

Business United in Leadership Development: Alumni Perceptions of a Program Promoting Business as a Degree Program and Career for African Americans

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Introduction

According to a recent Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) study (Sappal, 2000), racial and ethnic minorities, to include African Americans, are represented on only about 4% of Fortune 500 company boards of directors. The survey corroborates the findings of both the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (FGCC) study in 1995 and the Directorship, Inc. (DI) study of 1997.

In 1995, the FGCC found that less than 5% of the top positions in corporate America were held either by minorities or women. The FGCC did not more explicitly specify the percentage of positions held by minorities only. Nor did the study report on the percentage of positions held only by persons of color (Klimely, 1995). In 1997, the DI study similarly found that less than 4% of Forbes 500 board members were minorities, including but not limited to persons of color.

According to the SHRM survey, the most significant barrier to racial and ethnic minority organizational advancement is stereotyping and preconceptions based on the minority classification. Additional barriers, in order of significance, include exclusion from informal networks, a lack of mentoring opportunities, the lack of role models, and corporate cultures that are biased against these minorities.

Despite the many corporate initiatives implemented over the last twenty years, change has been slow and difficult. While the concept of diversity is bandied about in many boardrooms and is identified in corporate policy after corporate policy, we do not expect the rate of change for persons of color to accelerate greatly in the near future. Perhaps part of the problem is that various definitions of "diversity" are utilized and no broadly accepted definition has been determined.

As pointed out by The Conference Board (1992), the term diversity is often used in the strictest manner by restricting the term to "race, gender, ethnicity, age, national origin, religion, and disability". More general interpretations have also surfaced adding "sexual/affectational orientation, values, personality characteristics, education, and background characteristics" to name a few. When something cannot be defined it seems reasonable to expect that successful implementation of programs dealing with or affected by it can be difficult at best, and impossible in the worst case.

Further complicating the situation is defining the term "minority". Various interpretations of this word are used and the groups comprising a given minority classification can be altered at the will of the user. Minorities are, in general, groups of people who differ in some way from the considered norm of the population. Minority groups can be defined, for example, to include women or they may be excluded depending on the need of the user.

The underrepresentation of African Americans in leadership roles in business has implications that reach far beyond the boundaries of personal income or the corporate bottom line. Without leadership experience, the business contacts and networking capability that come with such positions it is difficult at best for black community leaders to

assist in the economic or social advancement of the communities in which they reside and work. The lack of successful role models further reduces the probability of improvement in the advancement of the African-American population in each successive generation.

Clearly, education in general, and obtaining a postsecondary degree from an institution of higher learning can be a key to advancement. African Americans have historically lagged behind the white population in earning postsecondary degrees. Over the last twenty years, numerous programs have been implemented to deal with the proportionately small number of blacks entering college and ultimately being awarded a degree. This study reports on the structure and success of one such program developed to foster, in high achieving black high school juniors, an interest in pursuing a business degree and in business as a career. First we report on the labor force, enrollment and degree attainment trends of blacks in the U.S. over the last twenty-five years. We then consider the rationale for improving the participation rates of blacks in business. The program itself, and the study methodology are then described and presented.

Labor Force Trends

Employment trends (Table 1) among blacks have improved in recent years. In 1976 only 59% of the black population participated in the labor force compared to a 61.8% participation rate for whites. These rates rose to 65.8% for blacks and 67.4% for whites in the year 2000.

The participation rate for black women accounted for the majority of the improvement in participation as the participation of black women in the labor force increased 13.4% from 49.8% in 1976 to 63.2% in 2000. For black men the change amounted to a 1.0% drop from 70.0% in 1976 to 69.0% in 2000.

Table 1. Labor Force Participation Rates (%)

POPULATION GROUP	1976	2000	% CHANGE 1976-2000
WHITE			
TOTALS	61.8	67.4	5.6
MEN	78.4	75.4	(3.0)
WOMEN	46.9	59.8	12.9
BLACK			
TOTALS	59.0	65.8	6.8
MEN	70.0	69.0	(1.0)
WOMEN	49.8	63.2	13.4

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor.

Clearly, black women joined the labor force in significant numbers over the period 1976 to 2000. At the same time the participation of men, especially white men fell opening the door for dramatic participation gains by women of color.

While labor force participation is important, the black population cannot realize its full potential unless the number of blacks on corporate boards of directors and in other leadership positions similarly improves. To accomplish this, however, requires a similar improvement in the participation and graduation rates for educational attainment by the black population.

