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The Minority Assistantship Program (MAP): Graduate Outcomes and Impact

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THE MINORITY ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAM (MAP):
GRADUATE OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Kenyetta Martin

August 2014

THE MINORITY ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAM (MAP):
GRADUATE OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

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This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Rosaline, and my grandmother, Mary Louise, for their love, hard work, sacrifices, and continued support throughout my entire life. To my children (Donovan, Taylor, Jeremiah, and Cole), everything that I do is for you! Always remember that challenges will come in life, but you have what it takes to overcome whatever comes your way. To my brother and sister, Lamarr and Allison, I am proud of you both and pray that you will always strive for greatness in life.

“Be resilient, feed your passion, and dare to create excellence in all things even if it must be on the margin.” Dr. Kenyetta V. Martin

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Kenyetta Martin

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Directed by: Antony D. Norman, Robert Reber, and Loretia Dye

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Western Kentucky University

This study examined the impact of the Minority Assistantship Program on program participants at a predominantly White institution (PWI) in southcentral Kentucky. A total of 103 MAP participants, 524 African American (AA) Non-MAP students, and a random sample of 103 Non-AA Graduate Assistants were studied. The main research question sought to determine any significant differences in the characteristics of the MAP participants compared to Non-MAP AA students and Non-AA Graduate Assistants. A focus group also was used to gain deeper insight into the experiences of the AA MAP program participants. Data collected on the three groups revealed that MAP students were retained and graduated at significantly higher rates than both Non-MAP AA students and Non-AA Graduate Assistants. No significant differences were found in the GPA and Time to Graduation (TTG) between MAP and the comparison groups. Focus group questions were developed to provide insight into how current students benefit from the MAP program. Five current MAP program students participated. Content analysis of focus group answers yielded the following four themes: Program Awareness, Program Benefits, Program Components, and Program Resources. Implications and recommendations for the MAP program and similar programs were made based on the results from this study.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In 1982, the state of Kentucky adopted its first statewide higher education desegregation plan designed to address creating greater access for a diverse student population in both undergraduate and graduate programs (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1982). The early stages of the plan focused on eliminating a dual segregated higher education system by giving special attention to the recruitment and mobility of African American students into traditionally White institutions in Kentucky. The Minority Assistantship Program (MAP) was implemented by public higher education institutions across Kentucky in 1998 and funded by the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) as part of the *1997-2002 Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities in Higher Education*. The MAP was put into effect to address the little progress made by Kentucky higher education institutions toward the Seven Commitments of the Plan (Committee On Equal Opportunities, 1997) and its objectives for minority graduate students. The MAP was created specifically to address Commitment #3 in the Plan: “The Council and the institutions are committed to increasing the proportion of Kentucky resident African American graduate students enrolled in higher education to the same level as the proportion of total students who receive undergraduate degrees that are Kentucky resident African Americans” (Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunity, 1993, p. 16).

As a result, one comprehensive university in southcentral Kentucky established opportunities through the MAP to provide funding for tuition costs and employment opportunities for African American (AA) students who were enrolled in any of the university’s graduate programs. Definitive records about the inception of the MAP program are no longer available, but evidence suggests that the program was directed primarily toward increasing the number of Kentucky AA graduate students.

Table 1

Kentucky Race and Education Demographics

Race	Population	Percentage	Bachelor's	Masters/Doctoral
Black	337,520	7.8%	909	313
White	3,809,956	87.8%	13,243	4,516
<i>Total</i>	<i>4,339,357</i>			

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census
 Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Comprehensive Database, 2009

Table 2

Kentucky Degrees Awarded 1999-2008

<u>Group</u>	<u>Bachelor's</u>		<u>Masters/Specialist</u>		<u>Doctoral</u>	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Black	7,713	6.78	2,369	6.25	143	6.60
White	106,113	93.22	35,537	93.75	2,025	93.40
<i>Total Degrees[†]</i>	<i>113,826</i>		<i>37,906</i>		<i>2,168</i>	

Source: Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Comprehensive Database, 2009

[†]Total Degrees reflect only a combination of Black and White for percentage comparisons.

At this particular institution, since 1998 the MAP has served 127 students, and currently (2013-2014) 14 students are receiving funding through the program. The program accepts applications in the spring of every year for fall applicants upon admission, and enrollees receive up to nine hours of paid tuition plus a monthly stipend. They must work 20 hours per week in a department on campus to be eligible for the stipend. Students can continue to receive funding for a maximum of two years, as long as they maintain a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) and enroll in at least nine hours per semester. Those students entering their last semester can take less than nine hours. Additionally, MAP recipients can receive funding for only their first graduate degree.

One of the gaps in the scholarly literature is the limited research focused on program evaluations that provide baseline data assessing minority assistantship programs, as well as their effectiveness regarding AA student retention and graduation from *graduate* programs. Most of the literature addresses AA student recruitment and retention in underrepresented doctoral disciplines (i.e., Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math [STEM] fields) (Maheshwari, Pierce, & Zapatero, 2008; Green, 2008); students' reasons for departure prior to program completion (Green, 2008; Ellis, 2001; Tierney, 1992; Tinto, 1993); evaluations of theories that apply to the culture (Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, & Smith, 2004; Merriweather-Hunn, 2008); the role of mentors in overall retention (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009; Walpole, 2008); and social experiences at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) (Barker, 2011; Torres & Massey, 2012; Felder & Barker, 2014). In order to fully address the issue of advancing efforts to offer equal educational access for AA *graduate* students, a concerted effort must be made to accurately assess the current programs, in particular the status of the students currently enrolled and overall program effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

Efforts to improve minority educational representation and opportunities through intervention programs date back to the 1960s. The federal government's equal opportunity programs challenged higher education institutions to recruit more AAs to enroll, with the ultimate goal of creating a pipeline of qualified AAs for government positions. Today, the federal government continues to provide leadership, at executive and judicial levels, by challenging colleges and universities to increase access and equity for AA graduate students at the graduate level. However, Conrad and Weerts (2004)

argued that government has not always had the ability to enforce transformative change as a stand-alone entity because momentous change must be carried out at the state and institutional levels.

In their review, Conrad and Weerts (2004) concluded that the federal government has worked on the issue of graduate minority enrollment and experienced some success in these efforts. However, they argued that there are cultural and structural barriers that AA students still face to gain entry into graduate school. While the agenda of equal educational access for minorities in higher education institutions called for a team effort to eliminate the vestiges of *de jure segregation* (segregation dictated by law), more attention must be focused on state and institutional accountability for creating effective programs to address the issue of the underrepresentation of AA graduate students in higher education. Admission is the first step; retention and graduation is the ultimate goal. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2013) reported that AAs represented 11.3% of the total graduate student population in public institutions. Certainly, creating a pipeline of qualified AA graduates will result in an increased overall diversity in the workplace (Cikins, 1966; Newman, 2011). As a report from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2003) contends:

Fostering diversity in the nation's institutions of higher education is a legitimate state interest in which all Americans have a stake. Historically, the Commission has found that achieving diversity in the classrooms of this nation's colleges and universities is a compelling-indeed essential-social, economic, and educational goal. With a growing percentage of minorities making up the working population, the nation's economic vitality will depend on how well minority

youth are educated. Facing these challenges, the nation cannot afford to abandon effective admissions and recruitment programs that encourage minority students to pursue college education and enable colleges to educate students in diverse environments. (The Commission, Affirmative Action, and Current Challenges Facing Equal Opportunity in Education, para. 12)

This statement holds true for both undergraduate and graduate populations.

Unfortunately, very little research is being conducted on the impact of these programs, particularly at the graduate level. As a result, limited evidence exists of their effectiveness in moving students through the pipeline and into the work force.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the demographic and educational characteristics of MAP participants, as well as the program's impact on measures of student academic performance. The quantitative portion of the study sought to determine whether a significant difference exists between the characteristics of participants and those who did not participate in the program. These variables are important to research, as they offer insight into the performance of program students as compared to non-program students. Differences between these two groups were statistically analyzed to determine program impact.

The qualitative portion of the current study was designed to provide insight into the effectiveness of the MAP program is for AA graduate students at the institution being studied and what parts are deemed by students as most important or effective. The findings were used to highlight best practices and make recommendations for program

improvements. The study also will contribute to the current literature on minority assistantship programs and their impact on the graduation rates of AA graduate students.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to fill a gap in the literature in regard to an intervention program for AA graduate students and its impact on student success and ultimately graduation. Thus, to guide this study the following general research question was used: Does the MAP program have an impact on its participants? More specifically, the following questions guided particular aspects of the research:

1. Who are the MAP's participants?
 - a. What are the demographics of MAP participants (Graduate GPA, Gender, 1st Generation, and Time to Degree Completion)?
 - b. How do the demographic characteristics of participants compare to other eligible AA non-participants?
 - c. What degree programs do most MAP and AA Non-MAP students complete?
2. Do MAP participants benefit from participation in the program?
 - a. Are there significant differences in the graduate GPA, retention, graduation rate, and time to degree completion of the MAP participants as compared to similar AA graduate students who do not participate in the MAP services (e.g., non-program graduate students, non-program graduate students with graduate assistantships)?
 - b. Are there significant differences in the graduate GPA, retention, graduation rate, and time to degree completion of MAP participants as

compared to non-AA graduate students who received graduate assistantships?

