

Exploring the Academic and Social Transition Experiences of
Ethnic Minority Graduate Students

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ABSTRACT

Despite gains made in the educational attainment of ethnic minorities, members of these groups remain underrepresented in higher education. Fewer numbers of minorities at the undergraduate level translates into fewer minority students eligible to pursue graduate and professional degrees. As such, institutions of higher education have begun to recognize the importance of not only ensuring that minority students earn bachelor's degrees, but that they are prepared for success in graduate school. Graduate school preparation programs (GSPPs) were created to improve access, retention, and graduation rates among groups underrepresented in higher education, and prepare them for transition to graduate study. To date, however little research has been conducted to see if GSPPs actually assist minority students in making that transition.

This study explored the academic and social transition experiences of minority students to graduate school and analyzed the differences in transition by race (Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaskan Native), type of GSPP experience (no program, research-only program, graduate/professional school seminars only, holistic program), and duration of experience (less than six weeks during summer, 7-12 weeks during summer, summer and academic year). The study employed a national sample of 621 ethnic minority graduate students at nine research extensive universities. Data were collected using the Minority Graduate Student Experiences Survey (MGSES), a 77-item instrument specifically designed for this study. Items for the survey were developed utilizing existing literature on the academic and social integration experiences of graduate students.

Overall, ethnic minority graduate students reported favorable academic and social experiences but appear to be more satisfied with their academic experiences than their social experiences. No significant differences were found by race on any of the subscales on the Academic Experiences (AE) scale, however, differences did emerge between Black/African American graduate students and Hispanic/Latino graduate students on one subscale of the Social Experiences (SE) scale. Significant differences were also found by

program type and program duration on the AE and SE subscales. Finally, results indicated differences between those who reported no program involvement and those who had been involved in a program of some type on the both the AE and SE scales.

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“One’s work may be finished one day, but one’s education never.” Alexandre Dumas, pere

Love, Peace, and Blessings to All!

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