

A STUDY OF WHY A SELECT GROUP OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS PERSISTED TO BACCALAUREATE ATTAINMENT

ABSTRACT

Based on Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure, this dissertation presents the findings of original research into the factors that influenced the baccalaureate degree attainment of a group of African American Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) students. Several members of this group of participants were surveyed and interviewed to determine why they, unlike many other traditional-aged African American students at predominantly white colleges and universities, persisted to baccalaureate degree attainment. The survey and interview questions used in this study were constructed using factors that Tinto (1993) and other researchers identified as influencing persistence. The research results indicated that these participants attributed their enrollment and persistence to degree attainment primarily to the encouragement and support of their parents. The influence provided by faculty as parental surrogates was a secondary source of encouragement. The results of this study support the prior research regarding the important role parents and faculty play in academic engagement and degree attainment but draw into question the benefits of peer interaction and institutional behaviors on baccalaureate degree attainment for these African American students.