Educational Enrollment and Degrees Conferred

Traditionally, the number of African-American students enrolled at institutions of higher learning has been far below desired levels as a proportion of total enrollments. (Douglas 1998) Recent surveys suggest that the underrepresentation of students of color is improving with time.

Enrollment trends (Table 2) in programs of higher education suggest that without regard to racial or ethnic origin, women have provided the majority of the 34.64% increase in enrollments during the time frame 1976 to 1999. In 1976 men represented 52.75%, and women 47.25% of the total enrolled students. By 1999, the numbers had completely reversed with men comprising only 43.88% of enrollments while women, gaining a full 17.74% represented a full 56.12% of students. Over the 1976-1999 period the enrollment of men increased only 12.02% compared to an overwhelming 59.90% increase for women.

Table 2. Enrollment Trends - 1976 to 1999

	1976 (000)	%	1999 (000)	%	GAIN/(LOSS) %	% CHANGE 1976-1999
ENROLLMENT						
TOTALS	10985.6		14791.2			34.64
MEN	5794.4	52.75	6490.6	43.88	(8.87)	12.02
WOMEN	5191.2	47.25	8300.6	56.12	8.87	59.90
WHITE	9076.1	82.62	10262.5	69.38	(13.24)	13.07
BLACK	1033.0	9.40	1640.7	11.09	1.69	58.88
MEN	5794.4		6490.6			
WHITE	4813.7	83.08	4539.9	69.95	(13.13)	(5.69)
BLACK	469.9	8.11	603.0	9.29	1.18	28.33
WOMEN	5191.2		8300.6			
WHITE	4262.4	82.11	5722.6	68.94	(13.11)	34.28
BLACK	563.1	10.85	1037.7	12.50	1.65	84.28

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

More specifically along racial lines, in 1976, non-hispanic blacks accounted for only 9.40% of enrolled students. Only 8.11% of the men and 10.85% of the women were black. By 1999, the enrollment of students of color gained a full 17.74% on white enrollments as the number of black students improved to 11.09% of the total with a 58.88% rate of change completely overshadowing the meager 13.07% growth rate for white non-hispanics.

For women the disparity was significantly greater than for men. The rate of enrollment growth for women of color, at 84.28%, far exceeded the excellent growth rate of 28.33% for black men. The rate of enrollment growth for white women, at 34.28% outstanding in its own right, was similarly surpassed by the growth rate of black women.

As presented in Table 3, the rate of completion of college programs of study for the black non-hispanic population has also improved over time. The percentage of black non-hispanic students receiving bachelor's degrees increased 84.00% from 6.39% of the degrees awarded in 1976-77 to 8.72% of the total in 1999-2000. Over the same period, white graduates at the bachelor's level received only 74.97% of the degrees awarded in 1999-2000, down from 87.99% in 1976-77 for a 14.90% change. The change in degree

completion trends resulted in a net 15.35% gain in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded to black students.

At the graduate level, the number of masters degrees awarded to blacks increased 69.34%, from 6.64% in 1976-77 to 7.79% in 1999-2000. Combined with a proportionate drop of 14.46% in the number of white conferees, the number of blacks receiving masters degrees improved by 15.61%.

The most significant improvements, however, occurred in the number of doctorates conferred. At the doctoral level, the increase in degrees awarded to black students represented a 77.17% rate of change from 1976-77 to 1999-2000. The rate of change for white students was only 2.49% for the same period. The net improvement for blacks was a gain of 20.81%.

Table 3. Bachelor's, Masters, Doctoral Degrees Conferred by Race - 1976-77 & 1999-2000

	1976-1977 (000)	%	1999-2000 (000)	%	GAIN/(LOSS) %	% CHANGE 1976-77 to 1999-00
DEGREES						
BACHELOR'S	917900		1237875			34.86
WHITE	807688	87.99	928013	74.97	(13.02)	(14.90)
BLACK	58636	6.39	107891	8.72	2.33	84.00
MASTERS	316602		457056			44.36
WHITE	266061	84.04	317999	69.58	(14.46)	19.50
BLACK	21037	6.64	35625	7.79	1.15	69.34
DOCTORATES	33126		44808			35.27
WHITE	26851	81.06	27520	61.42	(19.64)	2.49
BLACK	1253	3.78	2220	4.95	1.17	77.17

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

While these changes sound dramatic and are certainly not to be diminished as advances for blacks, a closer look points out a serious problem. While dramatic double digit gains for persons of color have in fact occurred over the 1976-99 period, the majority of the change has been wrought not so much by significant increases in black enrollments and degree attainment as by drastic negative change for whites in those same areas.

