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The Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference: An Assessment of Graduate Diversity Recruitment

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The Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference: An Assessment of Graduate Diversity Recruitment

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy

by

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Abstract

Graduate student recruitment is one of the most important factors in growing university enrollment. Unlike undergraduate recruitment, graduate recruitment is a coordinated effort facilitated between graduate faculty and program coordinators and graduate recruiters who often work outside of the department. An essential element in graduate recruitment is the effectiveness with which underrepresented minorities are identified and recruited. Graduate schools are commonly using initiatives known as intervention strategies to help enhance their traditional recruitment strategies and campus visitation programs have become a popular recruitment tool within those strategies.

Since the 1990's, the University of Arkansas (UA) has employed various intervention strategies utilizing the campus visitation approach to attract minority graduate students. A frequently used program is the Attracting Intelligent Minds (AIM) Conference. This study assesses the AIM conference, using Program Evaluation Theory, to determine how impactful it has been as a recruitment vehicle.

The Program Theory Evaluation (PTE) framework was used to examine the conference activities, recruitment strategies, involvement with graduate faculty and administrators, and the roles that UA and Minority Serving Institutes (MSI), particularly Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) play in the success of the conference.

Broadly, the study determined that AIM has been moderately effective for recruiting underrepresented minorities, primarily from HBCUs, to various graduate programs at UA, and strengthening the cultural capital among existing graduate students. But its continued success and growth will be largely dependent on collaboration between all stakeholders and the priority that is placed upon minority graduate recruitment.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the people who have influenced me the most: family, friends and colleagues. To members of the Dowe, Sills, Ford families for years of prayer and support. Thank you to ALL of my family in NY, DC, NC, NJ, OH, MD, WV, IL, CA, GA, and VA and all points in between. To friends from Shiloh Baptist and Restoration Churches, Men of Distinction, Brothers and Sisters in Christ (BASIC), METRO, the University of Arkansas, James Madison University, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. And to professional colleagues with every employer and organization in which I have worked or volunteered, especially Roanoke City Council, the University of Arkansas, the United Way of Greater Atlanta, Wells Fargo/Wachovia, and the National Basketball Association, for your professional guidance, mentorship, friendship, and support. Finally, to my mother, the late Mrs. Blanche S. Dowe, I miss you and I love you greatly.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Increasing racial and ethnic diversity in higher education remains a high priority for many US colleges and universities (Arnett, 2015; Berrett & Giorgi, 2015). As higher education and diversity and inclusion (D&I) professionals explore ways to make their campuses more representative of the communities and world that they serve, attracting a diverse student body through targeted recruitment has become a particularly important strategy (Berrett & Giorgi, 2015; Bingham & Torres, 2008).

In recent years, the use of intervention strategies or programs specifically designed to enhance minority student enrollment through intentional initiatives has increased, especially for recruitment programs focused on graduate education (Blackwell, 1984; Field, 2017; Gomez Yepes, 2013; Griffin & Muñoz, 2011). Some graduate recruitment programs are sponsored by the federal government and include research-intensive summer internships to familiarize undergraduates with a research environment. Other programs are institutionally supported, such as ‘bridge’ or campus visitation programs designed to familiarize potential students to the campus environment and its resources. The primary goal of both these types of programs is to increase minority student enrollment in graduate education, but secondary goals include preparing such students for the academic and emotional challenges that they will face and providing them with the tools that they will need to be successful (George, Neale, Van Horne, & Malcom, 2001; Griffin & Muñoz, 2011; Harper, 2006; McKinley, 2003).

To recruit under-represented minority students to the University of Arkansas, a coalition of campus administrators developed the Attracting Intelligent Minds (AIM) Conference (hereafter also *the Conference*). Designed in 2006 and first offered in 2007, the AIM Conference offered prospective graduate students an opportunity to learn about resources, graduate

programs, and research offerings by visiting the UA campus through a funded excursion and a series of educational and support-related programs. Informally, the AIM Conference has received strong verbal support from many campus officials, although the true impact and influence of the program on graduate recruitment is not well understood or documented. With rising costs and limited resources, the need to understand the impact on and effectiveness of AIM as a graduate recruitment initiative, intervention strategy, and campus visitation tool for minority graduate enrollment has become critical.

A. Context of the Problem

Understanding the political and social context of current and historical challenges associated with minority enrollment and higher education can help determine the value of AIM and other intervention programs for diversity recruitment (Franklin, 2013). Historically, few policy arenas in higher education have received more attention than those associated with underrepresented students (URMs), underserved students, and college admissions (Alon & Tienda, 2007; Bradley, 2019; Murrell, 2019; Steele, 1992). The implemented federal, state, and local policies, practices, and judicial rulings have affected admissions and provided some remedy against inequity and harassment on university campuses (Stage & Downey, 1999; Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, & Milem, 1998; Oppenheimer, Onwuachi-Willig, & Leong, 2019).

Despite national discussions on policies such as Affirmative Action in college admissions, programs that expose URMs to graduate and professional school opportunities are still needed (Blackwell, 1984). Despite the perceived increase in racially-focused recruitment and diversity initiatives, few universities have experienced noticeable growth in minority graduate student enrollment, particularly the enrollment of African American students in

graduate programs (Hurtado, et al., 1998 Alon & Tienda, 2007; Arnett, 2015; Berrett & Giorgi, 2015; Cleveland, 2004).

As policy makers and diversity and inclusion stakeholders continue to speculate why graduate minority enrollment has not improved dramatically despite substantial increases in diversity and inclusion recruitment budgets, scholars have offered their own insights into the social capital questions on college campuses (Allen & Epps, 1991; Bauman, Bustillo, Bensimon, Estela, Brown, & Bartee, 2005). Some scholars have argued that a clear recognition of the campus' culture and attitudes regarding race is imperative for D&I professionals to do their jobs effectively, including the task of building a culture that supports the diverse enrollment of graduate students (Arnett, 2015; Anderson-Rowland, Blaisdell, Fletcher, Fussell, McCartney, & White, 1999).

The racial attitudes and beliefs of the off-campus community (meaning the college's host city or region) likewise factor into potential students' willingness to attend a particular school. There are social, political, and cultural contexts of college and university neighboring communities that can either disrupt or reinforce campus diversity and inclusion initiatives (Hurtado et al., 1998; Yanow, 2000; Roberts, 2005). Nationally, social, economic, and political conditions continue to affect public sentiment toward racial and social justice, even as college campuses continue to experience episodes of racism and hatred (Baez, 2013; Chang, Milem, & Antonio, 2011). In addition, there are public and institutional policies that can adversely affect higher education equity, even though several institutions have incorporated guidelines designed to expand access (Swanger, 2018). Programs targeted at the economically disenfranchised, for example, include promises of free tuition or guaranteed admission upon fulfilling certain program requirements. Such programs and promises help to fill gaps that might be

unintentionally created through policies and practices. Programs such as the University of Nebraska's free tuition for students of any family at or below the poverty line and Southwest Minnesota State University's guaranteed admission upon completion of their summer bridge program are examples of practices designed to increase under-represented minority enrollment. While programs such as these can create additional opportunities, they can also elevate expectations regarding the success of diversity initiatives—or more specifically the success of students in them (Boehnke, 2016; Blaine, 2019; Mitchell, Leachman, Masterson & Waxman, 2018; Baez, 2013; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017).

Unlike some colleges and universities, those located in the southern United States, such as the University of Arkansas, have had to confront their reputations of being racially hostile toward underrepresented groups (Robinson & Williams, 2015; Allen & Epps, 1991; Williams, 2008). Although the University of Arkansas was one of the first to enroll an African American (Silas Hunt), other institutions, such as the University of Alabama, famously resisted integration. Governor Wallace's 'stand at the schoolhouse door' represents an attitude of fighting racial integration. Years of systemic oppression, discrimination, and segregation precluded Black students from entering many southern predominately White universities, and when they were admitted, their educational experiences were often different than White students (Braddock, 1981; Feagin, 2013; Von Robinson & Chaney, 2017; Guffrida & Douthat, 2010; Lewis, Ginsberg & Davies, 2003).

At least one result from the regional history of resisting integration has been a disproportionately low number of minority graduate students compared to their White counterparts, and this has had a compounding consequence for the recruitment of African

American graduate students (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006; Patel, 2015; Jaschik, 2015; Murrell, 2019; Oppenheimer, et al., 2019).

The historical situations that have affected minority student enrollment have been significant, but this also places a responsibility on the college or university. According to Chief Justice Lewis Powell in his opinion in *California v. Bakke* in 1978, “postsecondary institutions (have) the right to make their own determination regarding the characteristics of their educational environment and the selection of their student body” (Williams & Clowney, 2007, p. 7). Therefore, the priority that universities place on diversity and inclusion can be meaningful and the intentional recruitment of minority students can help validate those priorities (Bingham & Torres, 2008; Blackwell, 1984; Cleveland, 2004).

Intervention strategies, such as Arkansas’ AIM Conference, were created to introduce and expose underrepresented students to graduate school opportunities expressly to help alleviate the cumulative effect of historical precedence of implied and realized bias and cultural and social alienation (Cleveland, 2004; Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001; Garces, 2012). The campus visitation intervention template that AIM has used was designed to place students of color physically on campuses that they otherwise would not have considered due to historical perceptions, real or imagined (Gomez Yepes, 2013; Poock, 2007). Hosting students on campus not only enables the student to visualize themselves on that campus but can also further inspire them to attend graduate school.

The design of the intervention that AIM provides is based on the construction of human capital, the psychological, social, and emotional conception of attending graduate school (Broder, Houston, & Williams, 1988). Institutions, such as UA, invest considerable time, human resources, and finances to offer this type of program both as an element of their social

responsibility to the public, but also for their own gain, diversifying their student body. The important question the current study addressed is whether or not the AIM Conference actually succeeds in improving the diversity, and diverse culture, of the University.

B. Statement of the Purpose

The purpose for conducting the evaluation of the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference was to describe it and its success in recruiting academically competitive minority graduate students for the University of Arkansas. Throughout the program's existence, several components have been implemented to enhance the attendee's experiences, increase the likelihood of minorities enrolling at Arkansas, and encourage greater participation from graduate faculty and program administrators, but this study will measure their impact on graduate recruitment.

C. Statement of Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How successful was the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference in achieving its intended goal of enhancing minority graduate student enrollment from 2007 to 2019?
2. How satisfied were the various constituents with the format, structure, and design of the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference?
3. What were the degree completion success rates for students who were successfully recruited to the University of Arkansas through the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference, including completion by degree type and discipline?
4. Were there significant differences in the costs associated with recruiting minority graduate students through the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference and the costs associated with general graduate student recruitment?

