the campus to new incoming first-generation non-majority students. The last implication is that some students chose New Hope University because the institution is close to home for students who reside in the mid-western region of the United States.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

Findings from my study demonstrated a need for further research. I suggest two topics that could expand my study.

First, research is needed to explore why there is a continual systematic academic short fall that takes place among the non-majority high school students. Second, research is needed to examine if demographics has a part in the systematic problem. Third, research is also needed in determining why there is such a large gap between the White students to minority student high school graduation rate. Fourth, research is needed to discover why there is such a wide gap in White student to minority student in 2 or 4-year college preparation readiness. Fifth, future research is needed in these areas of concern so that it may help to alleviate these short falls in the United States.

Sixth, research is needed to conduct an in depth study as to why first-generation non-majority students chose to go to a predominately White land grant institution instead of going to a historically Black college or university. Within this study research should discover whether or not first-generation non-majority students have any knowledge or information about Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).

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