- c. What do MAP participants say about the benefits the program has afforded them?

Significance of the Study

Minority student enrollment in the nation's graduate schools has shown some increase; however, the bigger, and equally challenging, issue appears to be ensuring that those students complete the degrees (Baird, 1993; Brown, 2005; Most, 2008).

Intervention programs were designed to increase the number of AA students who enroll *and* complete graduate degrees in colleges and universities, specifically at PWIs. The overall goal of these programs is to fulfill the federal agenda of providing equal access to all individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity, and to provide more diversity in the pipeline for workforce positions. Merriweather-Hunn (2008) noted that AA students must experience greater success at the institutions where they enroll. To this end, higher education practitioners and scholars must recognize that, "The entry doors have been pried open by victories in the courtroom, but the exit doors seem to be stuck" (p. 2). If the doors remain "stuck," the ultimate goal of these programs remains unmet.

This research was designed to discover the impact of MAP on its student participants. As a measure of program evaluation, the results provide recommendations for improving the goals and outcomes of the program. This research also offers insight regarding the type of students who are participating in the program; which degrees they are seeking; and specifically, what degree areas are underrepresented and may need more recruitment focus. Finally, understanding how this program impacts AA student success

will improve the program and also fill a gap in the literature focused on graduate AA students and graduate intervention programs.

Limitations

This study was limited to one program at one public university in southcentral Kentucky. Results may not be generalizable to other types of institutions or even public institutions in other parts of the country. The quantitative student data were culled from only the 127 students who have participated in the Minority Assistantship Program at the comprehensive university in which the study was conducted. All AA students who are enrolled at this university did not participate in the MAP program and/or did not participate in the study. The qualitative portion of the study was focused on students currently receiving assistance from the MAP program. Only a small sample of AA students (5) was used to participate in a focus group, and their responses cannot be generalized to all students who participated in the program. The findings of this study are intended to offer insight on the effectiveness of the current program and identify areas that might need improvement. Finally, this study contributes to the limited information available in the literature regarding the evaluation and effectiveness of graduate minority assistantship programs.

Definition of Terms

Graduate Assistantship (GA) Award. An award granted to a graduate student that covers all or part of tuition costs and requires the student to work a set number of hours a week in a designated department on campus. Typically, the student works in the department associated with the student's selected degree program.

Minority Assistantship Program (MAP) Award. An award granted to African American graduate students that covers tuition costs and provides a stipend for students who work a minimum of 20 hours a week in a department on campus. Although MAP is referred to as a program, beyond tuition and stipend, no other special events and supports are provided to MAP students.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). An institution developed to educate AA students and, before desegregation, served as the only postsecondary option (Nelson-Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes, 2007).

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). An institution with a student population that is primarily White (Kim, 2002).

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the study, provided some background and rationale for the importance of the study, and provided the research questions that will guide the study. The next chapter provides a review of the literature surrounding the history of AA access to higher education and current research concerning minority assistance programs.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this review is to (a) provide a lens through which to understand the experiences and challenges of African American students in graduate school; (b) present an historical overview of the pathways to higher education for African Americans (AA); (c) discuss the role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the American educational system; (d) synthesize the literature related to the retention, recruitment, and attrition of AA graduate students, and (e) provide an historical overview of AA intervention programs on both the graduate and undergraduate level. It is important to note that the investigation of undergraduate intervention programs is not the focus of the study; however, some similarities mirror the structure of graduate intervention programs.

This literature review is designed to paint a picture of the educational opportunities afforded AA students and to provide insight into the issue of the equal education access agenda of the government and higher education institutions. Additionally, it will present research on AA student graduation rates in graduate and professional studies. Limited research is available that discusses the overall impact of intervention programs designed to increase the retention and graduation rate of AA graduate students. Such information would offer insight for administrators and program coordinators who are held accountable for designing and implementing intervention programs in an effort to support the equal education access agenda set forth by the federal government.

A review of the research revealed that studies exist that are focused on programs designed to recruit and retain AA students in advanced degree programs and disciplines

where they have historically been underrepresented (specifically doctoral programs and the STEM disciplines); factors that contribute to the graduation and retention of AA students in graduate school; theories to help explain the attrition rates of AA students in graduate schools; socialization factors that enhance the graduate school experience; and the impact of faculty and staff as mentors on the overall success rate in both programs and student academic achievement.

Beeler's Graduate Student Adjustment to Academic Life Perspective

Perhaps a good way to understand the experiences of AA students as they enter and attempt to complete their graduate education experience is through the theoretical work of Beeler (1991) on graduate student adjustment to academic life. Beeler (1991) postulated four stages of adjustment to academic work experienced by graduate students: (a) unconscious incompetence, (b) conscious in competence, (c) unconscious competence, and (d) conscious competence. Each stage is discussed in detail as follows.

Stage I – Unconscious Incompetence: Students in this stage have limited ideas concerning what will happen, and they “do not know what they do not know.” Feelings of isolation were related to this stage because students were new to the demands of this new culture, and the feelings of being academically underprepared left them feeling alone.

Stage II – Conscious Incompetence: Students in this stage begin to consciously accept that they possibly do not have what it takes to perform, and at this point they “know they do not know.” The “We Stand Out” theme was directly related to students’ feeling as though others were aware of what they perceived as their own academic shortcomings.

Stage III – Unconscious Competence: By this stage, students begin to sense their competence but are still very unaware that it really exists. During this phase students “do not know they know.” In this stage students receive positive feedback from peers or professors regarding their degree of competence. As a result, students begin to feel as though they are prepared to survive on this academic level and produce acceptable graduate level work.

Stage IV - Conscious Competence: Students in this stage have established scholarly credibility and “they know they know.” Students have discovered out how to navigate the system in the new academic environment.

Lewis et al. (2004) conducted a qualitative study, using Beeler’s (1991) framework, detailing the experiences of AA Ph.D. students at a Carnegie Research Predominantly White Institution (PWI). The participants in the study were either recent graduates deemed “successful” or current Ph.D. students in the education discipline. The authors were attempting to answer the following question: What were the lived experiences and barriers to completion for the AA Ph.D. students at the PWI Research I institution? “The key themes that arose from the study were feelings of isolation, we stand out, relationships with peers, and negotiating the system” (p. 2). Lewis et al. (2004) proffered that the findings revealed the overarching theme that AA students felt like “uninvited guest in a strange land” (p. 12) during their higher education journey. Students were responsible for navigating the system to find their own networking and faculty connections. Despite the fact that the university they attended had a campus culture dedicated to diversity in their student population, many students indicated the presence of feelings of isolation. This was mainly attributed to the lack of programs to

assist students after enrollment. The authors also noted that, while there were no programs in place, the university had a large enough number of minorities to create informal cohorts designed to aid AA students with social integration into the campus culture. In conclusion, the findings of this study provide supportive evidence that speaks to the validity of Beeler's (1991) graduate student adjustment framework.

Historical Overview of Educational Opportunities for AA Students

The arduous journey of seeking access to equal education opportunities continues to present AA students with new challenges, making it difficult to measure true progress. Brock (2010) asserted that access to higher education has increased, but some racial and ethnic groups remain underrepresented. In order to have a clear understanding of the difficult road to equal education opportunities, it is critical to bring to light the past events that shaped the current higher education culture for AAs.

Dating back to the 1800s education for AAs was kept a secret from society, and any of them found reading or writing faced severe consequences. Thus, they had to seek creative ways to learn to read and write, such as hiding in the woods or sneaking off the plantation late at night to attend a private school held by their own people (Williams, 2009). During a time when judicial decisions created an environment that enforced slavery, lynching, hanging, and burning of AAs, it was a reality that they would need to provide for their own education. After the Civil War, AA parents fought for schools and educational equity by petitioning the government, participating in demonstrations, and even resorting to lawsuits (Siddle Walker, 1998). Following their efforts, schools were built and funded by AA parents and a private philanthropic foundation. This was the beginning of segregated schools. During this time, AA schools were not supported as

much as the White schools because the White Americans believed the AA community contributed too little to the tax base (Anderson, 1988). Additionally, they felt that industrial training should be the focus of the curriculum rather than the traditional curriculum in White schools.

By the end of the 1930s, the AA community experienced urbanization, migration, and occupational opportunities that created a new social and economic class within the community (Fultz, 1995). The new social class was referred to as the “Black middle class and professional group.” This new group of AAs was different because they pressed issues surrounding education, self-help, social uplift, and solidarity for the AA race (Meier, 1962). One of the necessary terms for the co-existence of Black and White America was equal treatment for Black colleges and universities. In 1918, W.E.B Dubois made the following remark regarding Blacks in higher education: “If the Negro is to survive in this world as a man of thought and power, a co-worker with the leading races in civilization, a free, independent citizen of a modern democracy, then the foundations for this must be laid in the Negro University” (as cited in Fultz, 1995).