Business Schools and Black Enrollments

Clearly the proportionate number of black students enrolling in and completing academic degree programs has changed dramatically over the twenty-three year period represented in the data. It is only in the last twenty-five years that predominantly white business schools in the United States have seen an appreciable increase in the number of blacks pursuing degrees in business. As reported in 1999 by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, in fact, increasing numbers of black students are earning business management degrees.

According to Department of Education data as presented in Table 4, the number of business degrees granted in 1994 represented 20.72% of the degrees awarded that year as opposed to only 16.48% of the degrees awarded in 1977. The change resulted in a growth

rate of 52.53% in business degrees awarded versus only a 21.27% rate of change in total degrees awarded over the period.

Table 4. Business Degrees Conferred by Field of Study and Racial Group - 1976-1977 & 1999-2000

DEGREES	1977 (000)	%	1994 (000)	%	GAIN/(LOSS) %	% CHANGE 1977 to 1994
TOTAL	882364		1070044			21.27
WHITE	805186	91.25	936227	87.49	(3.76)	16.27
BLACK	58515	6.63	83576	7.81	1.18	42.83
BUSINESS	145378	16.48	221741	20.72	4.24	52.53
BUSINESS	145378		221741			
WHITE	132814	91.36	191111	86.19	(5.17)	43.89
BLACK	9976	6.86	20366	9.18	2.32	104.15

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

From 1977 to 1994 the number of business management degrees granted to black students grew at a dramatic rate of 104.15%. This improvement outpaced the 43.89% growth rate realized for white students receiving the same degree. As a percentage of the total business degrees awarded, black students gained a full 7.49% on white recipients from 1977 to 1994.

It is apparent that the pursuit of a business degree continues to be a popular choice for black students. According to a recent study by the Department of Education (Table 5), black students earned 9.18% of the undergraduate, 7.69% of the masters, and 4.68% of the doctoral business degrees awarded in the academic year 1999-2000.

Table 5. Bachelor's, Masters, Doctoral Degrees Conferred by Racial Group – 1999-2000

DEGREES	ALL FIELDS	%	BUSINESS	%
BACHELOR'S	1237875		257709	
WHITE	928013	74.97	186605	72.41
BLACK	107891	8.72	23645	9.18
MASTERS	457056		112258	
WHITE	317999	69.58	73252	65.25
BLACK	35625	7.79	8630	7.69
DOCTORATES	44808		1196	
WHITE	27520	61.42	665	55.60
BLACK	2220	4.95	56	4.68

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Substantiating the growing interest of black students in pursuing business management as a major are the Department of Education minority Field Concentration Ratios presented



in Table 6. The business management ratio is calculated as the percentage of black students earning a given degree who majored in business management divided by the percentage of whites earning that degree in the same field. Values in excess of 1.0 suggest that black graduates are more likely to major in business management than are white graduates.

At the bachelor's degree level, the ratio increased from 1.01 in 1979 to 1.19 in 1996, representing a 17.82% increase. The master's degree ratio rose from .66 in 1979 to 1.01 in 1996 for a change of 53.03%. At the doctorate level, the 1979 ratio of .56 increased to 1.04 in 1996 for a full 85.71% increase. These findings substantiate the earlier conclusion that black students are more likely to major in business than white students particularly at the masters and doctoral degree levels.

Table 6. Minority Field Concentration Ratios for Business Management Degrees – 1979 & 1996

DEGREES	1979	1996	% CHANGE
BACHELOR'S DEGREES	1.01	1.19	17.82
MASTER'S DEGREES	.66	1.01	53.03
DOCTORAL DEGREES	.56	1.04	85.71

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

The observed improvement in the attainment of postsecondary education by blacks has not come without cost. The collaborative activities of business, government, and institutions of higher education have steadily increased over the last twenty years. These community partners have all expended funding, albeit sometimes in their own self-interest rather than simply for the public good, geared toward increasing black representation in business degree programs and professional business careers. Merrill Lynch, for example, provided \$14 million for a Scholarship Builder Program covering 10 different cities. Similarly, the Coca Cola Foundation has provided a commitment of \$100 million to benefit all students by enabling them to have access to education (Executive Leadership Council, 1999). A number of other firms, over time, have adopted a variety of programs geared toward diversity problems. General Mills and KPMG Peat Marwick, for example, have fostered programs to increase the number of minority students in MBA and Ph.D. programs respectively (Klimely, 1995). Virtually all educational institutions have created diversity and minority programs, using both externally-provided contributions and monies diverted from other internal uses to fund the programs.