5. What are the policy implications for both institutional and public policy based on the program evaluation that could affect diverse graduate student recruitment?

D. Definition of Terms

Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference (AIM): A campus visitation program at the University of Arkansas sponsored by the Graduate School and International Education and the Black Graduate Students' Association that is designed to recruit underrepresented minorities.

Black Graduate Students' Association (BGSA): An officially registered student organization at UA that was originally founded to address the unique needs of Black graduate and professional students (Law, Medical, Dental, and Pharmacy), . The BGSA has been a joint sponsor of the AIM Conference since it began in 2007.

Campus Visitation Program: Initiatives that are typically created and funded for the benefit of introducing underrepresented minorities to universities by hosting them on campus. Some of these have been developed by professional or academic societies, some are sponsored by regional bodies or state governments, and some, such as AIM, are unique to an individual college or university. These programs are distinct from recruitment events such as open houses and preview days, as they tend to be multi-day events that are generally provided at minimal cost to the potential student.

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I): Refers to traits that make people who have unique behaviors and social norms feel properly and respectfully welcomed and engaged.

Graduate Preview Day: A campus visitation program that is typically not sponsored financially by a graduate school or university, and students commonly attend using their own personal funding. Prospective students usually visit a campus for a half-day or several hours. These programs are also referred to as an 'open house.'

Graduate Programs: Programs of advanced academic study beyond the bachelor's degree that are often segmented into degree categories that include master's, specialists, certificate, and doctoral programs and classes. These programs are normally offered by academic colleges, yet coordinated through a centralized institutional office, such as a graduate school. At UA, where the proposed study is situated, most graduate programs are offered through academic colleges, yet support services for them, including funded student recruitment, are through the Graduate School. The Graduate School at UA also uniquely houses interdisciplinary graduate programs.

Graduate Resource Assistance Fund (GRAF): A program unique to the U of A, yet similar types of programs exist at other colleges and universities. This Fund provides financial support for graduate programs to aid in new graduate student recruitment.

Graduate Research Opportunities Forum (GROF): A campus visitation program hosted by the University of Arkansas at which faculty, administrators, and staff from Minority Serving Institutions are introduced to graduate programs and student support services through a campus visit.

Graduate School and International Education (GSIE): The official office at the U of A that houses graduate recruitment and initiated the AIM Conference. GSIE has a full range of support staff members to assist in student recruitment, process appropriate paperwork, and provides services and supports that help enrolled graduate students.

Intervention strategy: An intentional attempt to gain congruence with a culture or community by questioning definitions, programs, and processes and by actively interrupting and reinventing them to ensure that the community is considered or included in future processes, programs, or definitions.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU): Higher education institutions established with the intention of serving the African American or Black communities. Many of these institutions were founded during the 1890 Land Grant Act, but many are privately supported or are public and are non-Land Grant institutions.

Minority Serving Institutions (MSI): Schools that enroll a certain high percentage of minority students.

Predominately White Institutions (PWI): Schools that enroll a certain high percentage of majority (White) students.

Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU): Research opportunities for non-graduate domestic (i.e. US) students generally funded by federal grant money that exposes them to graduate research.

Students of Color (SOC): Ethnic minority students that might include Black or African American, Hispanic, and Asian or Asian American students.

Underrepresented Minority (URI or URM): A group of students whose percentage in each population is less than a percentage of the general population in that category.

E. Assumptions and Limitations

A case study evaluation of one program, such as this, must accept several assumptions and has multiple limitations. The primary assumption of the study was that programs such as AIM can have a positive impact on an individual's decision making about where to enroll. Additionally, the study accepted the assumption that the data, which were not originally designed for a program evaluation, were fair, accurate, and appropriate to conduct the program evaluation. An extension of this thinking was the acceptance of the assumption that a program of this nature

can be evaluated, and that the evaluation outcome can be helpful in revising the program to improve its performance.

The study also accepts the following limitations:

1. The study was limited by data that have been collected over the past 13 years and data that were available through the U of A student information system and Graduate School records. Original data for the evaluation were collected as part of the program but were not originally intended to be used in a longitudinal evaluation of the program.
2. Although the Conference has lasted 13 years, the transient nature of graduate education in which students complete degrees quickly, constant changes of faculty and staff occur, and alterations in funding priorities together make it difficult to measure the consistent impact of the Conference.
3. This study will not evaluate other (U of A) graduate intervention programs that may also influence diversity enrollment, such as department summer Research Experience for Undergraduates, the Graduate Research Opportunities Forum, Graduate Preview Day, the Graduate Resource Assistance Fund, or any other GSIE or departmental diversity recruitment strategies.
4. The researcher was unaware of every diversity recruitment strategy initiated through each graduate program/department. Therefore a student might have participated in multiple different recruitment activities affiliated with the University of Arkansas.
5. The researcher acknowledges that graduate admissions rates are affected by several external factors, including undergraduate faculty, advisors, family, and friends of prospective students, the economic climate, and the job market. The study also did not evaluate the impact that on-line

graduate programs have on graduate enrollment, although data on minorities enrolled in on-line graduate programs is acknowledged.

6. The researcher acknowledges limitations of pertinent data due to limited access to graduate student information that may include gender, ethnicity, race, and other factors that may affect the results of this study. In addition, the findings reported here relate only to the AIM program during a specified period at a specific institution, meaning that results should be generalized with extreme caution.

F. Importance of Study

Access and equity in higher education are not achieved without intentional, specific strategies designed to meet those objectives (Alon & Tienda, 2007; Anderson-Rowland et al., 1999; Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Berrett & Giorgi, 2015; Field, 2017). Within minority recruitment programs such as summer research internships, bridge programs, research grants that target URMs, and campus visitation initiatives, are components that can influence a student's decision toward graduate education and pursuit of a terminal degree (Anderson-Rowland et al., 1999; Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Bingham & Torres, 2008). Research shows that even though most diversity professionals understand the requirement of intentional recruitment strategies, they are unaware of which factors within the strategy have the most effect on the students' enrollment decisions (Bingham & Torres, 2008; Gomez Yepes, 2013). As the priority of and investments toward diversity recruitment continue to grow, the ability to validate specific strategies and understand their effectiveness has become critically important (Anderson-Rowland et al., 1999; Williams & Clowney, 2007; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1998; Williams, 2008).

Despite that increased commitment toward intentional minority graduate recruitment strategies and programs, historical and current data do not reveal significant changes in URM graduate enrollment, even though diversity in undergraduate academic areas are improving their diverse student enrollment (Blackwell, 1984; Williams, 2008; Arnett, 2015; Patton, 2013; Garces, 2012; King & Chepyator-Thomson, 1996).

Still, some higher education professionals believe that the incremental increases in African American graduate and professional school enrollment mitigates the need for minority-specific recruitment initiatives (Alon & Tienda, 2007; Barnes, Chemerinsky, & Onwauchi-Willig, 2015; Oppenheimer et al., 2019; Agho, Baldwin, & Selig, 2004). Others illustrate that Black enrollment has grown at a faster rate than Asian, Native-American, Latino, and Pacific Islander student growth (Patton, 2013; Nerad, 2010). Although those statistics may be encouraging, a deeper analysis into the rate of minority graduate student growth, the factors that influence that growth, and a comparison of that growth to overall increases in university enrollment could reveal stagnant or non-existent domestic minority graduate student expansion (Robinson & Williams, 2015; Myers, 2016; Harper, 2006; Deo, Allen, Panter & Daye, 2009).

The AIM Conference is one of the few remaining graduate recruitment diversity initiatives at UA. Ultimately, the importance of the study lay in determining whether or not AIM was achieving its goals, including both its direct goal of increasing enrollment and its additional goal of improving the diverse culture of the institution. This type of evaluation enables Graduate School leaders and other UA officials and policy makers to invest their limited resources strategically in programs that make an actual difference at the University, not just that desire one. As senior administrators at Arkansas continue to analyze closely all policies, programs,

initiatives, investments, and expenditures and their collective impact on achieving diversity and inclusion objectives, data that can assist in that process is of significant value.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

Defining the *evaluand* (an evaluation of a program or system rather than a person) is often the first step in preparing for a program evaluation (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). “The illumination of the evaluand defines the scope and extent of the evaluation and serves as the basis for common understanding among evaluator, program administrators, and stakeholders” (Gomez Yepes, 2013, p. 7). One of the greatest opportunities that exists with the AIM evaluation is that several Conference and Conference-related recruitment activities will be analyzed for their impact and overall effectiveness on prospective students’ graduate school decision, compared to the recruitment strategies implemented by graduate programs. In short, much of the *system* of minority graduate recruitment will be analyzed.

Program Theory Evaluation (PTE)

This study will use the Program Theory Evaluation (PTE) approach to examine the substantive impact of the AIM Conference on diversity graduate enrollment. PTE consists of an “explicit theory or model of *how* the program causes the intended or observed outcomes and an evaluation that is, at least, partly guided by this model” (Rogers, Petrosino, Huebner, & Hasci, 2000, p. 5–6). Basing the evaluation on the causal model enables the evaluator to examine the “chain of objectives, where activity A will attain objective B because it is able to influence process C which affects the objective” (Rogers et al., 2000, p. 6).

In some PTEs, the main purpose of the valuation is to identify what component(s) within the program cause(s) the outcomes (Rogers et al., 2000). However, the more important aspect is that program theory can describe the program, explain the conditions necessary for project

success, and then predict the outcome by forecasting which specific program components lead to the desired outcome (Gomez Yepes, 2013; Rogers et al., 2000). Causal attribution data can be obtained through surveying stakeholders, while identifying data that describes a range of indicators—including the influence of external factors and identifying and measuring causal pathway (Rogers et al., 2000). Simply put, program theory can examine intermediate (program) outcomes and determine the extent to which they affect the ultimate outcome (Rogers et al., 2000).

According to Rogers et al., (2000), PTE can provide clues “to answer the question of *why* programs work or fail to work...By creating a model of the micro-steps and linkages in the causal path from program, to ultimate outcome-and empirically testing (them)-PTE...provides insight into why the program succeeded or failed at reaching the distal goals” (Rogers et al., 2000, p. 10). Certainly, limitations in using this model can be found in this study, including the inability to control for other influences outside of Conference activities, the impact of other diversity recruitment programs, and the transient nature of graduate education which directly affects how relationships are developed and sustained with MSI partners (Smith, 2015; Blackwell, 1984). But this theory provides an appropriate method that offers the evaluator and the participants insight into specific Conference components and their impact on graduate enrollment (Rogers et al., Gomez, 2013).