The concept of the Negro University has now evolved into the plural term, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), many of which formed prior to 1890. As a result of slavery and segregation, which prevented Blacks from participating in White education systems, these institutions were created to provide collegiate education to AAs (Wilson, 1988). HBCUs, discussed in more detail later, became a pivotal centerpiece in AA communities, and for many it was viewed as an avenue to level the playing field in regard to higher education. Brown and Davis (2001) posited that, in the past, HBCUs acted as a “social equalizer” for all who were not allowed to participate

in society and denied access to equal educational opportunities. Additionally, the General Education Board (a philanthropic agency that financially supported educational institutions) pushed more for industrial education rather than of higher education; which therefore, resulted in lack of financial support for HBCUs (Fultz, 1995).

A landmark event for AA education occurred in 1954, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* that separate educational facilities were unconstitutional (Conrad & Shrode, 1990). Shortly after the Supreme Court ruling, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that restricted funding to schools and colleges that denied equal educational opportunities to all Americans. The equal education opportunities agenda continued to be a struggle until the 1992 *United States v. Fordice* case that changed the higher education landscape by eliminating the vestiges of de jure segregation. The policy, not only focused on public institutions in Mississippi, but eventually addressed the desegregation policies of other states.

The pursuit of higher education continues to be a constant conversation in American discourse. America's political and economic thought leaders often contend that the pursuit of a higher education is the way in which individuals can acquire more human and social capital to advance their personal and career goals (Malveaux, 2003). One key strategy to obtaining these specific goals, for many Americans, has been through the acquisition of higher education degrees. Specifically, a focus from a number of key stakeholders has been on increasing the number of AA undergraduates and graduate students obtaining degrees. While a number of studies have focused on the number of AA undergraduate students obtaining degrees, limited scholarly research has focused on the graduation rate of AA graduate students in higher education. According to Aud, Fox,

and Kewalramani (2010), African Americans were awarded 6% of doctoral degrees in 2007. However, true success in college, as measured by retention and completion, presents a fair share of the challenges faced on both undergraduate and graduate levels (Brock, 2010).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

While HBCUs are outside of the scope of this research, it is important to note their historical contributions to AA education. Until the 20th century, HBCUs made up 90% of the enrollment of AA students in higher education (Kim & Conrad, 2006). The enrollment numbers were mainly undergraduate students because HBCUs did not have graduate programs. The U.S. Department of Education Office For Civil Rights (1991) states:

The addition of graduate programs, mostly at public HBCUs, reflected three Supreme Court decisions in which the "separate but equal" principle of Plessy was applied to graduate and professional education. The decisions stipulated: (1) a state must offer schooling for Blacks as soon as it provided it for Whites (Sinuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma, 1948); (2) Black students must receive the same treatment as White students (MacLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents, 1950); and (3) a state must provide facilities of comparable quality for Black and White students (Sweatt v. Painter, 1950). Black students increasingly were admitted to traditionally White graduate and professional schools if their program of study was unavailable at HBCUs. In effect, desegregation in higher education began at the post-baccalaureate level. (para. 10)

Thus, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (1996), during the 1960s when colleges were mandated to desegregate, the enrollment of AAs in HBCUs decreased to 17%. Even with the decrease in enrollment, HBCUs continued to play a vital role in increasing the number of college students, more specifically students who might not otherwise obtain a college degree (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). NCES (2005) reported that, of the 52,631 earned doctoral degrees, AA students accounted for 3,056 of the degrees, and HBCUs accounted for 434 of doctoral degrees obtained by AA students.

Recruitment and Retention of AA Graduate Students

While significant research exists on the recruitment, retention, and graduation of AA undergraduates (Campbell & Mislavy, 2013; Carter, 2006; Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2013), fewer studies have examined similar issues as they pertain to AA graduate students. Although research is limited on the experiences of AA graduate students in general, some prevalent studies address persistence in doctoral programs, recruitment, and retention in underrepresented disciplines; socialization factors that influence persistence; and the role of faculty/staff mentorship (Ellis, 2001; Maton, Hrabowski, & Schmitt, 2000; Morehouse & Dawkins, 2006). In fact, a current survey of the literature demonstrates a gap (from 1999 to 2005) in research addressing African American students in graduate education. Additionally, a limited amount of current research assesses minority assistantship programs for graduate students. To that end, most of the more contemporary (2005 to present) research has been in attrition, recruitment, and retention of AA graduate students in STEM fields.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2005), AAs continue to be underrepresented in colleges and universities. The Council of Graduate Schools

(2003a) submits that inclusive campuses enrich the academic environment and promote student success. Furthermore, more minority assistantship program assessments and evaluation research are needed to provide insight into the factors that contribute to AA student retention and recruitment into graduate schools.

Bowie, Cherry, and Wooding (2005) conducted an empirical study that examined the Enrollment Decision Factors (EDFs) of AA social work students. The study revealed that the strongest factors for AA students when considering graduate school were (a) the number of minority students and minority faculty; and (b) individuals who had a great deal of influence such as family members, professors, and practitioners in their discipline. This study was particularly important as many AA students attend PWI's for graduate school.

Forray and Goodnight (2014) interviewed 292 minorities to investigate their reasons for selecting to pursue a doctoral business degree and to gather a list of factors that delayed the decision for those who have not yet applied. The results indicated that mentorship, as early as undergraduate, played a key role in the decision-making process. It also was important to have representation of minority faculty to assist with recruitment and retention of minority students. The study noted that business doctoral programs are failing to fully reach or enroll the increasing number of potential minorities that are graduating with a master's degree in a business discipline. According to the study, this is a major issue for the business discipline, as it serves as a direct pipeline to faculty positions.

Milano's (2014) study of the PhD Project reached similar conclusions. The project was launched in 1994 to "address the severe under-representation of African

Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans in business-especially finance- by diversifying the front of the classroom and the business school faculty” (p. 29) and to ultimately increase the number of minorities in corporate jobs. Prior to the existence of the PhD Project, the few minorities who pursued faculty positions in a business discipline felt as though there were no networking opportunities, no co-authorships, or minority mentors to assist with navigating the higher education system. Milano found that those who have participated in the project benefited greatly and were able to successfully conduct research and land faculty positions in the business discipline. Last, the study found that the Ph.D Project was a great benefit to all people regardless of ethnicity.

Quarterman (2008) conducted a qualitative study to identify the barriers to successful recruitment and retention of a diverse graduate student population at PWIs, and the successful strategies perceived by administrators. The prevalent themes that emerged as successful retention methods were faculty role models and mentors, financial resources, and methods put in place to ensure that students reach a certain level of mastery in their subject matter. The barriers to retention that emerged were consistent with literature regarding students feeling alienated, isolated, and submerged in a non-supportive environment (Ellis, 2001; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009).

Doctoral student attrition rates have been an ongoing issue dating back to the early 1970s (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992), during a time when major Supreme Court decisions opened doors of equal access into higher education for all students regardless of race. Historically, doctoral programs have dealt with high attrition rates, and it has been even more challenging for specific programs such as humanities (Groen, Jakubson, Ehrenberg, Condie, & Liu, 2008), which the authors note as having the highest attrition

rates. For example, in his review of attrition issues at Pennsylvania State University, Wilson (2012) postulated that, although students could have selected humanities fields, eventually many of these were dropped because students were choosing options that had the highest rate of employability (i.e., based on the number of students who were able to obtain employment).

According to Groen et al. (2008), in 1991 the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funded the \$58 million Graduate Education Initiative (GEI) designed to improve the structure and organization of humanities Ph.D. programs and, in particular, to decrease attrition and time-to-degree completion for graduate students. The GEI program was a unique intervention program that focused on funding departments rather supporting individual students because earlier intervention programs that focused solely on providing funding for minority students, such as the Ford Foundation and the National Science Foundation, did not indicate a significant impact on decreasing time to completion or attrition (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). The GEI program required universities to develop a plan in line with the objectives of the Melon Foundation to improve doctoral completion rates in order to receive funding.

Groen et al. (2008) analyzed 10 years of data to determine the impact of the GEI initiative. “As of the study, the researchers conducted a survey that focused on obtaining information on how students viewed their program, department, experiences in the program, and workforce opportunities after completion of the program” (p. 136). The instrument was developed using the improvement plans and focused heavily on the promised changes and actual changes of each university who received awards.

The findings of the survey suggested that there were reduced attrition rates and improvements in the time to degree, but they were mainly attributed to the changes that each department made to improve their program. For example, a greater impact was found from those departments that provided students with clarity and encouraged them to complete the dissertation in a timely manner. In fact, the authors suggested that deans and administrators can glean from this finding the importance of all programs having a clear vision and expectations. The most impactful facets of programs included advising, clarity in degree completion expectation, and progress expectation. Finally, the most valuable nugget that can be gained from the findings is that the suggested changes are relatively low cost.

Based on the annual reports received from all partnering institutions, comprised of detailed information on student progress, attrition and time-to-degree completion were noted as indicators of effectiveness. The findings of the study also revealed several contributing factors as reasons that students leave doctoral programs before program completion. The factors listed were: (a) proliferation of courses, (b) elaborate and conflicting requirements, (c) intermittent supervision, (d) epistemological disagreement on fundamentals, and (e) inadequate funding. It also found that the GEI program had a significant impact on student outcomes, including decreased attrition and time-to-degree completion rates and an overall increase in completion rates of graduate students.

Of particular importance to the present study is that one of the reasons students left these programs was related to financial issues. Furthermore, the GEI results indicated that increased financial aid had the greatest impact on lowering the student attrition rate. Yet, the Groen et al. (2008) results do not suggest that attrition is solely affected by

financial constraints, as there were students who, even with financial resources, chose to leave programs for other reasons.