For a variety of reasons, business leaders must recognize the importance of diversity programs and be proactively responsive to the needs of African Americans. African Americans represent a valuable resource that has yet to be tapped to any significant degree. Business must also be cognizant of the need to make inroads into substantially black communities if only to increase profits at the bottom line.

In any community, the success or failure of the community itself can be attributed to the relationships within that community. Much can be said for the old axiom of "it's not what you know but who you know". But it is also important to consider the other side of that axiom that it is not just who you know but who knows you that is important.

Minority participation in business, especially in leadership roles, is particularly important to substantially African-American communities. Such areas have often lagged behind in development and, with experienced leadership and assistance, can attain significantly high rates of improvement. These commercial and residential areas are especially in need of the assistance of black leaders with business and political savvy as they bring leadership skills, experience, business relationships and often even provide money for community improvement.

Further, business and governmental leaders of color are especially suited to serve as role models for both male and female African-American students. Black male students have historically been considered at-risk youths, and African-American business leaders, especially those with roots in the black community can provide excellent examples of how people of color can succeed.

All African-American youth, over time, should be continually encouraged to contribute to economic expansion as well as to the good of the community itself. Such encouragement can be successful only if words are supported and enforced by the action of role models as well. Minority youth must be engaged in a manner that fosters a desire to pursue careers in business and related areas as a means of accomplishing this objective.

As is so aptly pointed out by Anderson, Sollenberger, and Betts (1996), the "relative underrepresentation of African Americans and other minorities in business disciplines is of concern for a variety of reasons". Workforce representation of minorities, economic development, and operational efficiency and leadership development in the minority workforce are all cited. Unless highly motivated and capable black students embark on the pursuit of business and related area majors as a means toward contributing to community economic and social improvement, only minor changes in the current structure of corporate leadership can take place.

Business Cultural Diversification Rationale

Several reasons for the increased interest in improving the ratio of blacks to non-blacks in business careers can be identified. While there are, of course, those with altruistic intentions who may initially have been the leaders in this movement, the greatest change has been wrought by U.S. corporations perhaps primarily for purely business reasons.

First consider the seminal study in the area of minorities and the pursuit of graduate business degrees as undertaken during the turbulent 1960s by Sterling Schoen (Moscowitz, 1993/1994). Schoen, a white member of the faculty at Washington University at St. Louis, found that fewer than 50 of the 12,000 students surveyed and pursuing the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree program at schools of business were black. As a result, in 1966 he founded the Consortium for Graduate Study in Management as an organization of American schools of business with a mission of assisting and encouraging African-American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American college graduates to pursue management careers. The Consortium, which has been a significant source of funding for black MBA students, currently is comprised of fourteen leading schools and has over 5,000 alumni.

Secondly, the Workforce 2000 Report published by the Hudson Institute in 1987 provided an awakening with its estimate that from 1988 to 2000, the majority of new workers would come from the ranks of women and minorities, with white men providing only about 12% to 15% of new workforce participants (Klimley, 1995). A look back at Table 1 speaks to the validity of this projection. Between 1976 and 2000 the percentage of white men in the workforce fell 3.0% while the percentage of women in general, and black women in particular grew at rates of 12.9% and 13.4% respectively.

Another study providing an incentive to improve diversity efforts was a 1990 Census Bureau study projecting that the most significant population growth area through the year 2015 would be for minorities. These findings substantiated those of the Hudson Institute.

The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics reports suggest that minorities will continue to increase at greater rates of change than the white population. The most significant groups identified are Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and African Americans. These projections suggest that the Hudson Institute projections were more or less on target.

Finally, reports dealing with size of the minority target sales markets have had a serious impact on business diversity decisions. One of the most recent studies has suggested that minority males and women provide over \$1.5 trillion to the American economy each year (Executive Leadership Council, 1999), thus providing a huge source of customer revenue.

Such findings have prompted business leaders to take a greater interest in improving the ratio of blacks to non-blacks in business and professional careers. The message conveyed by the data being reported from various sources was consistent. In the near future, a competitive business would need a diverse workforce cognizant of the wants and needs of a similarly diverse customer pool. Not surprisingly, diversification efforts became not only a common strategy for industry but also a necessity as a competitive tool.