Chapter II. Review of Related Literature

There is a documented, continued need to expand access to graduate education to under-represented minority students. This access, however, is complex and is influenced and affected by such variables as financial ability to pay, cultural understandings of the graduate school experience, and the knowledge of what opportunities exist for graduate education. One southern university's response to the recruitment of minority students into graduate education was an immersive, free, in-semester campus visitation program: the AIM Conference program at the University of Arkansas. Subsequently, the purpose for conducting the evaluation of the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference was to describe it and its success in recruiting academically competitive minority graduate students for the University of Arkansas.

The review of related literature is divided into four sections: Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Graduate Education, Graduate Student Recruitment Practices, Campus Visitation Programs, and Policy Issues that Affect Diversity Admissions/Enrollment. The chapter concludes with a summary and a brief discussion of the AIM Conference. As a note, the terms 'diversity' and 'minority' in this section primarily alludes to African American students.

A. Diversity in Graduate Education

Approaches to addressing diversity in graduate education continue to evolve. Not only are more universities actively promoting diversity, access, and equity to graduate education, but they are also recognizing that substantial efforts are still needed to reach their diversity enrollment goals and objectives (Berrett & Giorgi, 2015; Ghose, Ali & Keo-Meier, 2018; Bingham & Torres, 2008). Despite the increased use of inclusion as a benchmark of diversity growth on campuses (theoretically and numerically), ethnic and racial diversity enrollment remains a key measurement of minority growth with many institutions (Ohland, Brawner,

Camacho, Layton, Long, Lord, & Wasburn, 2011; Field, 2017; Nkansah, Youmans, Agnes, Assemi, 2009; Meera, Allen, Panter, Daye. 2009).

Some diversity and inclusion stakeholders believe that a structural or institutional response is needed by universities that categorically addresses historically disparate policies and the current attitudes toward race on campus (McMurtrie, 2016; Guffrida & Douthit, 2010). Some also have argued that responses should include a de-emphasis on standardized test scores that can unfairly affect underrepresented minorities (URMs), blind reviews of applications, and specific strategies that enhances access and fairness for minorities (Sedlacek, 1987; Lewis et al., 2003). Regardless of the rationale, there is consensus that keeping ethnic and racial diversity a priority is good for higher education, and that the implementation of proactive, dynamic, recruitment strategies that focus on racial and ethnic graduate students are critically important (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007; Alon & Tienda, 2007).

Black student enrollment in college has decreased 13% since 2010, and since 2017, only 58% of black high school graduates are enrolled in some form of postsecondary education, which is down from 66% in 2010 (Zahneis, 2019). Many universities continue to confront specific factors directly associated with impeding diverse student growth in graduate education such as the absence of faculty or senior administration diversity, inconsistent or antiquated D&I policies, and the continuation of certain customs or traditions that can create a climate of insensitivity or be construed as offensive (Gasman, 2016; June, 2015; Baez, 2013; Chang, Milem, & Antonio, 2011; Matthew, 2016; Smith, 2015). Additionally, African American students at many Predominately White Institutions (PWI) experience higher attrition rates, lower grade point averages (GPA), interact with fewer minority mentors and role models, and are generally less likely to pursue graduate education than their majority counterparts (Guiffrida &

Douthit, 2010; Summers & Hrabowski, 2006; Blackwell, 1984; Cleveland, 2004; Feagin, 2013; Gasman, 2016; Harper, 2007).

Even though the aggregate growth of all non-white students has increased for several years, certain demographics within this increase has varied (Carter & Wilson, 1997; Griffin & Muñoz, 2011; Quarterman, 2008). Many institutions struggle in making their public university reflect the diversity of the state they serve (Myers, 2016; Patel, 2015), and this is particularly true at state flagship universities (Myers, 2016; Harper, 2006). The culmination of the effects of these obstacles and many others are consistently reflected in minority graduate student enrollment around the country (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2019; Griffin & Muñoz, 2011; Melillo, Dowling, Abdulla, & Findeisen, 2013).

The University of Arkansas is not unique among its peers regarding minority student enrollment and growth (Quiñones. 2003; Harper, 2006; Myers, 2016). Like many other flagship institutions, minority student enrollment does not reflect the minority population in the state (Ayers, 2005; Census, 2000; 2010). For example, from 2000 to 2019, the Black population in the State of Arkansas remained around 15.5% of the state's population. However, in 2000 the total Black enrollment at the U of A was 6% (including graduate school) and in 2019, Black students comprised only 4.3% of the overall enrollment, and 6.5% of graduate student enrollment (University of Arkansas, 2020). By way of comparison, in 2009, the first year of the AIM program, the overall Black enrollment was 5%.

The prevailing challenges described here and the sustained level of small or non-existent growth in minority graduate enrollment infers that a comprehensive response to minority student recruitment needs to occur. Theoretically, singular programs are not enough: an entire *system* of diversity strategies that methodically recruits, engages, supports, retains, graduates, and

professionally places underrepresented and underserved minorities needs to be put in place (Williams, 2008; Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009). Also included within the system should be dedicated funding to prepare and support URMs; mechanisms that ensure the reliable transfer of information regarding internships and graduate opportunities; and an increased commitment of technological and human resources devoted specifically toward minority recruitment, engagement, and retention (Griffin & Muñoz, 2011; Bingham & Torres, 2008; Stassun, Burger, & Lange, 2010). Despite data confirming minimal growth in minority graduate enrollment, few institutions have chosen to commit the technological, human, or financial resources needed to significantly improve the participation of these students (Berrett & Giorgi, 2015; Myers, 2016; Smith, 2015).

Some of the obstacles that impede significant growth in minority student enrollment cannot or will never be eliminated (Bingham & Torres, 2008; Field, 2017; Berrett & Giorgi, 2015). Some observers believe the obstacles are greater than realized, as demonstrated in recent reports exposing the manipulation of some university admissions processes to benefit wealthier (mostly White) families for admission into college without appropriate credentials (Murrell, 2019; Shea-Gardner, 2019). Additionally, the enduring presence of White privilege, micro aggressive behaviors toward minorities, and social, political, and economic obstacles have extensively affected the psychology of URMs, which systemically effects their desire to begin and then to continue in formal educational settings and can affect their academic performance once enrolled (Smith, Allen, & Daniel, 2007; Marans & Stewart, 2015; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Sorozano, 2009; Murrell, 2019).

Consequently, increasing graduate student diversity remains a challenge, and continues to fuel frustrating conversations on many college campuses, including the University of Arkansas

(Deo, et al., 2007; Arnett, 2015; Spivey-Mooring & Apprey, 2014). Even as universities have touted their increased growth in diverse enrollment, much of this has now been exposed as international student enrollment or the enrollment of minority students in online programs—both valuable and important, but fundamentally different from the recruitment and retention of graduate students into traditional programs that lead to, among other things, academic and research-focused careers (Patton, 2013; Gambino & Gryn, 2011; Franklin, 2013).

There are a variety of documented barriers that diverse student populations face in seeking a postsecondary education, especially those considering a graduate level education (Williams, 2008; Nelson Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes, 2007). Programs such as the AIM Conference may prove to be different and beneficial because they focus on a range of identified barriers (access to funding, the psychology of being on a PWI campus, graduate education expectations, community of support, etc.) and incorporate systemic collaborative strategies to enhance minority graduate recruitment and enrollment.

B. Graduate Student Recruitment Practices

Among graduate recruitment professionals, a consensus regarding the factors that impact minority graduate enrollment varies as much as the challenges previously identified (June, 2015; Lynch, 2014; Gomez Yepes, 2013; Griffin & Muñoz, 2011). Some recruitment professionals believe that attracting talented graduate students occurs exclusively through lucrative graduate funding packages (stipends, waivers, travel, research funding, etc.) or trendy, popular research (Poock, 2007; Anderson-Rowland, et al., 1999). Others believe that the reputation of the university, the popularity of athletic teams, or the geographic location of the institution has the greatest influence on graduate school enrollment decisions (Baade & Daye, 1990; Astin, 1993; Rogers & Molina, 2006; Malaney, 1987). Scholars have also suggested that influencing K-12 curricula, providing standardized test preparation tutorials, or offering dedicated mentorship for

marginalized students can help prepare underserved minority students for academic work in higher education, and subsequently, better prepare the pipeline of students enrolling in graduate school (Gomez Yepes, 2013; Staussun, Burger, & Lange, 2010). Other scholars have reported that they perceive that all of those factors can influence a prospective minority graduate students' process, but the degree to which each influences a students' decision is largely unknown (Mullen, Goyette, & Soares, 2003; Zoltowski, Eddington, Brightman, Buzzanell, & Joshi, 2018; Berrett & Giorgi. 2015).

Scholars have also worked to discredit some of the myths of minority graduate student enrollment, such as that cultivating relationships with HBCU partners (faculty and staff) does not influence their perception of PWI graduate schools; marginal students cannot meet the rigors of graduate work, especially minorities; graduate schools that do not have large resources or a notable research reputation cannot compete for top minority talent; intervention that occurs later during an undergraduate's matriculation (i.e. spring semester of their senior year) is too late ;and that graduate coordinators and faculty cannot locate resources needed for providing competitive funding packages for deserving students (Anderson-Rowland, et al., 1999; Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Field, 2017; June, 2015; Gomez Yepes, 2013; Melillo, et al., 2013).

Some institutions struggle with increasing graduate minority enrollment because they apply an undergraduate recruitment mindset or set of strategies (Tharp, 2012). Undergraduate minority recruitment and diversity programs tend to be highly centralized and less dependent upon faculty relationships, while graduate recruitment and programs are mostly de-centralized, inconsistently funded, and depend largely on effective collaboration between graduate faculty and graduate recruitment (Melillo, et al., 2013; Field, 2017; Griffin & Muñoz, 2011). In other words, a consistent, sustained, collaborative recruitment strategy generally translates into

stronger diversity programs that can affect minority graduate enrollment, but the strategies and programs must be patiently supported because students' graduate school decisions can be influenced by several factors, not just a single one that is perhaps more easily addressed (Blackwell, 1984; Spivey-Mooring & Apprey, 2014; Gomez Yepes, 2013; Griffin & Muñoz, 2011).

Graduate recruitment is an interactive, intimate process in which graduate faculty and recruiters are procuring students to fill specific research needs within their programs (Lynch, 2014; Field, 2017; Melillo et al., 2013). Graduate faculty often play a major role in the identification of prospective students for their research. Typically recruitment is not broad, but instead quite targeted for a limited number of available positions, and these graduate student positions must be aligned specifically with certain research areas and areas of advanced study. To that end, it is generally beneficial for faculty to target specific institutions where students are being academically prepared for research, and this can narrow the recruitment focus (Agho et al., 2004; Gomez Yepes, 2013; Griffin & Muñoz, 2011; Stassun, et al., 2010; Arnett, 2015; Aspray & Bernat, 2000).