Ali and Kohun (2007) asserted that feelings of isolation directly impact the high attrition rates of doctoral programs. The authors further explained that isolation occurs at different stages of the doctoral program. Moreover, isolation is experienced in different ways, depending upon the stage of students in the program. The process is divided into four stages, and it is important to divide the stages to show the role of confusion and miscommunication in the isolation feelings of doctoral students. The first phase is preadmission to enrollment; during this stage students enroll or begin the program with unclear expectations about processes and procedures. The second phase is the first year of the program, which includes difficulties with adjusting to the demands of the new journey requiring students to use a different set of intellectual skills. The third phase is the second year through candidacy. During this phase students have a qualifying or comprehensive exam and possibly proposal defense, which are viewed as two major hurdles. The final stage is the dissertation stage, which is noted by the authors as “complicated, long, and daunting” (p. 26).

Even though there are four stages in which isolation is felt differently, the final suggested solutions as counter measures sound reasonable and easy to implement. Ali and Kohun (2007) offered two ways to decrease feelings of isolation among doctoral students- clarify the requirements and include social support. The counter measure suggested for the first phase is to ensure that the requirements for completing the program are clear, and an orientation session was suggested as a way to offer clarity. For the second phase, increasing student interaction with faculty and staff would help to address

challenges for both types of students (those who are familiar with academia and those who are possibly first generation). The second phase is considered the stage where students are expected to work alone; however, cohort models and sessions supervised by faculty serve as a positive method to ease the anxiety and feelings of isolation at this stage of the process. Last, the dissertation stage requires more measures of support. The suggestion has been made that a model that clearly states steps to completion allows students to obtain feedback on their work, and cohorts also would be effective counter measures.

AA Intervention Programs

Undergraduate

Sweeney and Villarejo (2013) investigated the means by which the educational experiences of participants in an undergraduate intervention program shape career decisions for minority students. The intervention program was designed to address the underrepresentation of minority students in science teaching and research careers. The study revealed that internal and external factors contribute to their career choices. The internal factors consist of confidence and intellectual ability to perform in research labs and courses. The external factors that influenced participants' career choices were life/work, mentors and advisors, finances, peers, and family. The results also indicate additional key findings that influenced career choice. Mentors and advisors played a key role in the exploration process, the level of perceived expertise in their specific field, and confidence gained by the students. For example, a portion (one third) of the students chose a career field outside of science. The students attributed this difficult decision to

poor performance in core classes (math and science) and having culturally sensitive mentors and advisors to assist with the decision.

Ovink and Veazy (2011) conducted a case study to investigate a university-sponsored intervention program for underrepresented minority science majors. The program was designed to address academics and how underrepresented students adjust socially into campus climate. There were 201 program alumni surveys, and 106 alumni were interviewed by a team of researchers investigating their undergraduate experience, specifically their participation in the intervention program. The findings revealed that a focus on academics alone does not result in a long-term commitment from minority students. In fact, a focus on supplemental instruction, advising, and skills to help students move forward into professional science careers were the key components of this programs success. For example, students in this program were more successful than both minority students who did not participate and White/Asian students who also were in science majors similar to the program participants.

Ishiyama and Hopkins (2003) conducted an assessment of the Ronald McNair Scholars program that was designed to promote the retention and timely graduation of underrepresented minority groups. Students were selected for this program beginning in their sophomore year and remained in the program until the completion of graduate school. The program provided preparation for graduate school, and students were provided research opportunities combined with faculty mentors. The results of the study indicate that programs fostering faculty-student relationships and student peer relationships are highly effective. This program has proved to be successful for two reasons. The first is the mentor relationship between faculty and students. Students felt

that it established a long-term relationship with someone from your their discipline. Second, students had the opportunity to gain research experience under the leadership of a faculty member. This reinforced student peer interaction and faculty-to-student interaction. It also gave students an opportunity to discuss research projects with other students and faculty. The approach used by this program is indicative of the key elements of a successful intervention program. Those students who participated in the McNair program had higher retention, graduation, and graduate school placement rates.

While the McNair program provides evidence of a successful framework for intervention programs that can be used by other universities, Tinto (2012) proposed a framework for institutional action that also is vital if colleges and universities desire to increase the retention and completion rates of their students. Based on research of retention efforts, including numerous interviews with stakeholders at over 400 institutions, Tinto argued that the issue was not about the intentions of those involved, but more about the appropriate type of policies and actions they should use in the process. Tinto suggested that institutions must first focus on creating conditions in the campus environment that promote student success. The four conditions are expectations, support, assessment and feedback, and involvement. *Expectations* are established by the institution's faculty and what students expect of themselves. *Support* is crucial to the success of a student. There are many types of support, but the most important include financial, social, and academic. The first year should include *assessment and feedback* from faculty and staff to allow students to make necessary adjustments that result in success. Last, *involvement* appears to be the most important condition that promotes student success in retention and completion. "The more students are academically and

socially engaged with faculty, staff, and peers, the more likely they are to succeed in college” (Tinto, 2012, p. 7). However, Tinto asserted that all of the conditions must be present; if any are missing, it is detrimental to overall student success outcomes.

Graduate

In 1966 the federal government challenged institutions of higher education to recruit Negroes (now referred to as AAs) to graduate school as a long-term solution to increase the number of qualified AA for government jobs (Cikins, 1966). This effort was encouraged due to the new Equal Opportunity agenda that focused on giving all Americans an opportunity. The first program was called The Foreign Affairs Scholars Program, which was financially supported by the Ford Foundation and the Field Foundation. “The purpose of the program was to recruit AA students and other minorities for careers in the foreign affairs department” (p. 184). Students selected for this program are paid a monthly stipend and are expected to intern during the summer. The second program was the Harvard-Yale-Columbia Intensive Summer Studies Program focused on preparing AA students for graduate education. Funding was provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York for minorities interested in social sciences and English. “The main focus of this program was to find students who qualify for graduate school but may not necessarily attend” (p. 185). All participants of this program receive full tuition and travel expenses. Last, the Harvard Law School Special Summer Program was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. “The objective of this program was to increase the number of AA lawyer to help fill careers in politics, public administration, and management of business” (p. 185). Students accepted into this program receive full tuition, room and board, and travel expenses.

Three years after the start of the aforementioned government minority assistantship programs, only a small number of program alumni that matriculated through the pipeline to a government job. C Atkins (1966) reported that it was too early to determine the success in bridging the “cultural gap,” but the mere travel to major institutions and taking courses had broadened the experience for the AA students.

As a result of the increased efforts to create intervention programs, which was sparked from the 1950 court decision that mandated PWIs grant equal access in graduate schools to AA students (Merriweather-Hunn, 2008), Tinto and Sherman (1974) conducted a critical review of the literature to synthesize the impact of the programs on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The authors were careful to note that, “Many rely upon gross figures, such as number of graduates, grade point averages and standard test scores, to assess a program's success or failure.....such an approach, however, is inadequate since it does not control, or take into account, a myriad of input and process factors which may also affect program outcomes’’ (p. v).

With that being said, the conclusions of the assessment report were suggested to be implied due to the incomplete and flawed intervention program studies available in the literature during that time. Despite the flaws of validity in the program outcomes, Tinto and Sherman (1974) argued that both secondary and postsecondary education proved to have a positive impact on AA students’ academic progression and motivational orientation. In their conclusion, they recommended that future intervention programs should have a better interpretation of evaluation research, include funding for longitudinal evaluations, and make the research available to a wider audience to fill the gaps in literature.

Moving forward nearly three decades, Maton, Hrabowski, and Schmitt (2000) conducted a study that assessed the effectiveness of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program. “The purpose of the program was to increase the number of underrepresented minorities who pursue graduate degrees in science and engineering” (p. 629). Although the program focus is now is more broadly defined as several types of minority groups, it is important to note that this program accepted only AAs until 1996. Historically, AAs have been underrepresented in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in both undergraduate and graduate programs (Carter, 2006). The Maton et al. (2000) study contributed to the limited body of literature that assessed minority assistantship programs. The study proved to have a significant impact on retaining and graduating AA students in the STEM majors. In fact, AA students who participated in this program were more likely to persist in a STEM major than Asian and White students. When students were interviewed and asked which part of the program had the most impact, having financial support and encouraging staff were mentioned as critical to their success.

Morehouse and Dawkins (2006) conducted a study further supporting that financial resources and supportive environments are factors that contribute to AA student persistence in STEM fields. The study was a formal investigation of the impact of the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program on increasing the presence of AA Ph.D. students in underrepresented disciplines. This program is a prime example of a partnership between the state and the institutional level. The state of Florida supplements funds for this program and recognizes that it addresses a broader issue of providing access and opportunity for minorities.

Chapter Summary

The literature review revealed that, while African Americans have made gains in achieving equal access to higher education, the journey continues to present new challenges. The challenges of underrepresentation in specific disciplines (i.e., STEM), and rising attrition rates for African Americans in graduate education, support the contention that intervention programs are a necessity. Intervention programs were first presented as a way to develop a pipeline of AA students who will go into government jobs after degree attainment, and more recently have evolved into programs that seek to address issues of disparity in higher education. Studies have shown that AA students can be successful in graduate education, provided there are programs and resources available to address the challenges and barriers that prevent degree completion.