Diversification Efforts

Over time, two basic forms of diversification effort evolved. These include primary or direct efforts within businesses or academic institutions in order to recruit and/or retain African Americans, women, and other minorities as employees or students. These direct efforts have generally been coupled with programs designed to improve the understanding and treatment of diverse groups important to these organizations and institutions.

Indirect or secondary forms of diversity effort take the form of training and/or the mentoring of employees or students by executives or other role models, and formal educational programs to include those aimed at expanding the knowledge base of students with regard to careers in business. The present study was designed to examine the perceptions of student participants in and the efficacy of one such educational program.

The Program

Project BUILD (Business United In Leadership Development) was initiated in 1985 and began operation with its first class of students in the summer of 1986. The non-profit Lincoln Foundation, the University of Louisville, and several corporate sponsors whose membership has changed over time jointly fund the program geared toward encouraging African-American high school students to consider business as a career choice.

While BUILD was designed to provide assistance to African Americans, and while most participants in the four-week summer program are, in fact, African-American high school students entering their senior year of study, the program is not restricted only to African Americans. Several qualified non-African-American students, including white males, have applied and participated in the program but were not included in this survey.

All participants are required to meet specified grade point criteria, submit essays about their goals and aspirations, pass interviews with members of the BUILD Steering Committee, and be recommended to the program. Student recommendations are generally received from guidance counselors, teachers, school administrators, clergy, and other professionals in the community.

The students selected for participation represent all socio-economic backgrounds and generally have evidence of a genuine curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and have demonstrated leadership ability and promise. All participants receive scholarships covering the cost of tuition, books, school supplies, and small stipends based on merit.

Students accepted into the program participate in a four-week, on-site educational experience at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. The University is listed in the Doctoral/Research Universities-Extensive category (or level) of the Carnegie Foundation. Only 148, or 3.8%, of the 3,856 colleges and universities in the United States have this distinction. Home to more than 20,000 students, women comprise 54% of the enrolled

student body. In 2001, students of color accounted for 16% of enrolled students, and in 2000-2001 were awarded 8.5% of the degrees conferred at the university. Approximately 4.6% of the university's more than 1275 full time faculty are minorities. Almost 90% hold terminal degrees and teach in its eleven colleges and schools, including the College of Business and Public Administration (CBPA).

The CBPA is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and houses 2900 undergraduate and 700 graduate students. African-American students represent about 9.2% of the student body. These proportions represent improvements over time. In 1996, for example, African-American students comprised only 7.0% of the CBPA student body. While improving over time, the proportion of African-American students is still less than the average in the university population. Certainly, while not the most basic reason for creating Project BUILD, the goal of improving the proportion of students of color in the CBPA was unquestionably an integral factor in the decision to implement the program.

The most basic rationale for creating the program was to clarify, for BUILD participants, precisely which major and career opportunities exist in business. Studies supporting the need for such educational efforts (Gifford, 1975; Lieberman & Marquette, 1986) suggest that minority students are unclear with respect to business occupations as well as the pay which accompanies them.

Secondly, the BUILD directors were hopeful that students, influenced by BUILD and following the path to business and related professions, would provide the leadership of industry and the Louisville metropolitan community in future years. This objective has in fact been realized over time as BUILD graduates have returned to the Louisville area after completion of various postsecondary academic degree programs. Alumni of the program now include attorneys, a television producer for a local station, and numerous banking, and other business area executives. They are assisting in economic improvement activities, provide community service, and have taken active roles in city governance.

Project BUILD students take a carefully tailored curriculum of business discipline classes at the College of Business and Public Administration, with instruction provided by both university faculty, generally those with terminal degrees and extensive teaching and professional work experience, and by leaders from both the public and private sectors. Both the business leaders and BUILD faculty are selected by members of the program steering committee, with a priority given to African-Americans whenever possible.

The participating African-American members of the business community serve two basic functions. As business executives or public officials they provide practical experience, insight, and guidance to students. As successful African Americans they also serve as role models, discussing not only what they do but also how they worked to attain the positions they hold. Students are quickly made aware that many of these individuals came from backgrounds similar to their own. The idea that hard work and commitment are required to achieve success in any endeavor is continually reinforced.