Intentional strategies and programs are where URM students are strategically engaged for graduate recruitment (Field, 2017). Included in those strategies are necessary interventions, such as paid summer internships, sponsored campus visits, or bridge programs that help students get acclimated to a new campus in a new community (Bennett, 2002; Gomez Yepes, 2013). But the most influential aspect of any strategy may be the flexibility that graduate education leaders have in admitting and funding underrepresented minority graduate students (Arnett, 2015; Berrett & Giorgi, 2015). And it will likely be that flexibility in creating programs and their autonomy over

their programs' admissions process that will enable many universities to enhance their minority graduate enrollment (Stassun, et al., 2010; Quarterman, 2008).

C. The need for Intervention for Underrepresented Minorities

The need for graduate recruitment strategies specifically targeting minorities can be a difficult concept to explain, and more difficult to understand for people outside of higher education. Even within graduate education, questions regarding the optimal number of minority students to have enrolled on campus can prompt debate. Additional inquiries concern how much money reflects an appropriate investment to demonstrate the university's commitment to diversity or graduate education, or whether it is a fair standard to compare minority enrollment campus to a state's minority population (Berrett & Giorgi, 2015; Kallio, 1995; Brown, Davis, & McClendon, 1999; Field, 2017; Blackwell, 1984; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007).

Berrett and Giorgi (2015) and Gomez Yepes (2013) stressed that the objective for minority student recruitment should not be simply numeric, but rather should be to demonstrate an increasingly inclusive environment for students in which to enroll and flourish. A certain number of minority students enrolling can be helpful, but it is not helpful simply to create a 'quota.' The objective is to ensure that levels of enrollment are included in diversity goals but are not the lone measure of diversity. Consequently, recruitment strategies must be linked to the cultural elements of building a diverse community (Field, 2017; Bingham & Torres, 2008).

Some graduate education professionals believe that majority students differ in their approach to graduate school pursuit, and consequently have designed recruitment programs that are specifically for underrepresented populations (Clark, 2011; Field, 2017). Some of the most common strategies include targeted advertisements in minority journals, attending culturally focused graduate fairs, and support of minority educational organizations such as the National

Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS), the Ph.D. Project, the GEM Consortium, and Minorities for Applied Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) (Bingham & Torres, 2008; Pooch, 2007; George et al., 2001; Williams & Wade-Golder, 2007).

Even though the University of Arkansas, the case institution and focus of the current study, participates and supports many of the targeted activities designed for minority student recruitment, there is no empirical evidence reported about their effectiveness or lack thereof. The academy, however, has stressed that recruitment is increasingly being measured by how personally connected a prospective student feels to the graduate program and its faculty (Stassun et al., 2010; Field, 2017; Pooch, 2007; Arnett, 2015). The most practical way to create and solidify that connection is through intentional recruitment strategies culminating in a campus visit where students *believe* they are wanted and valued (Williams & Golden, 2007; Pooch, 2007; Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Gomez Yepes, 2013).

Many institutions employ recruitment programs where they can infuse their school's identity or brand, while creating that comfort and congeniality for the prospective and existing students within their campus community. This enables universities to reinforce their values and beliefs to students before and after they enroll (Broader, et al., 1988). Some examples include the University of San Diego, which uses their 'Radical Hospitality Program' to promote a community of inquiry that encourages questions about difference while revitalizing respect for those differences (University of San Diego, 2019). The Tapia Center at Rice University empowers and motivates academically successful URM students in Math and Science by providing them with a "higher education experience because they are deserving of an academic opportunity" (Rice, 2019, p. 1). And Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (NY) engages a Dean of Graduate

Experience to facilitate, prioritize, and monitor URM students' support and experiences while in graduate school to assure that they have direct and consistent access to a senior administrator (Rensslear, 2019).

Within graduate recruitment, however, nuanced examples such as these are sometimes viewed as specific only to *those* universities (i.e., colleges with large resources, and a location and reputation that make it easier to attract URMs) (Bingham & Torres, 2008). However, several examples of effective minority recruitment strategies and programs exist at universities that do not fit those descriptions (Gomez Yepes, 2013). For example, the National Association of Graduate Admission Professionals (NAGAP) completed a study in 2006 that examined how their member graduate schools recruited minority students. Although the analysis was limited due to the number of survey responses received and the variation of recruitment models and methods used by universities, each school depended on some common components.

According to the study, the “highest performing graduate schools” (Poock, 2007, p. 2) consistently implemented the following strategies:

- The use of personal contact and follow-up with students, and consistency in implementing diversity programs. Prospective students that consistently communicated with graduate faculty and staff frequently enrolled in those graduate schools (Gomez Yepes, 2013; Poock, 2007; Lynch, 2014). Another study performed by Reyes in (2013) examined how institutions planned and implemented their D&I strategies. He proffered that many campuses used “emotion-inducing” (p. 4) terms such as *access, multiculturalism, diversity, inclusivity, outreach, equity, and inclusive* consistently on their institution's website, but noted that very few institutions articulated or implemented strategies that directly connected action with

those phrases. He further observed that several schools marketed antiquated strategies or outdated plans on their university website (e.g. 7 out of the 42 plans reviewed in 2013 had not been updated within the last 5 years), depicting the genuine level of priority placed on D&I from those institutions (Reyes, 2014).

- Each school had mechanisms and resources that enabled the graduate program to compete financially for more talented prospects. NAGAP's study, which included participants exclusively affiliated with doctoral degrees or master's degrees only, and schools that offered both, revealed that assistantships or funding packages were the most influential factors to entice prospective graduate students, especially for minority Ph.D. students. According to the study, the graduate programs that grew the fastest were fiscally creative, flexible, and nimble when competing for higher quality minority talent.
- Graduate programs consistently participated in collaborative activities and programs throughout campus and the community.
- Schools reported that minority applications generally increased if the prospective student was hosted on their campus (tours, visitation days, internships, and bridge programs), especially minority doctoral students.
- Two-thirds of survey participants did not allocate funds specifically for recruitment activities and less than half offered funding specially for underrepresented students. Only 7 out of 93 participants offered assistantships or fellowships greater than \$5,000.00; these institutions generally ranked lower on this list (Poock, 2007).

There were limitations to NAGAP's study, primarily because only Conference attendees were surveyed; however, the findings aligned with the broader literature about minority graduate

recruitment. Stassun et al., (2010), Field (2017), and Bingham and Torres (2008) all stressed that minority recruitment should be an intentional, consistent, focused long-term strategy that includes sustained relationships with MSI/HBCUs, summer internships, and sponsored and non-sponsored campus visits. In addition, commitment at the institutional level, strategic advertising, and support for ethno-centric organizations can visually confirm the schools' commitment to minority enrollment (Allen & Epps, 1991; Alon & Tienda, 2007; Poock, 2013). But, as Poock (2007) noted, the greatest impact on minority enrollment (regardless of size, location, or resources) was consistent and personal follow-up by graduate faculty, flexibility in funding for URMs, collaboration between units and across campus, and low-cost (to the student) campus visitation programs, all of which enable the prospective student to feel that their graduate experience is customized specifically for them (Gomez Yepes, 2013; Bauman et al., 2005; Spivey-Mooring & Apprey, 2014; Quarterman, 2008).

D. Campus Visitation Strategies

In 2017, a conversation with a University of Arkansas Political Science student revealed that she was attending graduate school at one of the most prestigious research universities in the country. Her path toward that decision represents a microcosm of many experiences for underrepresented minorities attending graduate school. The process began with a meeting with her faculty mentor, who encouraged her to consider graduate school. Until that meeting, the student had not considered going to graduate school. The professor called colleagues and friends around the country and shared the student's résumé. The result of those efforts culminated in her admission to a very competitive summer internship and in sponsored campus visits to several graduate schools (Personal communication May 4, 2017).

For many minority graduate students, the first step of their graduate school process begins with an intervention (typically from a mentor or faculty member) that introduces the concepts of research and graduate education, and invariably increases the student's curiosity and interest. Often those processes result in the student enrolling in a graduate program (Thomas & Dockter, 2019; Ghose et al., 2018; Adserias, Charleston, & Jackson, 2017; Berrett & Giorgi, 2015).

For many minority graduate students, their perception of themselves and the university are altered because of the campus visit (Broder, et al., 1988; Pooch, 2007; Rogers & Molina, 2006). They describe how the impact of interacting with existing graduate students and faculty while visiting campus confirmed which school was the best fit. In addition, the interaction and synergy with other prospective minority graduate students reinforced that they would have the necessary support and motivation needed to complete the program. Most important, the student felt a connection with the graduate program because the consistent, personal, and genuine communication that originated with the programs' faculty was reinforced during and after the visit (Staussun et al., 2010; Swanger, 2018; Bloedon & Stokes, 1994).

Campus visit programs have been identified as one the most important strategies in the minority graduate recruitment and enrollment process (Rogers & Molina, 2006; Pooch, 2007; Gomez Yepes, 2013). That is primarily because most traditional graduate recruitment occurs at graduate fairs or Conferences, where recruiters are generally afforded 1 to 4 minutes to convince students to invest their next 2 to 7 years at their university (Field, 2017). Campus visit programs on the other hand enable recruiters, faculty, staff, and graduate students collectively to influence the student to consider their graduate school while they are experiencing the campus and greater community during an extended stay on campus. Literature has confirmed that when prospective

minority students visit the graduate school they are considering, the likelihood of them enrolling at that school increases dramatically (Broader et al., 1988; Berrett & Giorgi, 2015; Smith, 2015; Melillo et al., 2013; Iverson, 2012; Clark, 2011; Yepes Gomez, 2013; Pooch, 2007).

Obviously, several components of the recruitment process help influence a prospective students' decision, including the attractiveness of financial packages, the early engagement of minority faculty in the recruitment process, the relationships with MSIs, and innovative approaches to minority recruitment, student support, and retention (Melillo et al., 2013; Stassun et al., 2010; Bingham & Torres, 2008). But the area most graduate schools believe made the greatest impact on the successful recruitment of minority students was hosting them on their campuses for a personal visit (Rogers & Molina, 2006; Pooch, 2007; Quarterman, 2008; Field, 2017; Broader, Houston, & Williams, 1988). Due to the research similarities between universities in many areas, such as their recruitment strategies and offering of programs, the successful recruitment of students requires the differentiation of institutions through the exposure to prospective students of the people, places, events, and relationships that are unique to their campuses (Pooch, 2007; Rogers & Molina, 2006; Stassun et al., 2010).