The next section will discuss the methodology, including research questions, the population used for sample selection, the research design, and the procedure for collecting and analyzing data.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The current study was conducted to explore the demographic and educational characteristics of MAP participants, as well as the impact of the Minority Assistantship Program (MAP) on its African American (AA) participants related to measures of academic performance. Comparisons were made between program participants and similar AA students who did not participate in the program at a comprehensive university in southcentral Kentucky between the years 2001 to 2013. To further explore the impact of the program, a focus group was conducted to determine whether the participants benefited from the program and how they would describe those benefits. The findings of this study can be used to assist administrators and program coordinators in making decisions regarding this program and/or other minority intervention programs. This study offers evidence of the role intervention programs in the overall success of AA graduate students. This chapter will focus on the research questions, the population and sample, the outline of the research design, and the analysis of the data.

Research Questions

The following general research question was used to guide the study: Does the MAP program have an impact on its participants? More specifically, the following questions guided particular aspects of the research:

1. Who are the MAP's participants?
 - a. What are the demographics of MAP participants (Graduate GPA, Gender, 1st Generation, and Time-to-Degree Completion)?
 - b. How do the demographic characteristics of participants compare to other eligible AA non-participants?

- c. What degree programs are completed by most MAP students compared to AA Non-MAP participants?
2. Do MAP participants benefit from participation in the program?
 - a. Are there significant differences in the graduate GPA, retention, graduation rate, and time-to-degree completion of the MAP participants, as compared to similar AA graduate students who do not participate in the MAP services (e.g., non-program graduate students, non-program graduate students with graduate assistantships)?
 - b. Are there significant differences in the graduate GPA, retention, graduation rate, and time-to-degree completion of MAP participants, as compared to non-AA graduate students who received graduate assistantships?
 - c. What do MAP participants say about the benefits the program has afforded them?

Population

The general population for this study included all AA and non-AA graduate students (n = 10,946) who had attended the institution being studied between 2001 and 2013. Within this population, three particular groups were of interest: a) AA graduate students who participated in the MAP during the 2001-2013 academic years (n = 99; < 1% of WKU graduate student population); b) AA graduate students (n = 524; 4.8%) who did not participate in MAP during 2001-2013 academic years; and c) all other graduate students (n = 10,323; 94%) who received graduate assistantship benefits during the 2001-2013 academic years.

Sample

Because of large discrepancies in group sizes, sampling methods were employed to create similar sized groups. Thus, to represent the three groups of interest previously mentioned, the following processes were followed. For AA graduate students who participated in the MAP during the 2001-2013 academic years, 103 students were included (because 4 MAP students were non-AA, yet members of other underrepresented groups); for AA graduate students who did not participate in the program during 2001-2013 academic years, all 524 were included in analyses; and for the group of non-AA graduate students who received graduate assistantship benefits during the 2001-2013 academic years, a random sample of 103 group members was selected.

Research Design

The research design for was primarily quantitative in nature, including descriptive and inferential statistics, but additionally employed a focus group of current students. Thus, this study utilized a mixed methods design used to investigate the impact of the program on overall student outcomes. Greene, Caraceli, and Graham (1989) postulated that the *development* approach is considered one of the five reasons that researchers would use mixed methods. *Development* is further defined as a means to help develop or further inform the other methods employed. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) asserted that *mixed research* “relies on qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques combined according to the logic of mixed methods research to address one’s research question(s); and...is cognizant, appreciative, and inclusive of local and broader sociopolitical realities, resources, and needs” (p. 129).

The purpose of descriptive statistics is to assess what is occurring on in a particular phenomenon (Dane, 2011). They further help to explain the reasons something occurs in various situations in quantifiable terms. Inferential statistics is a method that quantifies the strength and significance of relationships (Bettany-Saltikov & Whittaker, 2014; Polgar & Thomas, 2000).

The main descriptive data were gathered from the records maintained at this university's Institutional Research Office, and some of these variables were used to make inferential comparisons between the groups. To provide context to focus group responses, additional descriptive variables were collected from the focus group participants using a demographic questionnaire that consisted of questions pertaining to gender, major, ethnicity, age, length of time in program, and mentor status.

The focus group served as the qualitative method used to collect information on the lived experiences of the AA student MAP participants. According to Patton (2002), "qualitative inquiry can be used to discover, capture, present, and preserve the stories of organizations, programs, communities, and families" (p. 196). Additionally, Litosseliti (2003) asserted that a focus group should include individuals who can relate to the topic and have a mutual understanding; therefore, the goal should not be to aim for diversity. Some of the advantages of a focus group are that participants are more relaxed and the method is socially oriented (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). However, "the researcher must also be aware of the limitations of focus groups, such as controlling the side conversation, less control over a group than an individual, and also be aware of logistical problems" (p. 115). It should be noted that the focus group lacked a large number of participants from the MAP program. Concerning this issue, Patton asserted that the researcher should

focus on paying close attention to not overgeneralize the results and maximize the opportunity to obtain thorough purposeful sampling to alleviate concerns about small sample sizes.

Procedure

Prior to data collection and the focus group sessions, IRB approval was sought and obtained (see Appendix A). The university Institutional Research (IR) office received a request for student characteristic data for the years 2001-2013 and approval to conduct a focus group using current program participants. Table 3 summarizes the demographic variables collected. It should be noted that the data received from IR included many incomplete graduate student records, which led to varying numbers when analyzing data.

Table 3

Variables Defined

Variable	Definition
Grade Point Average (GPA)	Cumulative GPA at completion of degree
Gender	Classified as Male or Female
Retention	Indicates whether or not the student returned for either semester of the second year after they started
Graduation Rate	Graduated at any time after they started
First Generation (Legacy)	Students who are the first in their immediate family to graduate with a bachelors or greater
Time to Graduation (TTG)	Calculated by semesters (excluding summer terms)
Top Five Majors	Top five majors represented by the sample population

All current MAP participants received a pre-notice email one week prior to a phone call soliciting their services to participate in a focus group study. The letter also requested that all interested participants contact the Graduate School. All 2013-2014

MAP recipients received a phone call one week after the email soliciting their services to participate in the focus group designed to gain feedback and suggestions from current students regarding the MAP program. All students who agreed to participate were informed of the date, time, duration, and location of the focus group at least one week in advance.

The focus group session was held on the university campus at the Institute for Research and Development, with five students choosing to attend. The focus group was approximately 90 minutes in length. The primary investigator opened with a brief introduction of the research project. All participants were asked if they had questions, and they were answered at that time. Eight questions guided the focus group interviews.

The descriptive statistic data set collected for this study was entered into the SPSS Statistical Software Program for analysis. The information for Question 1 (a-c) was collected using a demographic data collection sheet from data provided by the university's IR. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize these data for the various groups. Data related to Question 2 (a and b) were analyzed using *t*-tests or chi-square analysis. Responses to Question 2c were obtained using a focus group comprised of five MAP participants. Focus group responses were transcribed and then analyzed using the qualitative methods of coding and identifying recurring themes.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Research Question 1a

The first research question examined the MAP participants' demographic variables (GPA, Gender, First-Generation [Legacy] Status, and Time to Graduation). Table 4 indicates that the MAP participants' end of program GPA was approximately 3.7, suggesting that these students typically earned As or Bs. Table 5 reveals that over two-thirds of MAP participants were female.

Table 4

MAP Students by GPA

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Grad GPA	66	3.659	0.289

*Data unavailable for 37 students

Table 5

MAP Students by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	70	67.96
Male	33	32.04

Demographic information related to legacy of MAP participants is presented in Table 6. It is important to note that some of the data is missing due to incomplete applications, and this information is available only for students who attended this university as an undergraduate. Most participants (nearly 65%) classified themselves as first generation, nearly 15% indicated they are not first-generation college students, and another 20% indicated that one or more of their parents attended college. This information was determined by the student's initial undergraduate application.

Table 6

MAP Students by First-Generation (Legacy) Status

Legacy	Frequency	Percent
First Generation	31	64.58
Alumnus in Family	3	6.25
Both Parents College Grads	1	2.08
Father College Grad	1	2.08
Mother College Grad	4	8.33
Not First Generation	7	14.58
Not reported	1	2.08

*Data unavailable for 55 MAP students

Time-to-graduation (TTG) data are reported in Table 7. Of the participants who completed a graduate degree, 75% completed in two years or less. Fewer than 25% reported completing a degree in three or more years. One student was reported as completing a degree in eight years. The missing 24 includes current MAP students who were not included in this section.

Research Question 1b

The next research question compared the demographic variables (GPA, Gender, First-Generation [Legacy] Status, and Time to Graduation) of the MAP participants ($n = 99$) with all AA Non-MAP participants ($n = 524$). Table 8 indicates that the mean end of program GPA for MAP students appears to be slightly greater than AA Non-MAP students. Table 9 reveals that MAP students and AA Non-MAP participants appear to be equally predominantly female.