The BUILD curriculum (Appendix A) is both academic and practical in nature and great care is taken to ensure that it familiarizes participating students with a variety of the career possibilities, business challenges, and the different kinds of business problems faced in a dynamic world. Student activities include visits to business and community organizations, as well as on-site presentations by faculty and executives. Wherever possible, both male and female African-American role models provide the instruction and discussion leadership.

The majority of the classes offered provide insight with regard to business majors and careers in basic areas such as accounting, economics, finance, marketing, and management.

Maintaining the currency of the program has been paramount and is exemplified by the inclusion and/or expansion, over time, of modules on entrepreneurship, total quality management, ethics, technology, and various modules in which workplace diversity issues are discussed. Additional classes or activities are provided in the areas of African-American culture of the Louisville metropolitan area, and financial aid.

BUILD is not just a four-week program however. It does not simply end at the completion of the four weeks on-campus. During the classroom experience, networking, mutual assistance, and life-long learning are emphasized as essential ingredients for a successful professional career. As a means of reinforcement, alumni of the program are invited annually to dinners with business and economic related programs as well as to social events with other alumni, and business professionals. All events, and even additional follow-up training sessions, are geared toward assisting the alumni of the program via providing a venue for both maintaining old friendships and business networking.

Program Objectives

In a 1992 study, Fisk-Skinner and Gaither (1992) reported a 71% dropout rate for black undergraduates as opposed to a 55% rate for white undergraduate students. A number of studies on undergraduate dropouts (most notably Feldman & Newcomb, 1969/1994; Levitz & Noel, 1989; Tinto, 1993) further suggest that the most critical period of time for the undergraduate student is the first year as they acclimate to their new environment. A number of researchers (Allen, 1991, 1996; D'Souza, 1992; Hurtado, 1992; Malaney & Sively, 1995) have suggested that a large number of black students attending predominately white colleges find campuses to range from hostile at worst, to indifferent at best.

To that end, because the leadership of the BUILD program believes that anxiety and apprehension can be high for students commencing their first collegiate experience, especially for at-risk black students in a predominantly white institution, one of the objectives of the program has been to familiarize participants with the collegiate classroom environment. This is done by holding most classes in the CBPA classrooms, and by the involvement of CBPA faculty as instructors. A two-fold goal is to provide an understanding of the typical expectations which college faculty have of college students, and secondly to gain an understanding of how college classes differ from those in the high school setting with which the students are most familiar.

Another objective of the program is to provide the best quality in instruction and guidance possible. This relates not only to providing the best in faculty and guest speakers, but also by ensuring the timeliness of topics and materials.

Since there is no restriction on student preferences for majors at the time of selection for participation in BUILD, one program objective is to help expose students to the types of business majors and careers available. It is assumed that students can readily identify what it means to be a carpenter, or electrician, but that there is little knowledge regarding the types of careers, such as investment banking, logistics, or ethics officer, available in business. One major goal of the program then, is to provide some insight regarding not only business degree programs but also the possible career paths that might be followed. An effort is made, therefore, to identify specific operational areas within each discipline of study.

While it is important to educate students about the basics of majors and careers, and to provide them with role models, the project sponsors are also concerned that the program stimulates intellectual, social, and personal growth as well. As a result, training modules include role-playing, written assignments, written tests, in-class presentations, and open discussion on presented concepts and theories as well as practical application through simulation exercises.

Methodology

With the exception of several non-black students accepted into the program upon request, the study included all 437 of the alumni of Project BUILD since its first class (1986) through the class of 2002. Thus seventeen years worth of data were examined. Of the 432 students participating in the program and surveyed, 330 responded to our survey. This amounted to a response rate of 76.39%, which we considered exceptional.

The survey was developed to address issues of concern to the program steering committee and funding sponsors and was tested on several BUILD groups over time. The instrument was revised each time until the final survey document, which contained twelve different items of interest, was finalized. Nine of the statements included required a Likert-type response based on a five-point measurement scale designed to determine the extent to which the alumni were in agreement or disagreement with the statements provided. A tenth statement was similarly structured but on a four-point Likert-scale which was felt to be more appropriate for that particular question. The final two items required simple yes or no responses. Written comments were also solicited.

Results

Collegiate Preparation

Ninety-five percent of the alumni responding to the survey attended college, completed at least one degree-program of study, or expected to undertake study at the college level. The survey results are provided in five segments based on the intent of the questions asked. The first part of the survey simply asked about the usefulness of the program in preparing students for their college careers. Fully 99.4% of the respondents (Table 7) indicated agreement that the program helped to prepare them for what was to be expected of college students by college faculty.

