

# EQUITY ASSESSMENT EXCERPTS

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## PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED COUNSELING SERVICES BY UNDERGRADUATE MINORITY STUDENTS AT ELEVEN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS IN ILLINOIS

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The quality of student life depends on relationships, academic success and career choices (group for The Advancement of Psychiatry, 1990; Archer, 1991; and Geller, 1990). In the college years, students need to meet new people, form new relationships and develop a new support system (Archer, 1991). These relationships may involve roommates, friends, and instructors. For traditionally-aged college students, late adolescent development involves learning how to form more intimate and reciprocal adult relationships. Older adult students must learn to relate to a new set of younger peers at the same time maintain earlier social connections.

Minorities on predominantly white campuses have an additional concern. Their cultural background may be different from the culture of a predominantly white campus. How minority students deal with higher education and its many intellectual, social and personal challenges depends in general on their relative degree of immersion in mainstream American culture versus their own culture of origin (Martinez, Huang, Johnson & Edwards, 1989). If these students do not strongly identify with either the mainstream culture or their own culture, they may find themselves in conflict with regard to values, tasks, goals and behavior. The discordance arising from two sets of cultural values often results in powerful and debilitating stress (Martinez, Huang, Johnson & Edwards, 1989).

Perceptions regarding counseling services were analyzed using data collected in 1990 from eleven private and public Illinois colleges and universities. Over 10,500 undergraduate students completed the questionnaire. Of these, there were 377 Asian American students, 35 Native American students, 1031 African American students and 412 Latino students. The data were collected in conjunction with climate studies initiated as part of the Assessment of Educational Equity Project.

Counseling services constitute a major component of university life. It is through these services that a student receives academic advisement, career guidance, supportive group interaction and personal counseling in order to achieve emotional and academic success. The purpose of this descriptive study is to look at the perceptions by minorities of the counseling services on college campuses. Are the counseling services an important attraction for minority students?

Frequency and mean responses are reported for the following questions:

- 1) How important are academic support services to different minority groups?
- 2) How important are career placement services to different minority groups?
- 3) How important are personal support services to different minority groups?
- 4) How important are recruitment programs to different minority groups?
- 5) How important are diverse faculty and administrative/professional staff?
- 6) How much do minority groups feel a sense of belonging at their institution?

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Students were asked to respond to questions using a four-point Likert scale: From 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 4 = "Strongly Agree." Their perceptions are indicated in the following tables:

*Table 1*  
*Percentage of Participants Who Responded Agree or Strongly Agree*

Importance of:	Asian Americans	Native Americans	African Americans	Latinos
Academic Support Services	88	82	90	88
Career Placement Services	90	85	98	89
Personal Counseling Services	88	82	90	85
Recruitment Programs	80	68	87	83
Diverse Faculty	79	82	86	83
Sense of Belonging	76	76	64	84

*Table 2*  
*Mean Score for Each Group*

Importance of:	Asian Americans	Native Americans	African Americans	Latinos
Academic Support Services	3.29	3.23	3.44	3.30
Career Placement Services	3.42	3.03	3.45	3.43
Personal Counseling Services	3.24	3.06	3.50	3.26
Recruitment Program	3.00	2.88	3.32	3.19
Diverse Faculty	2.97	3.11	3.28	3.15
Sense of Belonging	2.91	2.94	2.72	2.87

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study infers that minority students consider that counseling services are important to their college success. Yet, a review of the literature reveals that minority students under-utilize counseling services. Trust issues become more salient for minority students with nonminority counselors. It has been reported that "blacks, like members of other minority groups, make less use of counseling than whites and in counseling are more likely than white clients to terminate prematurely, often after one session" (Pomales, Claiborn and LaFromboise, 1986, p. 57). It was also found that the Asian American population underuses mental health services, despite their high need for services. One explanation for Asian Americans' underutilization of mental health services and high drop-out rates is the lack of ethnically or racially similar counselors (Gim, Atkinson and Kim, 1991). Thus, recruitment programs for diverse students, faculty and staff may help to create the kind of environment where minority students would feel comfortable using campus counseling services.

The minorities in this study feel that it is important to have a recruitment program. Institutions must commit themselves and focus on aggressive strategies to recruit minority students as well as faculty and staff. Colleges and universities must ask themselves: Are minority enrollments disproportionately low? If so, why? Are there low percentages of minority faculty, staff and administrators? If so, why? Do minority students feel like they are part of the college community? These are important questions that need to be addressed when colleges and universities are evaluating their missions, objectives and policies.

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