Moreover, there is limited generalizable research literature on the impact and effectiveness of campus visitation programs on minority enrollment, reinforcing the need for the current study to offer insights into the process and its success.

E Policy Issues that affect Graduate Education

One of the most important historical decisions that connects policy, race, and higher education is affirmative action (Allen & Epps, 1991; Garces, 2012). Fewer court cases have specifically had a greater impact on the connection between college admissions and race than *The University of California v. Bakke* in 1978, which established affirmative action

(Oppenheimer et al., 2019; Ball, 2000). Although affirmative action continues to be vitally important for equity, fairness, and access for ethnic minorities in education, it also remains one of the most contested and controversial policies in higher education (Law, 1999; Allen & Epps, 1991). As recently as 2016, with *Fisher v. University of Texas* and in 2014 with *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action* at the University of Michigan, constant objection to the use of race as a consideration in higher education admissions has been present. The result, therefore, is that remedies to offset objections to affirmative action cannot be haphazard, and must be systemic, strategic, consistent, and thoughtful (Oppenheimer, et al., 2019; Garces, 2012; Motley, 2015; Baez, 2013).

Although court cases, and state and federal legislation can affect higher education admissions policies, the internal policies within each institution can have a greater impact on graduate enrollment (Chang, Milem, & Antonio, 2011; Dawes, 1971; Ponterotto, Martinez, & Hayden, 1986; Bartunek & Rynes, 2014). As noted, graduate school faculty and staff typically have considerable autonomy over the student admissions process. To that end, minority graduate enrollment can be influenced by a graduate faculty or staff member who is tenaciously committed to recruiting and admitting URMs to their graduate program versus those who do not have the same commitment (Dawes, 1971; Adserias, et al., 2017; Alon & Tienda, 2007; Nelson Laird et al., 2007; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007).

Graduate enrollment is generally not affected by the size or diversity of the neighboring community, the family lineage connected with the institution, state or local education policy, or the popularity of the athletic teams (Baade & Daye, 1990; Mullen et al., 2003; Sidin, Hussin, & Tan, 2003). However, the priority and commitment an institution places on underrepresented minorities, which is often reflected through institutional support of minority graduate

recruitment, admissions, support, and retention, likely does affect such enrollment (Thomas & Dockter, 2019; June, 2015; Stassun et al., 2010; Nelson Laird, et al., 2007).

Consequently, many graduate schools have enhanced racial and ethnic diversity efforts directly through internal policies, strategies, initiatives, and programs (Karimi & Matous, 2018); Zoltowski et al., 2018). The success of these efforts is determined by the cohesion and partnership of several stakeholders working together (Bryson, 2004). This requires consistent support from the institutions' senior administration, progressive and meaningful diversity and inclusion policies, equitable admissions procedures, engaged faculty, aggressive minority recruitment, and palpable support for existing graduate students (Poock, 2007; Williams & Clowney, 2007; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007; Allen & Epps, 1991; Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Bennett, 2002; Bingham & Torres, 2008; Blackwell, 1984; Gomez Yepes, 2013). Subsequently, dependable and relevant financial support to create, implement, and sustain diversity initiatives is critical for institutional change (Williams & Clowney, 2007). Committed human resources and technological support for D&I programs can be the difference between a program being fully developed or eliminated, and consistent follow-up with MSI partners is imperative for the continuation of such programs (Gomez Yepes, 2013; Anderson-Rowland et al., 1999; Bauman et al., 2005; Bingham & Torres, 2008; Nkansah et al., 2009; Quaye & Harper, 2014).

Many universities have worked tirelessly to enhance their diversity and inclusion strategies, and their graduate programs have benefited from those efforts (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2019; Spivey-Mooring & Apprey, 2014; Poock, 2007). However, many institutions choose to focus on specific areas they believe can have the greatest impact, and graduate education generally is not a high priority, mostly because of the smaller size of graduate student enrollments compared to undergraduate enrollment (Kallio, 1995; June, 2015; Patton, 2013;

Spivey-Mooring & Apprey, 2014). Graduate schools typically implement their own strategies and must strategically incorporate those that distinctively differentiate them from other institutions. Even though most schools generally use familiar approaches for recruiting students, such as those described here, some are also using unique innovative approaches to recruitment that focuses on pipeline development at select institutions, deliberate intervention strategies, and dedicated resources for URM students (Poock, 2007; Alon & Tienda, 2007; Anderson-Rowland et al., 1999; Blackwell, 1984; Lewis et al., 2003; McConnell, 2010; McKinley, 2003).

F. Intervention Strategies

The premise behind intervention strategies, or programs or initiatives specifically designed to enhance minority student enrollment through intentional engagement, is to provide diverse students with information and resources that increase their awareness of graduate school opportunities (McKinley, 2003; Milem, Chang, Antonio, 2005; Mulder, 1991). Research has indicated that minority students may not be as cognizant of the graduate application processes and deadlines, paid summer internships, graduate funding, graduate research, and other programs specifically designed to increase their graduate school opportunities (Blackwell, 1984; Summers & Hrabowski, 2006; Gomez Yepes, 2013; Bingham & Torres, 2008; Stassun, 2003). Moreover, MSI faculty, particularly from HBCUs, may not be fully aware of faculty engagement visitation programs, joint research opportunities, or available funding to assist in the recruitment of their students (Gomez Yepes, 2013). Therefore, intentional efforts designed to relay information directly to these stakeholders has been a necessary strategy (Poock, 2007; Gomez Yepes, 2013; Nelson Laird et al., 2007; Ponterotto et al., 1986).

As mentioned, typical intervention methods for most graduate programs consists of actively supporting large national minority-centric organizations such as the Louis Stokes

Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP), the National Association of Black Geologists (NABG), or the National Black Graduate Students Association (NBGSA). In addition, graduate recruiters attend cluster career and graduate school fairs where the HBCU's located in the same region coordinate their schedules so recruiters can visit every school in the region. As well many schools have become part of the National Name Exchange, where research institutions share the names of talented underrepresented students in one comprehensive database (Melillo et al., 2013; Poock, 2007; Oliver & Brown, 1988).

Recently, some universities have incorporated intervention methods that addresses specific elements of graduate recruitment and enrollment. For example, campus bridge programs, which provide social and academic acclimation for students who are new to a university and a community, have grown in popularity because of the increase in out of -state/region and international graduate students (Stassun, et al., 2010; Bennett, 2002). Also, research-intensive summer internships that introduce URM's to specific areas of research related to their career aspirations, have been found to be instrumental in familiarizing students with the nuances of graduate research, while also introducing them to the campus and the broader geographic region (Broder et al., 1988; Cole & Thompson, 1999; Oliver & Brown, 1988; Foertsch, Alexander, & Penberthy, 2000). Some graduate schools also provide preparation for Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) and writing laboratories to prospective students to ready them for the demands associated with standardized testing and graduate student level writing. For many minority students, these intervention strategies are what they need to adjust to graduate school demands(Quarterman, 2008; Lane, 2016; Bennett, 2002; Summers & Hrabowski, 2006; Brown, Davis, & McClendon, 2010; Field, 2017; Melillo et al., 2013).

G. Dedicated Resources for Minority Recruitment

Universities around the country are making significant financial investments toward diversity and inclusion (Jesse, 2016; Agho, et al., 2004). Announcements regarding the University of Michigan’s investment of \$85 million toward diversity programs, Brown University’s \$100 million diversity initiative to enhance diversity and inclusion, and Virginia Tech’s and Yale’s increased focus on diversifying students and faculty have captured recent headlines (Jesse, 2016; Philanthropy, 2015; Shimshock, 2017; Yale, 2015). Generally, investments of this nature follow a template that includes a percentage spent on enhancing faculty diversity, resources toward scholarships, undergraduate recruitment and outreach, and improvements in diversity-related curriculum (Frederick, Sanderson, & Schlereth, 2017; AP, 2008; Jesse, 2016; Philanthropy, 2015; Williams, 2008).

What is often missing from programs such as these are significant investments toward graduate education, specifically, minority student recruitment and enrollment (Gomez Yepes, 2013; Griffin & Muñoz, 2011). Although some graduate programs use funding approaches that target certain ethnicities, socio-economic populations, or gender, those strategies are generally not designed to address comprehensively or systemically most of the challenges associated with minority graduate recruitment (Matthew, 2016). Consequently, most graduate schools must generate their own fiscal strategy that enables them to attract and recruit students for their graduate programs (Griffin & Muñoz, 2011; Bingham & Torres, 2008).

Examples of those innovative strategies also include:

- Tapia Camps at the Tapia Center at Rice University—camps within a larger diversity ecosystem that leveraged initial funding from the National Science Foundation’s Alliance for Graduate Education in the Professoriate (AGEP) to

provide opportunities for URM undergraduate and graduate students in science, mathematics, and engineering who participate in a summer internship at Rice.

Through Dr. Richard Tapia's inspiration and leadership, Rice University was able to leverage additional gifts and investments that enabled the center to increase the number of students who participated. Under Tapia's direction, over 35 math students have received, or are working toward, a Ph.D., and 15 of the 35 are women (Rice, 2019).

- The Future Faculty Career Exploration Program at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) increases diversity among faculty by hosting graduate students and junior faculty on campus. Guests are introduced to RIT's research and teaching philosophy, campus leaders, and community stakeholders, while learning about upcoming position changes or professional opportunities. The program adds additional value to faculty members who join the school by supporting them with grant funding, mentors, and research support (Rochester, 2019).
- The College of Engineering (COE) at the University of Arkansas aligned the department's recruiting resources and programs with GSIE to become more efficient in diversity recruitment. The collaboration enabled both units to target prospective students for specific programs and research within the college. Often competitive students were identified earlier in their undergraduate matriculation and cultivated for several years. The reduction in recruitment expenditures enabled the department to increase their graduate funding packages for competitive minority students. To date, the COE has had the largest number of

distinguished graduate fellowship recommendations for minority students in the history of the fellowship (Personal Communication, 2012–2018).

- The graduate school at Princeton University facilitates the Graduate Student Support Fund (GSSF) that “provides grants to Princeton graduate students...allowing them to remain in the program until the completion of the degree” (Princeton, 2019, p. 1); The fund is designated specifically for historically and presently URM by providing financial relief toward expenses directly related to their academic progress (e.g. tutoring, non-Princeton course work and self-study materials). The fund can also cover unforeseen obligations of family members, dependent care costs, and expenses associated with illness or the death of a relative (Princeton, 2019).