Table 7. Statements Concerning Alumni Perceptions on College Preparation

STATEMENTS	STONGLY AGREE 4	AGREE 3	DISAGREE 2	STRONGLY DISAGREE 1
PREPARED STUDENT FOR COLLEGE	74.7%	24.7%	.7%	
AVERAGE SCORE: 3.7/4.0				

Career/Major Identification Assistance

The next three research questions (Table 8) addressed the issue of major or career identification. Since one of the goals of the program is to aid students with little knowledge about the various business majors and careers available, the sponsors of BUILD were interested in determining if the program provided any perceptible assistance in that area. The first question dealt with college majors and was somewhat general in nature since participating students were not selected because of an interest in business as a major but rather as a result of their extant record as achievers. It was expected that these students might already have some interest in various careers or majors and our objective was to simply provide more in-depth understanding of business majors and careers. Ninety-five percent of the respondents indicated that the program was helpful in identifying their college major.

The second statement dealing with majors was more specific. In response to this item, 98.4% indicated that the program helped them to understand the various types of business majors and careers available. Finally, the last question specifically asked if the program were helpful in exposing them to a variety of business careers. The respondents affirmed this with 99.7% of them indicating that BUILD was helpful in this regard.

Table 8. Statements Concerning Alumni Perceptions Related to Majors Programs of Study

STATEMENTS	VERY SATISFIED 5	4	3	2	NOT SATISFIED 1
MAJOR IDENTIFICATION AVERAGE SCORE: 4.6/5.0	65.9%	30.0%	2.5%		1.6%
BUSINESS MAJOR IDENTIFICATION AVERAGE SCORE: 4.7/5.0	72.8%	25.6%	.6%	.3%	.6%
BUSINESS CAREERS IDENTIFICATION AVERAGE SCORE: 4.8/5.0	77.2%	22.5%			.3%

Growth

The third group of statements (Table 9) was concerned with student growth. Since the BUILD sponsors were concerned not only with educational growth, but also with the stimulation of intellectual, social, and personal growth as well, four statements on growth in these areas were utilized.

A full 95.0% of the survey participants indicated that the program contributed to their intellectual growth. As shown in Table 9, similar high ratings were assigned to the statements on social (92.8%) and educational (94.4%) growth.

Table 9. Statements Concerning Alumni Perceptions on Growth

STATEMENTS	CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY 5	4	3	2	NO CONTRIBUTION 1
CONTRIBUTED TO INTELLECTUAL GROWTH AVERAGE SCORE: 4.6/5.0	61.7%	33.3%	4.7%	.3%	
CONTRIBUTED TO SOCIAL GROWTH AVERAGE SCORE: 4.3/5.0	49.7%	43.1%	6.3%	.6%	.3%
CONTRIBUTED TO EDUCATIONAL GROWTH AVERAGE SCORE: 4.4/5.0	46.4%	48.0%	4.0%	1.6%	
CONTRIBUTED TO PERSONAL GROWTH AVERAGE SCORE: 4.3/5.0	46.4%	36.4%	16.1%	1.2%	

The lowest growth rating occurred in the personal area with only 82.8% indicating an agreement that the program significantly contributed to their personal growth. While lower than any of the other ratings, this is neither a surprising nor a negative result since the students in this program are selected based on achievement not only in the classroom but also in extracurricular activities, with substantiating recommendations provided by guidance counselors, clergy, and/or other responsible adults such as coaches, teachers, and professionals. Probably not a representative group of the minority student community as

a whole, these students are assumed to already be pursuing a well-established path and pattern of personal growth.

Perceptions of Value-Added

The last group of statements (Tables 10 & 11) dealt with student perception of the value added by the program. The results indicate that the instructional quality of the Project BUILD program was perceived as above average (Table 10) by 99.1% of the program participants, with 74.5% rating the program at the highest level. In addition, 93.2% of the participants (Table 11) indicated that they would participate again if given the opportunity, while fully 99.3% indicated that they would recommend the program to others.

Table 10. Statements Concerning Alumni Perceptions Related to the Quality of the Program

STATEMENTS	VERY SATISFIED 5	4	3	2	NOT SATISFIED 1
INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY	74.5%	24.6%	1.0%		
AVERAGE SCORE: 4.7/5.0					

These last findings were especially important to program sponsors since a majority of the BUILD participants are also involved in a variety of other programs geared toward assisting minority students in reaching their goals. Since word-of-mouth promotion by highly satisfied alumni returning to high school in their senior year creates interest in the next year's junior class, a poor ratings assessment by alumni would indicate that BUILD provided little or no value compared to other programs available to these students thus suggesting that termination of the project, or at a minimum, a radical revision would be appropriate.