Table 7

MAP Student Time to Graduation (TTG)

TTG	Frequency	Percent
0 Years	1	.42
1 Year	22	27.85
2 Years	37	46.84
3 Years	12	15.19
4 Years	7	8.86
5 Years	5	2.10
6 Years	6	2.52
7 Years	1	.42
8 Years	1	1.27

*Data unavailable for 24 MAP students

Table 8

MAP Students GPA Compared to AA Non-MAP Students

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
MAP Students	66	3.659	0.289
AA Non-MAP	202	3.648	0.263

*Data unavailable for 37 MAP Students

**Data unavailable for 322 AA Non-MAP Students

Table 9

MAP Students Compared to AA Non-MAP Students by Gender

Group	Gender	Frequency	Percent
MAP Students	Male	33	32.04
	Female	70	67.96
Non-MAP Students	Male	161	30.73
	Female	363	63.27

Legacy information for the MAP participants and AA Non-MAP participants is reported in Table 10. A preliminary look at the distribution of the legacy categories appears to indicate similarity in both groups' legacy and non-legacy status. For both AA groups, greater than half of the students are first-generation college students. Likewise, Table 11 reveals similar patterns between both groups related to time to graduation, with most students completing in one to two years, nearly all finishing within three to four years, and only a few taking longer.

Table 10

Students by First Generation (Legacy)

Legacy	<u>MAP Students</u>		<u>AA Non-MAP Students</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
First Generation	31	64.58	94	60.26
Alumnus in Family	3	6.25	13	8.33
Both Parents College Grads	1	2.08	2	1.28
Father College Grad	1	2.08	3	1.92
Mother College Grad	4	8.33	5	3.20
Not First Generation	7	14.58	31	19.87
Not reported	1	2.08	8	5.14

*Data unavailable for 55 MAP students

** Data unavailable for 368 AA Non-MAP students

Table 11

Student Time to Graduation (TTG)

TTG	<u>MAP Students</u>		<u>AA Non-MAP Students</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
0 Years	1	.42	-	-
1 Year	66	27.73	22	28.21
2 Years	104	43.70	36	46.15
3 Years	42	17.65	12	15.38
4 Years	12	5.04	7	8.97
5 Years	5	2.10	-	-
6 Years	6	2.52	-	-
7 Years	1	.42	-	-
8 Years	1	.42	1	1.28

*Data unavailable for 24 students

** Data unavailable for 286 students

Research Question 1c

The top five majors for both MAP participants and AA Non-MAP participants are reported in Table 12. The top five degrees that MAP students completed are Social Work, Public Administration, Public Health, Student Affairs, and School Psychology. For the AA Non-MAP students, the top five degrees are Social Work, Recreation and Sport Administration, Communications Disorders, School Principal, and Public Administration. Based on the data, the Social Work degree is the most sought-after degree for AA students at this institution, and Public Administration falls in the top five majors for both groups.

Table 12

MAP Student and AA Non-MAP Student Top Five Majors

Major	MAP Students		AA Non-MAP Students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Social Work	14	17.95	44	18.49
Public Administration	13	16.67	12	5.04
Public Health	8	10.26	-	-
Student Affairs	7	8.97	-	-
School Psychology	6	7.69	-	-
Recreation/Sport Administration	-	-	42	17.65
Communication Disorders	-	-	18	7.56
School Principal	-	-	15	6.30
Social Work	14	17.95	44	18.49

*Data unavailable for 24 students

** Data unavailable for 286 students

Research Question 2a

Although preliminary comparisons of MAP and AA Non-MAP student demographics suggest similar averages or category distributions, *t*-test or chi-square statistics were used to ascertain any significant differences in three areas: GPA, Retention, Graduation Rate, and Time-to-Degree Completion. As expected, *t*-test results revealed is no significant difference in end of program GPA between MAP students and AA Non-MAP students, $t(265) = .81, p = 0.30$.

Table 13 contains a comparison of the retention rate between MAP students and AA Non-MAP students. To ascertain whether a significant difference exists between the two groups, a Pearson chi-squared was performed. As can be seen in Table 13, the results indicate a significant difference between the retention rate of MAP students and AA Non-MAP students, $\chi^2(1, 623) = 19.74, p < .001$.

Table 13

MAP Students Compared to AA Non-MAP Students Retention Rate

Group	<i>N</i>	% Retained
MAP Student	99	88.89
AA Non-MAP Student	524	66.60

Table 14 is a comparison of the graduation rate between MAP students and AA Non-MAP students. To ascertain whether a significant relationship exists between graduation rate and MAP participation, a Pearson chi-squared was performed. As can be seen in Table 14, the results indicate a significant difference between the graduation rate of MAP students and AA Non-MAP students, $\chi^2(1, 623) = 37.09, p < .001$.

Table 14

MAP Students Compared to AA to Non-MAP Students Graduation Rate

Group	<i>N</i>	% Graduated
MAP Student	99	78.79
AA Non-MAP Student	524	45.42

Last, the times-to-degree completion for MAP students and AA Non-MAP students were statistically analyzed (see Table 15 for a conversion of Table 9 frequencies to average completion rates). The results of *t*-test analysis indicate no significant difference in the time-to-degree completion.

Table 15

MAP Students Compared to AA Non-MAP Students Time to Graduation (TTG)

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
MAP Students	78	2.13	1.1207
AA Non-MAP Students	238	2.20	1.2193

Research Question 2b

To answer research question 2b, *t*-test or chi-square statistics were used to ascertain any significant differences between MAP students and the non-AA students with graduate assistantships in four areas: GPA, Retention, Graduation Rate, and Time-to-Degree Completion. Table 16 provides a comparison of end of program GPA for these groups. As the table would suggest, *t*-test results revealed no significant difference between GPA at the time of graduation for MAP students and the non-AA students with graduate assistantships, $t(135) = -1.54, p = 0.12$.

Table 16

MAP Students GPA Compared to Non-AA Graduate Assistants GPA

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
MAP Students	66	3.66	0.289
Non-AA Graduate Assistants	71	3.73	0.275

As shown in Table 17, MAP students were retained at a higher percentage than non-AA with graduate assistantships. The relationship between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(1, 206) = 10.05, p = .0015$. Thus, there is a significant relationship exists between MAP participation and retention, as compared to non-AA students receiving similar financial support.

Table 17

MAP Students Compared to Non-AA Graduate Assistant Retention

Group	<i>N</i>	Percent Retained
MAP Students	103	89.32
Non-AA Graduate Assistants	103	71.84

Table 18 shows a comparison of the graduation rate between MAP students and non-AA with graduate assistantships. To ascertain whether a significant relationship exists between retention rate and group membership, a Pearson chi-squared was performed. As can be seen in the Table 18, the results indicate a significant difference between the graduation rate of MAP students and non-AA with graduate assistantships, $\chi^2(1, 206) = 17.44, p < .001$.

Table 18

MAP Students Compared to Non-AA Graduate Assistants Graduation Rate

Group	<i>N</i>	% Graduated
MAP Students	103	76.70
Non-AA Graduate Assistants	103	48.54

Table 19 provides a comparison of time to degree (TTG) MAP students and non-AA students with graduate assistantships. As the table would suggest, *t*-test results indicated no significant difference between the mean time to degree of the MAP students and non-AA students with graduate assistantships $t(127) = 1.00, p = .32$.

Table 19

MAP Students TTG Compared to Non-AA Graduate Assistants TTG

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
MAP Students	*79	2.13	1.11
Non-AA Graduate Assistants	**50	2.34	1.27

*Data unavailable for 24 students

** Data unavailable for 53 students

Research Question 2c

The final research question examined how the AA students benefited from the MAP program. This question was answered by conducting a focus group with five MAP participants. Eight interview questions guided the focus group session, which was approximately 90 minutes in length. After the focus group, the session was transcribed and coded.

The demographic information of the focus group participants is detailed in Table 20. Consistent with the information provided in Table 5, most of the focus group participants were female. The participants appear to be mainly traditional graduate students ranging from ages 22-38 years. Participants were asked whether they currently have a mentor and the method by which the mentor was appointed. Most students did not have a mentor to assist with the transition or challenges of graduate education. In fact, the two students who had a mentor personally initiated the informal mentor relationship with faculty in their department. A mentorship program does not appear to be in place to assist students with academic and professional growth.

Table 20

Focus Group Participant Demographics

Gender	Age	Mentor	Mentor Appointment
Male	38	No	-
Female	26	No	-
Female	25	Yes	Informal
Female	22	Yes	Informal
Female	22	No	-

Table 21 includes a summary of the key themes and findings, along with feedback from students suggesting additional components or resources needed to successfully navigate the graduate experience.

Summary of Themes in the Qualitative Data

Program Awareness

The program awareness theme examined how well the participants feel the MAP program has been marketed to potential students. Essentially this theme describes how the students were notified about the program. Also, this theme included suggestions on the most effective ways to market the MAP program to potential students.

Data indicates that the MAP program was considered a secret for most of the participants. The students learned about the program mainly through peers and alumni. Those who learned about the program from the main website expressed that the MAP information was vague. Two current participants in the MAP program stated:

“I think it just needs better marketing, because I wanna say it’s a well-kept secret.”