H. Chapter Summary

Several universities, including the University of Arkansas, invest in D&I strategies specifically to engage prospective minority graduate students (Pooch, 2007). The review of related literature describes the strategies used most often by many universities in attracting, recruiting, and admitting qualified URMs. Most of these strategies are considered intervention strategies because they are intentionally designed to target specific students.

One of the most effective intervention strategies is a campus visit, an activity that allows institutions to introduce prospective students to graduate research, faculty, graduate students, academic support networks, and social and cultural amenities on campus and throughout the community (Bingham & Torres, 2008; Pooch, 2007). Depending on the priority placed on minority graduate enrollment, some institutions partially pay student expenses while others pay for all expenses (Pooch, 2007; Rogers & Molina, 2006; Gomez Yepes, 2013). The visit and the

related engagement are designed to demonstrate the graduate program's genuine interest in underrepresented and underserved students, while exposing them to the expectations associated with graduate school (Bennett, 2002; Deo, Allen, Panter, & Daye, 2009; Gomez Yepes, 2013).

Like most campus visitation programs, the AIM Conference is constructed to directly influence the graduate school decision of prospective students while they are on Arkansas' campus (Bennett, 2002; Staussun, Guadalupe, Burger, & Lang, 2010). AIM incorporates many of the activities that other institutions believe have significantly influenced their minority recruitment, and AIM's implementation of those strategies has meant that the U of A competes for highly academically qualified minorities. Yet the Conference has never been comprehensively evaluated. Graduate recruitment literature suggests that recruitment and intervention activities, whether they are social activities, community engagement, interaction with graduate students, or introductions to key D&I leaders on campus, should examine their effect on graduate enrollment, and this evaluation has been designed to accomplish this recommendation.

Chapter III. Research Methods

There is a sustained need to explore how colleges and universities can best recruit graduate students from underrepresented populations. This has been an on-going challenge for institutions, and many have created unique, single institution approaches to increasing minority graduate student enrollment. The University of Arkansas, a land-grant university in the mid-southern US has a history of racial inequality, but during the past few years has made earnest efforts to improve minority graduate student recruitment (Robinson & Williams, 2015). Just over 10 years ago, UA developed the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference (AIM), a campus visit program, to aid in this recruitment. The purpose for conducting the current evaluation of the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference is to describe it and its success in recruiting academically competitive minority graduate students for the University of Arkansas.

Program evaluation strategies recommend using one of several approaches to complete the evaluation of a program, depending upon the desired outcome of the evaluation. According to Fitzpatrick, et al., (2004), the three primary evaluation strategies are: a program approach, that analyzes how effective program activities are on reaching a goal; the decision approach, that analyzes the premise behind decisions that affect the strategy associated with a program; and the participant approach, that examines the roles of stakeholders and participants and their effect on the strategy. The current study explored the effect of the AIM program on increasing minority graduate student enrollment and used the program approach to evaluate the Conference and Conference-related recruitment activities.

This approach enabled the evaluation to play roles that were formative (by examining ways to improve the program) and summative (by determining the merits of continuing the program under its current structure and format) (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2004). In addition, this program

evaluation was expected to enhance AIM stakeholders' understanding of the Conference's impact in four specific ways: the evaluation can contribute to on-going conversations regarding the need to expand, continue, or certify (meaning to institutionalize it throughout the university); it can contribute toward specific program modifications; it can obtain evidence that intensifies support for the Conference; and it can contribute "to the understanding of basic psychological, social, and other processes" (Worthen, Blaine, & Fitzpatrick, 1997, p. 1) associated with the program (Worthen et al., 1997).

A. Program Theory Evaluation (PTE)

Within the context of evaluating the program versus the participants or decisions, the study will incorporate the Program Theory Approach (PTE) to examine the substantive impact of Conference activities and (related) recruitment activities on minority graduate enrollment. PTE consists of an "explicit theory or model of *how* the program causes the intended or observed outcomes" (Rogers et al., 2000, p. 5-6). Basing the evaluation on the causal model enabled the evaluator to examine the "chain of objectives, where activity A will attain objective B because it is able to influence process C which affects the objective" (p. 6)

In some PTEs, the main purpose of the evaluation is to identify what component(s) within the program cause(s) the outcome (Rogers, et al., 2000). More importantly, program theory can properly describe the program, explain the conditions necessary for program success, and then predict the outcome by forecasting which specific program component(s) lead(s) to the desired outcome (Yepes Gomez, 2013, Rogers, et al., 2000). Causal attribution data can be obtained through surveying stakeholders, while identifying data that describes a range of indicators, including the influence of external factors and identifying and measuring causal pathways (Rogers, et al., 2000). Simply put, program theory can examine the intermediate

program activities of AIM and determine the extent to which they affect the ultimate outcome of increasing minority enrollment (Rogers, et al., 2000).

According to Rogers et al., (2000), PTE can provide clues that “answers the question of why programs work or fail to work” (p. 1). By creating a model of the micro-steps and linkages in the causal path from program to ultimate outcome, and by empirically testing them, PTE can provide insight into why a program succeeds or fails to reach its stated goals (Rogers, et al., 2000). Some limitations existed because of the decision to use PTE for this study, including the inability to control for other influences outside of Conference activities, the impact of other diversity recruitment programs, and the transient nature of graduate education which directly affects how relationships are developed and sustained with MSI partners.

B. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis for the study were guided by protocols for program theory evaluation, and they incorporated qualitative, descriptive methods, which used existing student surveys, stakeholder interviews, document analysis, and Conference evaluation reports.

Additional information was obtained from university graduate enrollment and degree completion data, as well as evaluations from other minority visitation programs that occurred in lieu of AIM (2012–2015). Documented discussions between the evaluator, UA faculty, diversity and inclusion administrators, MSI partners, AIM participants, UA graduate students, and GSIE staff were also used.

The data used to analyze the impact of AIM was stored electronically and hard copy files maintained by the evaluator, GSIE staff, and BGSA members. Historical data, including comprehensive reports regarding minority recruitment visit programs, stakeholder interviews, Conference attendee surveys, and Conference evaluation reports served as primary data sources.

The methodology used in the study addressed the following research questions using the described methods:

1. How successful was the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference in achieving its intended goal of enhancing minority graduate student enrollment from 2006 to 2019?

The first step in the data analysis included securing the complete and accurate listing of all participants of the AIM program, and related Conferences, from 2007 through 2019. This participant listing came from the historical documents and materials that have been retained for each visit program. Each name was used to construct a table (Tables 4 to 14) of participants, gender (if known), undergraduate institution, discipline, and whether they enrolled at UA. Degree levels, graduate programs, and whether students attended an HBCU were constructed in Table 15 . Each name was researched using information from the University of Arkansas' student information system to identify whether the individual matriculated at the University, the degree program in which they enrolled, and, if appropriate, whether the individual graduated. For reporting purposes, each name was replaced with the term 'Participant' and a number to preclude identification of students' names (Tables 4 to 14). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were also reported to answer the question. As a note, the AIM program included a variety of majority and minority populations, so data analysis only included underrepresented minorities who participated in the program.

Overall, a percentage of yield from interest to enrollment was reported along with percentage of degree completion. These percentages were compared to overall statistics for the University's graduate student population.

2. How satisfied were the various constituents with the format, structure, and design of the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference?

Along with student data, the second step in data analysis included accessing the interviews, historical documents, and responses from the various constituencies associated with AIM. Most of the data were obtained from the comprehensive Conference evaluations and the annual recruitment reports provided by the evaluator for GSIE. Specifically, the data was housed jointly between GSIE and individuals who have worked with and have knowledge of the AIM program. These materials and documents, that include correspondence, reports, and emails, were used in conjunction with the comprehensive Conference evaluations that provided content analysis to answer this question.

AIM student feedback was examined using the AIM participant surveys that were administered annually to students as they completed their time on campus. As a note, the survey that was administered typically had the same questions from year to year, although there were some slight modifications over time. A sample of the survey is included as Appendix G. The data from these surveys are primarily numeric, but also includes participants' rating (using the Likert scale format) of their level of agreement with different activities in the AIM program. These data are reported from 2015 to 2019 and note the central tendency, mean, median, and mode for each item. For narrative comments provided by participants, a content analysis was conducted on the wording, looking for theme identification that may suggest the participants' overall satisfaction with the program.

3. What are the degree completion success rates for students who were successfully recruited to the University of Arkansas through the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference, including completion by degree type and discipline?

Using the student data table, an inquiry through University of Arkansas' student information system determined whether each student completed their degree program. The

success rate for all students was reported as a group, and then reported by year, as well as by academic program. In this reporting, frequency counts and percentages were used to answer the research question. Student success rates were also compared to the student population of non-AIM participants.

4. Are there significant differences in the costs associated with recruiting minority graduate students through the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference and the costs associated with general graduate student recruitment?

The total costs for conducting the AIM program was computed, by year, from 2015 through 2019. This total dollar figure was divided by the number of successfully recruited graduate students to result in a by-year cost of successful recruitment. This dollar figure was averaged over the span of those years and offers a by-year cost and average cost of recruiting a graduate student through the AIM program. This cost was compared to the cost of otherwise recruiting a graduate student to the University of Arkansas, with that expense being identified by GSIE or graduate coordinators.

Annual AIM expenditures generally consisted of the following: air travel for student participants outside of the region and mileage reimbursement for students who drove; rental van costs (number of vans depended on number of attendees); fuel for vans; meals (some units have sponsored meals); lodging; social and cultural activities, and internal costs in the university (photography, printing of programs, and swag bags). Additional costs have also been recorded, including extenuating circumstances (e.g. alternative transportation if problems disrupted the planned travel arrangements, or the cost of a taxi outside of the group pickup or drop-off time).

Non-AIM related revenue/contributions: n/a

5. What are the policy implications for both institutional and public policy based on the program evaluation that could affect diverse graduate student recruitment?

Based on the results of the evaluation, findings were examined in relation to the state and federal policy noted in Chapter 2, as well as discussed in relation to institutional policy. Special attention was given to the roles of social and human capital, as well as the need for the program to serve as an impetus for public agenda setting related to minority graduate student recruitment.

C. Bias of the Researcher

Reporting qualitative research in an appropriate manner can add validity to any study or evaluation (Maxwell, 2012). According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), standards for evaluating qualitative research must be flexible because of the variation that is often linked to the findings. Like some qualitative studies, this study included narratives and reports in which the evaluator participated, which amplifies the need for objectivity and an understanding of any bias of the researcher. I must be diligent in examining my role, relationships, values, biases, and assumptions associated with the research and participants to protect the impartiality of the study. Additionally, the evaluator (see next paragraph for explanation) identified, acknowledged, and managed any assumptions and beliefs connected with external stakeholders (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Golde, 2017).