Table 11. Alumni Perceptions on Participation in and Recommendation of the Program

STATEMENTS	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
WOULD YOU PARTICIPATE AGAIN?	93.2%	6.8%	
WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THE PROGRAM TO OTHERS?	99.3%	.3%	.6%

Open-Ended Comments

Open-ended comments (Appendix B) of students were also solicited in the survey. The comments were uniformly positive although some provided insight as to changes that might be made.

Conclusions

Diversity within a culture can be threatening just as dealing with it can be problematic and often viewed as tantamount to trying to hit a moving target. From a practical business perspective however, a diverse culture suggests the possibility of significant resources waiting to be mined. Programs such as Project BUILD provide a means for academe and industry to work together to both mine and refine such available resources.

The findings of this investigation suggest that the alumni of Project BUILD are well satisfied with their experience in the four-week summer program. Not only was the program successful in providing some enlightenment with regard to which majors could be



earned in the business area, but learning functional skills and concepts such as time value of money, supply and demand, consumer behavior, leadership qualities and tools, and total quality management process contributed to intellectual and educational growth. Further, using techniques such as teams, role-playing, trips to local business and community organizations, presentations and interaction with community and industry leaders, and hands-on application of learned business tools contributed to providing an atmosphere for both personal and social growth as well.

Many of the BUILD students entered college, with assistance (funding, internships, and summer employment) from one of the institutions sponsoring BUILD. With approximately 90% of BUILD alumni completing their undergraduate studies many are now contributing to the local economy and community in many ways — as lawyers and as marketing, finance, accounting, media, and other professionals. This 90% number is more than two and one-half times the Census Bureau 1990 national average of 35.1% of blacks with at least some college experience.

A business career that ultimately proves to be both rewarding and productive, can be viewed as the means to both economic independence and as positive self-esteem. If we consider that the foundation of such a successful career is a well developed and applied educational experience, Project BUILD appears to be providing that foundation.

Appendix A

Typical Curriculum for Project BUILD

Session Topics	Contact Hours*
Introduction to Accounting	6 Hours
Introduction to Basic Economics	3 Hours
Management Concepts	9 Hours
Introduction to Marketing	3 Hours
Computer Information Systems**	15 Hours
Entrepreneurship	3 Hours
Introduction to Finance	3 Hours
Introduction to Insurance and Risk	3 Hours
Introduction to Total Quality Management	3 Hours
Industry/Public Agency Visitations	15 Hours
Total Hours	60 Hours

*Hours tallied may include off-site industry/public agency visits not included in the 15 hour entry in the table.

**Computer Information Systems classes are geared toward integrating technology, the Internet, and learned business concepts in order to solve business problems. These are not geared to programming and include e-commerce issues.

Appendix B

Sample of Open Ended Comments

- Seeing African Americans not too far removed from our own age in significant careers impressed me as a participant in BUILD
- It is encouraging to learn that many (role models) came from a lower level of life (economically and socially) to a higher level of life.
- Learned "stuff" you hear about on the news, but don't know what it means—like Gross National Product--and how it affects you.
- Interesting to learn how the wheels of justice run and how you can use them to your advantage in business, for example, when it comes to taxes.
- I've changed my ideas about how I'm going to accomplish my goals...I'm interested in management.
- The program has shown me that there are more types of business jobs available than I realized in such areas as marketing and finance. It's a good field to get into...I just thought business was accounting, more or less. But now I see there are a lot more areas.
- Most of the kids our age don't know much about business. This gets you a step ahead of everybody... almost everything revolves around business.
- The program helped me develop my communication skills, gave me a better understanding of economics and business, and introduced me to people with communication careers. This propelled me to earn a degree in communications.
- I think the program was an excellent opportunity to succeed.
- I loved Project BUILD...
- I believe that this program has lead me to take my career choice seriously, and to be all that I can be, and to do what is possible of me. I now know that I must strive to be the best, cause this world is tough.
- This is a very good program, keep it forever.
- It was great.
- I think that BUILD enlightens your mind to what the business world has to offer. It is really good that somebody is looking out for us.

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