Table 21

Focus Group Key Findings/Themes

Category	Current Program Status	Suggestions for Improvement
Program Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Best Kept Secret” • Word of Mouth (Peers, Alumni) • Website is too vague 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise at Recruitment and Campus Events • Market to Students at the Undergraduate level • Advertise at Regional Campuses • Professors, Advisors, and Administration provide information about the program • Provide detailed information on the MAP website • Market to students via email
Program Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus Job • Opportunity to work outside of discipline • Departments are willing to work with MAP students because of the “free labor” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about other employment opportunities • Summer employment with pay • Provide more information on using MAP and Graduate Assistantships together.
Program Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid Tuition Expenses for Fall and Spring for a maximum of 2 years (up to nine credits) • Campus employment with monthly stipend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition and stipend extended through Summer term • Extend the program participation to 3 years • MAP program orientation • Monthly meetings with other MAP students
Program Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None advertised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a website that lists all open positions on campus for MAP students • Offer Professional Development Opportunities (workshops, resume building, and conferences) • Assist with locating Internships • Opportunities to attend networking events in particular disciplines • Provide a mentor for each participant for professional growth and guidance

“You secretly talk to people in the corner like...You’re in the program? Then somebody walks behind and you’re like....Don’t let them see....”

According to the current MAP participants, the program can create awareness in several ways. One student stated:

“A good idea would be to contact department heads and advisors.....that’s information that they need to know.”

Another student stated:

“I would also say.....better advertising on the actual MAP website.”

Although these students suggest that the program should increase methods used to create awareness and visibility, most were notified about the program through peer interaction. The data indicate that peer interaction and support systems are an effective way to notify potential students. One student who was notified by a peer stated:

“The only reason I ran across it....a friend at the time told me about it....”

Program Benefits

The theme of program benefits examined how the participants felt they have benefited from the MAP program. It appears that the most important benefit is the campus employment and an opportunity to work in another discipline. One of the students stated the main benefit as:

“I got a job. Yay!”

Even though the majority of the participants indicated campus employment as a great benefit, they also benefited from having assistance in locating the campus employment. One student stated:

“Me applying was like me going out on a limb, and they sent the email saying, you know, If you need help finding a graduate assistant position let us know.”

Program Components

The program component theme examined the elements of the MAP program and how these elements can be improved to increase student success. The MAP program is primarily an intervention program designed to increase the AA student population in graduate education. Two students who participated in the program for a year and suggested the importance of having a monthly meeting for MAP students, stated:

“I think that it’s a great program and I think it provides fantastic opportunities...but I don’t think we’re really togetheryou kind of keep it a secret.....I know there is probably someone out there that needs it more than I do, but everybody keeps it a secret.”

“If they could just make it more of a group.”

Additionally, the data indicate that another major issue with the program is the lack of summer term tuition and campus employment. Most of the graduate programs recommend that students take classes and complete the required practicum in the summer term. One student stated:

“I’m big on the summer session because I know I’m gonna have to finish up my thesis in the summer....”

Program Resources

The last theme that emerged was the program resources available to participants. Primarily this includes professional development opportunities or other opportunities for employment. Students felt that including more professional development opportunities

for students was important, but even more important was to ensure that students know what resources are available. One student stated:

“If we could have workshops or something coming exactly from the MAP program....as far as a resume building.....or have programs or events where people come in and speak to us.”

Students felt they needed more opportunities to develop within and outside of their current discipline. One student noted that more opportunities for research would help them to be successful and make connections. Many felt that the MAP program should include internship opportunities or create a website that lists all open positions. Attending conferences and networking was suggested as a beneficial resource to MAP participants. One student who worked in a department that supports professional development stated:

“Professors along with teaching are doing these research projects and then they present them at conferences.....so in our field it would be getting to go to different conferences and networking.”

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Summary of Major Findings

Research Question 1a

Research Question 1a explored the demographic characteristics of MAP participants (Graduate GPA, Gender, Legacy, and Time-to-Degree Completion). The results of this study indicate that the MAP program was made up of mostly females (68%) and mirrors the current academic environment for AA students nationwide. It further confirms the disparity in the number of AA males present on college and university campuses nationwide. Although, a number of participants were missing legacy status, the results provide evidence that most AA students represented in higher education are first-generation college students.

Research Question 1b

Research Question 1b explored the demographic characteristics of participants compared to other eligible AA Non-MAP participants. The results indicate no significant difference in the average GPA of MAP participants compared to AA Non-MAP. It should be noted that, as most graduate programs have minimum GPA requirements for continuance, analysis of GPA is affected by restriction of range. However, the retention rate of AA students who participated in the MAP program is significantly higher than those AA students who did not. This information provides supporting evidence that the MAP program is, in fact, fulfilling its initial purpose of increasing the number of AA students enrolled and graduated from graduate schools in Kentucky.

Research Question 1c

Research Question 1c explored the degree programs completed by most MAP students complete compared to AA Non-MAP participants. The Social Work degree is the top degree obtained for AA students overall. For the MAP participants, the second ranked degree for most participants was Public Administration, and Non-MAP AA students graduated with Sport and Recreation degrees. The most interesting information provided by this question was the lack of AA students graduating from STEM majors. This information was supportive of the current literature regarding the underrepresentation of AA students in STEM fields nationwide.

Research Question 2a

Research Question 2a explored whether significant differences exists in the graduate GPA, retention, graduation rate, and time-to-degree completion of MAP participants as compared to similar AA graduate students who did not participate in MAP services (i.e., Non-MAP AA graduate students including students with other graduate assistantships). Significant differences were found between the two comparison groups in retention and graduation rates of AA students who participated in the MAP program. Those students had higher rates of retention and graduation than those students who did not participate in MAP services. It is believed that those who did not participate in the MAP program possibly experienced barriers mentioned in the literature as related to reasons students do not persist to completion of their graduate degree.

Research Question 2b

Research Question 2b explored whether there were significant differences exist in the graduate GPA, retention, graduation rate, and time-to-degree completion of MAP participants as compared to non-AA graduate students who received graduate assistantships. The results did not indicate a significant difference in the graduate GPA and time-to-degree completion between the MAP and non-AA graduate students with assistantships. However, the results indicated that MAP students were retained and graduated at a higher rate than non-AA students with assistantships.

The literature that addressed student attrition rates described several reasons why students leave graduate programs (Morehouse & Dawkins, 2006; Tinto, 1998; Tierney, 1992). One of the most common cited reasons for high rates of attrition in graduate education was attributed to financial challenges (Groen et al., 2008). Yet, both programs include financial resources to cover tuition costs, limits the perception that students leave mainly due to financial concerns. It initiates the conversation to discuss deeper issues connected to lack of campus support, peer relationships, and faculty mentors.

Research Question 2c

Research Question 2c explored statements by MAP participants about the benefits the program has afforded them. The results indicated that MAP participants greatly benefited from the program in regard to retention and completion of degrees. Students felt they benefited from the MAP program in regard to finding campus employment as part of the program's services. Although they sometimes felt as though they were viewed by departments as free labor, many believed it was an opportunity to learn about and work in different departments across campus. The participants suggested that the

program should offer more resources to participants. Some of the resources mentioned were professional development, workshops, seminars, and internship placement.

The most important suggestion for improvement was to increase expenditures for more resources to market the program. Although the MAP program is a great opportunity for AA students, many are unaware of the program's existence. Finding creative avenues to market the MAP program to AA graduate students, such as using websites, student forums, student recruitment events, and brochures, were some of the recommendations suggested by the MAP participants.

Implications

If the original intent and primary goal of the MAP program was to increase the enrollment of AA Kentucky resident graduate students in higher education to the same level as the proportion of total AA Kentucky resident students who receive undergraduate degrees (Committee on Equal Opportunities, 1997), certainly a first focus should be to evaluate the impact of MAP program and other similar intervention programs in Kentucky on the total number of AA enrolled in Kentucky graduate schools. In terms of impacting the number of AA students enrolled in graduate school, over a 15 year time frame, 127 AA students have participated in the MAP program. This suggests that the MAP program's central goal is not being met. Thus, looking only at the numbers suggests that it would be important for the state of Kentucky to *at least* consider offering this intervention program at more institutions to make a profound impact on the original goal of the *Kentucky Plan*. Additionally, one could strongly argue that the state should re-examine both its commitment and strategies for bringing the AA graduate student numbers in line with those of AA undergraduates.

If the pursuit of a higher education is the means by which individuals can acquire more human and social capital to advance their personal and career goals (Malveaux, 2003), then more focus should be on establishing a pipeline early in a student's academic career that is a direct line to admission into a graduate program. Furthermore, administrators and program coordinators should consider when the pipeline should begin. Just how early in a student's academic career should programs start recruiting and preparing students for graduate education? According to May and Chubin (2003), success in an undergraduate program is a predictor of the success of a student in obtaining admission and enrollment in a graduate program.

Regarding benefits to students once in MAP, no significant difference was found in graduate GPA and time to degree between the program participants and the Non-MAP participants. It should be noted, however, that students in both groups had reasonably high GPAs and were finishing degrees within the normal range for master's program (approximately two years).

Two important differences between MAP and Non-MAP students, as well as between MAP participants and other Non-AA students receiving graduate assistantships (and, thus, financial support), were in retention and graduation rates, with MAP students being retained and graduating at significantly higher rates. Both of these outcomes are central measures of student success and are valued at both the university and state as measures of educational quality and a university's commitment to students. These two findings alone are strong evidence of the merits of MAP and other similar programs.