The evaluator was a graduate recruiter who specifically focused on racial and ethnic graduate student diversity for the U of A from 2010 to 2016, and who from 2011 to 2018 was the adviser to the BGSA. During that time, I participated in the evolution of several graduate recruitment strategies, which included adjustments to AIM, the growth of the George Washington Carver Summer Research Internship, the recognition of UA as one of the fastest

growing graduate schools for HBCU students in the Southeastern Conference (SEC), and several other changes that directly impacted minority recruitment.

Over the years, GSIE, graduate programs, the BGSA, and the university implemented strategies that I championed or recommended. To that end, personal and professional biases have been created. Among them is the recognition that the proactive involvement of graduate faculty, the connectivity between *all* recruitment activities and diversity initiatives, the difference of promoting the campus visit versus promoting the university while recruiting students, and assisting departments through cost-effective recruitment strategies, which enabled them to locate additional graduate funding, provided a strategic advantage for UA and unique insight for me.

Additional biases also include an intimate understanding of how certain faculty recruited minority students because of joint recruitment expeditions or familiarity with another department's particular commitment to recruiting students from certain HBCUs, or dedicated funding for those students who enrolled at the U of A. Recognizing and acknowledging these biases promotes trustworthiness and reliability in my research, which in turn fosters validity in the study and its findings.

Moreover, methodological rigor can be obtained through making data understandable, accessible, and public (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Rigor connotes legitimacy, which is generally obtained through the internal and external validity, reliability, objectivity of data and the research process (Anfara et al., 2002; Golde, 2017). Although many of the components described in the *Quantitative and Qualitative Criteria for Assessing Research Quality and Rigor*, according to Anfara et al., (2002), will not be applicable for an evaluation of this nature—components such as prolonged engagement in the field or the use of peer debriefing—several other components will be applicable.

For example, understanding positionality can mitigate biases, assumptions, and presumptions through an integral chain of evidence process that involves all participants (Tufford & Newman, 2012). In fact, U of A staff and AIM stakeholders who will be involved in the study can help validate the process through *instructional leadership*, where collegiality, objectivity, and transparency were essential. This was accomplished through team members providing pertinent graduate student data relevant to the study or graduate program, and through coordinators being transparent about their departmental minority graduate recruitment strategies.

Most important of all, graduate school leaders can advocate for the implementation or integration of specific actions that result from the study, if those expectations are proactively and clearly articulated by the evaluator (Oliver & Brown, 1988; Anfara, et al., 2002). To control for researcher bias and maintain methodological rigor, the evaluator has triangulated his data and findings using a non-biased researcher not affiliated with the graduate recruitment, the BGSA, or the AIM Conference.

D. Chapter Summary

A program evaluation is defined as “the application of program approaches, techniques, and knowledge to systematically assess and improve the planning, implementation and effectiveness of the program” (Chen, 2005, p. 1). The AIM Conference is a small component of a larger ecosystem designed to identify, attract, recruit, and enroll underrepresented minorities to graduate school at the University of Arkansas. The results of the study can help stakeholders, policy makers, and GSIE leaders improve the planning and effectiveness of the Conference, and subsequently, of minority student recruitment.

The program evaluation of the Conference and some of the related recruitment activities was needed to assess their genuine impact on minority enrollment. By conducting the evaluation

appropriately, systemically, and with integrity the findings can lend a greater understanding to which specific activities impact minority student recruitment and enrollment. Although many of the components in the program evaluation are consistent with the traditional qualitative research methods, the context of the evaluator essentially analyzing much of his own work is unconventional (Asselin, 2003). Moreover, data for the study was drawn from existing data files, data sets, interview transcripts and notes. Therefore, it is critically important that the researcher, the participants, and the audience understand that the study was not designed to confirm or validate the relationship between variables, but to inform stakeholders of Conference and recruitment activities that optimize the Conference's effectiveness and affects minority enrollment.

Chapter IV: Findings of the Study

The recruitment of under-represented students into graduate school is an important process with which colleges and universities have struggled for decades. Some institutions have undertaken aggressive approaches to recruiting minority students, some have made use of exclusively online or technologically mediated approaches to recruitment, and some have attempted to build systems of recruitment that bring prospective students to campus to explore options. This latter approach was the one developed by the University of Arkansas and resulted in the creation of the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference (AIM, or the Conference), which has been in practice in various forms since 2007. The current study was designed to evaluate the Conference's success in matriculating graduate students using archival program data. This chapter shows the results of the data analysis in answering the study's research questions and has been structured to include a Summary of the Study, Analysis of Data and Answers to Research Questions, and a Chapter Summary.

A. Summary of the Study

The purpose of conducting the evaluation of the AIM Conference was to describe its success in recruiting academically competitive minority graduate students for the University of Arkansas. The evaluation used archival data held by the AIM Conference and the Conference coordinator from 2007 to the present to address the research questions, identify trends, and address how these findings might influence institutional and public policy.

Throughout the program's existence, several components have been implemented to enhance attendees' experiences, increase the likelihood of minorities enrolling at Arkansas, and encourage greater participation from graduate faculty and program administrators at the University. Using Program Theory Evaluation (PTE), which employs theory and models to

discuss how the program and program activities lead to the intended results, the Conference and related recruitment strategies were analyzed.

Scholars have argued that access to higher education for minority students cannot be achieved without intentional strategies designed to accomplish this (Alon & Tienda, 2007; Anderson-Rowland et al., 1999; Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Berrett & Giorgi, 2015; Field, 2017). In minority graduate recruitment programs such as summer research internships and bridge programs, as well as campus visits can help influence a potential student's decision to pursue graduate education, partially through hosting them on campus (Anderson-Rowland et al., 1999; Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Bingham & Torres, 2008). However, research also shows that even though many diversity professionals understand the need for structured, intentional recruitment, campus visits and other intervention strategies, they are unaware of which factors within those strategies have the most effect on prospective students' enrollment decisions (Bingham & Torres, 2008; Gomez Yepes, 2013).

The findings will be important to both institutional leaders and policy makers in improving their understanding of how effective campus visit programs such as AIM can be an appropriate tool in minority graduate recruitment. As universities around the country continue to invest in diversity and inclusion, minority recruitment initiatives such as AIM must demonstrate consistent success.

The design of the study made use of ex-post facto, archival data, and a framework of Program Evaluation. This approach allowed for summative and formative data to inform the answering of the research questions. The archival data were held by the AIM Conference and the Conference coordinator from 2007 to the present. Additional data to inform the question answers

was requested from several University of Arkansas units, including administrators working in graduate student recruitment.

B. Analysis of Data and Answers to Research Questions

RQ1: How successful was the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference in achieving its intended goal of enhancing minority graduate student enrollment from 2007 to 2019?

In program evaluation, there is a need to understand the institutional context in which the program was implemented and then consider the extent to which a program was able to achieve its intended purpose (Rogers, et al., 2000; Chen & Chen, 2005). The AIM Conference was designed to recruit and assist in the recruitment of under-represented graduate minority students, meaning that to be successful the program would need to demonstrate value in increasing the overall enrollment of under-represented minority students for graduate programs and/or the university.

To answer the research question, three elements of data were consulted: numeric data on graduate enrollment retrieved from the University of Arkansas's Office of Institutional Research that were publicly available, numeric data from the AIM Conference archives, and qualitative data from the AIM Conference archives. Further, data analyses were included across multiple levels of student enrollment, including overall enrollment, by degree level, by specific degree program, and for the quality of students as measured by funded doctoral fellowships, an indicator of high quality.

To address the research question, the first element to consider was the recent historical trend of the University of Arkansas in enrolling under-represented minority students, specifically African American students. To understand this trend, it is similarly important to consider the

overall student enrollment and percentage of African American students in the overall Graduate School enrollment.

As shown in Table 1, total African American enrollment grew from 910 students in 2003 to 1,202 students in 2019 (fall semester enrollment counts). As a percentage of the *total* student population, this represented a decrease from 6% of all students in 2003 to 4.3% of all students in 2019. For graduate students, there were 197 African Americans enrolled in the fall of 2003 and 263 enrolled in 2019, representing a 1 percentage point decrease in the *total* graduate student population, from 7.4% in 2003 to 6.3% in 2019.

Data presented in the table from 2003 to 2019 show that overall student enrollment grew by approximately 60% and that graduate student enrollment grew 64%, but African American student enrollment never exceeded 7.5% in either category and never grew more than 1% during any period. The data also show that the University's African American enrollment, overall, is at its lowest point since 2010 as well as at the lowest percentage of the overall enrollment for at least the last 16 years (4.36% of the total enrollment). For graduate student enrollment, the average, as shown in Table 1, was that 6.28% of all graduate students were African American, and during the period of the current study this enrollment ranged from 177 students to 263, or 4.86% (2016) of the graduate student population to 7.52% (2007).

The data from the reporting of African American enrollment indicate that although there may be a stronger emphasis on recruiting African American students, the percentage of participation in enrollment has not changed dramatically in recent history.

Table 1.

Total and African American Student Enrollment by Year and Degree Level, 2003 to 2019

Year	Total Enrolled	# African American	% of Total	Total Grad. Enrolled	#Afr. American	% of GS
2003	16,449	910	6.00%	2,670	197	7.37%
2004	17,269	981	5.68	2,859	177	6.19
2005	17,821	982	5.51	2,950	201	6.81
2006	17,926	946	5.27	3,021	208	6.68
2007	18,648	1,023	5.48	3,137	236	7.52
2008	19,194	1,024	5.33	3,192	219	6.86
2009	19,849	1,040	5.23	3,407	243	7.13
2010	21,405	1,128	5.26	3,569	249	6.97
2011	23,199	1,246	5.37	3,759	250	6.65
2012	24,537	1,278	5.20	3,777	215	5.69
2013	25,341	1,284	5.06	3,942	229	5.80
2014	26,237	1,330	5.06	4,022	220	5.46
2015	26,754	1,334	4.98	4,220	239	5.66
2016	27,194	1,308	4.80	4,275	208	4.86
2017	27,558	1,268	4.60	4,161	215	5.16
2018	27,778	1,217	4.38	4,024	223	5.54
2019	27,555	1,202	4.36	4,170	263	6.30
Average			5.00			6.28

The next step in attempting to understand the context of African American student enrollment in graduate degree programs was to identify the levels of degree program in which students were enrolled. Table 2 shows African American graduate student enrollment by degree level from 2005 to 2019. Note that the University archival data for 2003 and 2004 did not provide detailed enrollment summaries by degree level, and for that reason these data were not included in the table.