In regard to the impact on participants at this institution, the focus group interviews with MAP program participants revealed that information about program

participation was not readily advertised or easily accessible; thus, it appeared to be the “*best kept secret.*” Although the students perceive MAP as a great opportunity, most participants learned about the program from other students or university alumni.

Although some administrators, faculty, and staff were aware of the program, they did not appear to reach out to many students to promote the MAP program to AA students. The information indicates that, in order to reach more students, a comprehensive marketing plan should be developed to create more program exposure.

Additionally, the results of this study suggest that programs such as MAP can benefit participants by including additional resources to ensure overall program effectiveness and student success. This programming implication is based on two findings from the focus group interview conducted in this study. As stated in Table 21, students desire peer support groups, mentors, and professional development to be more equipped for success on the journey of graduate education, as well as the transition to the workforce after degree completion. This implication is supported by the literature, in that many researchers (Ovink & Veazy, 2011; Quarterman, 2008; Ishiyama & Hopkins, 2003) described the most successful intervention programs as including the very resources suggested by focus group participants. If this program is to have a true impact and make a significant difference, university administrators should consider enhancing MAP and similar programs by offering similar resources to program participants.

In summary, these types of intervention programs should be continually evaluated to ascertain whether they are indeed increasing the number of AA students in graduate school in conjunction with paying close attention to variables that increase retention and completion after students are admitted into these programs. The findings of this study

indicated a need for this type of intervention program in graduate education, yet a majority of schools in the southeast region do not currently house intervention programs. The review of literature revealed a focus on the underrepresentation, retention, and recruitment of AA students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and discussed methods and theories to understand the challenges and barriers; however, a thorough investigation of intervention programs is necessary to understand the role of faculty, staff, and administration in program effectiveness. Furthermore, the literature lacks a true definition of an intervention program. The development of a comprehensive model intervention program that could be used at campuses across the United States would offer administrators an effective foundational structure to mirror.

Limitations

The focus of this study was limited to one assistantship program at one public university in the southeast. Results from this study cannot be generalized to other types of institutions, or even to public institutions in other parts of the country. The quantitative student data were culled from the 127 students who have participated in the Minority Assistantship Program at the university where this study was conducted. All African American students who are enrolled at the university did not participate in the MAP program and/or did not participate in the study. The qualitative portion of the study was conducted using a focus group with students currently receiving assistance from the MAP program. Only a small number of MAP students were used to participate in the focus group, and their responses cannot be generalized to all students who participated in the program.

Additionally, a large amount of information was lacking for many of the students in both the MAP program and Non-MAP participants. The missing data contributed to uneven comparison groups for the data analysis reports. Last, another limitation for this study was the absence of data records (due to a campus wide system conversion) from 1998-2001.

Recommendations for Future Research

Other than besides the current study, few have evaluated the effectiveness of minority assistantship programs or any similar intervention programs at the graduate level. Therefore, to increase an understanding of the impact of such programs, similar studies could be initiated that include minority assistantship programs at other colleges and universities. An expanded study across several minority assistantship programs also would confirm whether the findings in this study are replicable and generalizable.

Additionally, further research is needed to determine the variables are most associated with a successful graduate-level intervention program. The literature suggests that, in order to maximize student success, a graduate-level intervention program should be focused not only on academic factors, but also should include additional aspects such as professional development, mentorship, research partnerships, and internship appointment. For example, the Council of Graduate Schools (2004) cites factors, including selection and admissions into graduate school, mentoring, financial support, and program environment, as particularly related to graduate school completion. One or more studies could (a) investigate perceptions of minority assistant programs regarding factors that have been most influential in ensuring a successful graduate education journey and (b) verify the impact of these variables, as well as others garnered as

important from the literature, by relating them to measures of student success these studies could guide other institutions in developing quality intervention programs.

Any program, such as MAP, could be enhanced if a formal program evaluation was conducted to determine how the program operates. A full investigation of the role of the program's faculty, staff, and administration and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program would provide valuable information on improving the experience for all involved stakeholders. Future studies should include follow-up surveys or questionnaires sent to graduates to determine whether the program affected their professional knowledge, skills, or employability. The inclusion of employer surveys would also provide feedback on whether, and how, the program prepared graduates for the workforce after graduation. This information could provide insight that would help to enhance program aspects, specifically to better prepare participants for future employment and careers after graduation.

The findings of this study also revealed that graduate students at this institution complete graduate degrees in slightly over two years, and that no significant differences appear to exist in academic achievement in terms of GPA at the time of graduation among the three groups studied. However, MAP students were clearly being retained and graduated in higher numbers than the other groups. Although this is an important finding in itself, further study could more fully investigate program or other institutional factors that contribute to the successful graduation and retention rate of participants in MAP or other similar programs.

In conclusion, as universities and colleges continue to explore, develop, or enhance programming efforts to address student attrition and retention, the previously

cited factors should be considered. Literature consistently supports that students need more than financial support (Groen et al., 2008). Thus, university administration, faculty, and staff must begin the conversation on how best to nurture and grow programs and program participants that go beyond the provision of financial support. Fortunately, many of these support mechanisms appear to be low cost, yet show promise as powerfully impacting program effectiveness and, ultimately, graduate minority student success.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



*INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY*

DATE: February 28, 2014

TO: Kenyetta Martin, B.S. & M.B.A.
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [579241-1] Minority Assistantship Program Scholarship Study
REFERENCE #: IRB 14-305
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 28, 2014
EXPIRATION DATE: February 28, 2015
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a *signed* consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of February 28, 2015.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Mooney at (270) 745-2129 or irb@wku.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

APPENDIX B: IRB INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Minority Assistantship Program Scholarship Study

Investigator: Kenyetta Martin, Educational Leadership Doctoral Program, 270-792-3181

You are being asked to participate in a research project titled, "The Impact of a Minority Assistantship Program (MAP) Scholarship on Minority Graduates." This project will serve as Kenyetta V. Martin's dissertation for the requirements of the Educational Leadership Doctorate at Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, procedures used in this study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project.

This purpose of this study is to obtain feedback and suggestion on the current effectiveness the MAP program and improvement ideas. All students are currently participating in the MAP program can participate in this study. The study will take place in the form of a focus group. Your participation in this focus group should take approximately 2 hours.

There are no anticipated risks known to participate in this focus group. Participating in this focus group will give you an opportunity to share how the program has been a benefit to you and offer suggestions to make the program more effective. There are no costs associated with participating in this focus group. All information provided by participants will be kept in a secure manner. Your name will not be recorded on any of the information collected. All of the information collected from you will remain confidential to prevent any possibility of harm. If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Kenyetta V. Martin by email kenyetta.martin988@topper.wku.edu.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

Signature of Participant

Date

Witness

Date

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT
THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY
THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

APPENDIX C: PRE-NOTICE E-MAIL

February 24, 2014
Participants Name
Address
Address

Greetings,

My name is Kenyetta Martin, and I am Educational Leadership doctoral student at Western Kentucky University (WKU). I am soliciting your assistance with my dissertation research. A few days from now you will receive a phone call asking you to participate in a focus group designed for the sole purpose of obtaining feedback and suggestions on the effectiveness of the WKU Minority Assistantship Program Scholarship.

I have contacted you in advance because many people prefer to be notified ahead of time. You have been chosen as a possible participant in this focus group because you are currently in the MAP program for the 2013-2014 academic year. This study is an important one that may prove helpful in making changes or improvements to the MAP scholarship. The ultimate goal is to provide minority students with the best resources to ensure that they successfully matriculate through their respective graduate program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kenyetta Martin, M.B.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership
Western Kentucky University

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the following demographic items listed below.

1. Which of the following best identifies your race/ethnicity (Check one)?

- African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- Multiracial
- Other _____

2. Age _____(Years)

3. What is the highest degree you have obtained (Check one)?

- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Doctorate

5. Length of time in your current graduate program (Check one)?

- 0 – 1 year
- 2-3 years
- 3 or more years

6. List the degree(s) you are currently seeking?

7. Length of time as a MAP recipient (Check one)?

- 0 – 1 year
- 2-3 years
- 3 or more years

8. Do you currently have a mentor (Check one)?

- Yes
- No

9. How was your mentor initiated?

- Department Appointed
- You initiated the relationship
- Other (Explain)_____

10. What is the ethnic identity of your mentor?

- African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- Multiracial
- Other _____

APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Purpose

This focus group is designed for the sole purpose of obtaining feedback and suggestions on the effectiveness of the Minority Assistantship Program. The information will be used to make improvements to the current services and resources offered to MAP participants.

Timeline

This focus group will last a maximum of 2 hours.

Participants

There will be 6-9 Minority Assistantship Program graduate students participating in this focus group session. The participants were selected because they are currently recipients of the MAP scholarship for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Questions

1. How did you hear about the MAP program?
2. What is the best way to market the MAP program to prospective students?
3. How have you benefited from the MAP program?
4. If you could build a new MAP program, what would you include to make it a better program?
5. What would make the MAP program more appealing to graduate students?
6. What type of professional development would better prepare graduates for the workforce?
7. What are the top three resources you need to be successfully complete your degree program?
8. Would you attend graduate school if you did not receive MAP support?