The highest level of African American student enrollment at the master's level was in the years of 2019 ($n=209$), 2011 ($n=178$), and 2010 ($n=178$). For doctoral student enrollment, the

years with the highest African American student enrollment were the three-year period from 2009 to 2011 ($n=68$, $n=66$, and $n=69$, respectively). Educational Specialist degrees have also been included in Table 2; these graduate degrees have typically been offered as professional certifications in the field of public education. Although there was a high enrollment of 8 students seeking a Specialist degree in 2008, a variety of state credentialing regulations have changed, eliminating this degree as a pre-requisite for administrative licensure in the public schools.

Table 2.
African American Graduate Student Enrollment by Degree Level, 2005 to 2019

	Masters	Specialist	Doctoral	Total
2003	--	--	--	197
2004	--	--	--	177
2005	154	6	41	201
2006	161	3	44	208
2007	173	5	58	236
2008	156	8	55	219
2009	171	4	68	243
2010	178	5	66	249
2011	178	3	69	250
2012	152	0	63	215
2013	160	4	65	229
2014	158	5	57	220
2015	178	3	58	239
2016	155	2	51	208
2017	157	2	56	215
2018	168	0	55	223
2019	209	2	52	263

The next level of data to consider in assessing the AIM Conference was the actual attendees and their decision to enroll at the University of Arkansas. From one perspective, these data provide one of the most important considerations as to whether the AIM program was successful.

The data presented in Table 3 illustrates the incomplete nature of data associated with the AIM Conference as well as the early inconsistencies in offering the program. Included in Appendix B is a sample copy of the AIM Conference program schedule, Appendix C includes the Ronald E. McNair Scholars program schedule, Appendix D includes the UAspire, UApply UAchieve (AAA) program schedule, and Appendix E includes the Graduate Resources opportunity Forum (GROF) program schedule; all represent variations of AIM. These schedules are provided to allow for an examination of the consistencies of the programs, revealing that although there were several unique elements for each Conference, they included many similarities, particularly as it related to the students' itinerary.

Data from the Conferences, taken as a whole, show that a total of 148 African American potential graduate students were funded to visit the University of Arkansas campus, and that of those, 53 (36%) were verbally offered admission to a graduate program, and of those, 12 (23% of those offered admission) enrolled. Of the total number of participants, excluding the 2019 AIM Conference, 12 students were admitted and enrolled in graduate programs out of 131 visiting potential students, resulting in an overall yield rate of 9%. The data did not confirm whether every participant applied to UA graduate school. A major difficulty in conducting the assessment based on attendees and enrollment was that all data were not captured either by the Graduate School or by the various participating departments. This difficulty was noted in the Background of the Study, as the Graduate School seeks to facilitate the enrollment of students and serves as a service provider in both the recruitment and data management of student records. The individual offers for graduate enrollment, however, are made by academic department.

Table 3.
Conference Participants and Yield, 2007 to 2019

Year	Conference	Number of Participants	Number Offered	Number Enrolled
2007	AIM	20	NR	NR
2008	No Conference	--	--	--
2009	AIM	NR	NR	NR
2010	McNair	11	NR	1
2011	AIM	18	10	2
2012	No Conference	--	--	--
2013	Triple AAA	21	NR	2
2014	GROF	6	4	0
2015	AIM	13	4	1
2015	Diversity Sch	13	NR	0
2016	AIM	14	9	1
2017	AIM	13	12	3
2018	AIM	15	14	2
2019	AIM	17	NR	TBD
Total		148	53	12

NR=No record.

To further understand the Conferences and attendees, each segment has been separated by year and is presented in Table 15. This table presents data that indicate that 7 of the 12 enrolled graduate students were female (58%), and that the same number of students enrolled who graduated from Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The most popular graduate majors for these students included biomedical engineering, agricultural business, and health studies (all had 2 enrollees each except for health studies, which had 3). By academic college at UA, 4 students enrolled in academic programs in the College of Education and Health Professions, 4 students enrolled in the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, 2 students enrolled in the Dale Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food, and Life Sciences, and 2

students enrolled in the College of Engineering. The academic college information was not captured within any of the tables.

Also shown in Tables 4 to 14 are the gender of the students and the institutions from which the students visited UA. With three individual’s gender unaccounted for (missing data), 39% ($n=57$) of the total participants were male and 61% ($n=88$) were female. Nearly two-thirds of the visiting potential graduate students came from HBCU-designated institutions ($n=104$; 74%); there was incomplete, missing data for 7 students.

Table 15 presents a summary of those students who enrolled at UA after participating in the AIM (or related) Conference.

Table 15.
Summary of University of Arkansas AIM Enrollees

Year	Degree Level	Discipline	Gender	HBCU
2010	MS	Anthropology	M	No
2011	MS	Rehabilitation	F	Yes
2013	MS	Ag Business	F	Yes
	PhD	Biomed Engineering	F	Yes
	MS	Sociology	M	No
2015	PhD	Chemistry	F	Yes
2016	MS	Health	F	Yes
2017	MS	Geosciences	M	Yes
	MS	Ag Business	F	No
	MS	Health	M	Yes
2018	MS	Higher Education	F	No
	PhD	Biomed Engineering	M	No

In addition to identifying students to enroll at UA, the AIM Conference (and related programs) made efforts to target high-ability students. The University of Arkansas, like many land-grant universities, made a dedicated effort to create programs that could incentivize these high-ability students to enroll. One of these programs at UA were fellowships created through

philanthropic giving and designated as the “Distinguished Doctoral Fellowship” (DDF) and the “Doctoral Academy Fellowship” (DAF). The process for awarding either of these fellowships includes a consideration by the enrolling department first to accept the student, and then to recommend to the Graduate School that the fellowship be awarded. The awards were generally based on the student’s entering grade point average, standardized test scores, and departmental recommendation.

From 2003 to 2007 over 300 DDF and DAF fellowships were awarded (approximately 60 per year) and these awards were for the length of program enrollment; 7 of them (.023%) were awarded to African Americans. From 2007 to 2019, one AIM student was awarded a doctoral fellowship (2013), and that student pursued advanced graduate study in Biomedical Engineering. It is important to mention that the Graduate School also has rigorous benchmarks with respect to standardized test scores and for entering grade point averages, meaning that several doctoral students admitted to graduate study could likely qualify for consideration of the DDF and DAF fellowships based on GPA and test scores, further indicating the importance of equitable departmental recommendations.

As noted in the Background of the Study and highlighted in much of the literature concerning under-represented minority graduate student recruitment, a major challenge to the recruitment process is the culture, or perceptions of cultural bias, at Primarily White Institutions (PWI) such as the University of Arkansas. Due to the possibility of implied or perceived bias, an evaluation of the AIM Conferences must include how it might have affected both the culture and perceptions of inclusivity of the campus. In program evaluation theory, this type of impact or influence of a program has value and merit. Yet it is difficult to measure, and it is frequently described through qualitative rather than quantitative data.

Data from the AIM Conference evaluations collected between 2011 and 2019, including narrative interviews and commentary data from related stakeholders, were also considered in evaluating the program. Data from stakeholders presented here represent the reported impact that AIM produced for invited students, minority serving institution partners, University of Arkansas graduate coordinators and faculty, and the University's administrative unit, the Graduate School.

Invited Students

As noted, 148 potential graduate students participated in the AIM campus visit program, and each iteration of the Conference included a student feedback survey (see Appendix G for a sample of the satisfaction survey; Table 17 presents related data and is presented in Appendix H). Feedback from these surveys was incorporated into future Conferences, and Conference planners ultimately incorporated adjustments to the AIM program content to reflect student interests. These adjustments included integrating activities and participation from representatives in affordable student housing, retail and shopping options, arts and entertainment, ease of regional and national travel, and professional development opportunities.

Prior to the 2015 AIM Conference, student surveys were generally used to gauge student satisfaction with respect to travel, lodging, food, speakers, and convenience, focusing on the extent to which a student enjoyed the program and the campus visit. After 2015, Conference planners began to tailor individual campus visits to include areas of specific interest for those visiting campus. For example, if a prospective student indicated that a family would be relocating upon enrollment, information that was relevant for the parents of children or activities for a spouse was included in a visitation packet.

Although narrative and evaluation data were used for programming adjustments, these comments also provided information that might reflect the effectiveness or success of the AIM Conferences, particularly regarding the culture and inclusive environment of campus.

One student from 2011 commented about the general nature of the AIM experience, stating:

At the AIM Conference I met other students from different HBCUs as well as graduate students from the U of A. I didn't initially know what to expect. I was able to tour the university, learn about how to apply to the graduate school, attended a basketball game, and was introduced to several people who worked for Wal-Mart. Overall I felt very welcomed and was given a ton of helpful information about the university, the best eating spots in town, and made a lot of new friends I could relate to. The recruitment efforts at my undergraduate university, attending the AIM Conference, and meeting with other graduate students really helped me to decide to go to the U of A.

Another student, in 2012, articulated the nature of the AIM program as one that could change a prospective student's mind. He said:

Coming from an HBCU, I was not sure I was going to fit in at (a) predominately White institute. Fortunately, the doubt that I had did not hold up. I believe it is important to form a partnership with my alma mater North Carolina A&T State University because there are so many qualified individuals that (are) looking to become even more exposed in their fields. I have been telling several of my younger peers to apply to Arkansas for graduate school. I am willing to do whatever it takes to get more Aggies to come to Arkansas and form a university partnership.

And another 2012 student said:

Upon my first visit to the University of Arkansas, I was shocked at the beauty of the campus and welcoming spirit I felt from everyone. However, prior to visiting, I had no idea what to expect from the city of Fayetteville or the University of Arkansas. The entire ride from the airport to campus I was thinking to myself, 'where am I and what have I gotten myself into'? However, I quickly learned that Northwest Arkansas had much more to offer than acres of farmland and uninhabited mountainsides... When I was taken to Stone House for a meet and greet I received the opportunity to meet some of the staff from the graduate school and officers of the Black Graduate Student Association, and other graduate students. I thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality and felt like I had been there for more than just a few hours. The next day when I toured campus and met with a few faculty and staff members, I knew that Arkansas would be at the top of my list for graduate school. Since being at Arkansas, my

perception of the university has only gotten better. The university basically draws a path of success for their students.

The recurring theme of the comments, whether longer narrative passages as displayed here or in shorter comments such as this 2016 student who wrote “I did not know much about the school and was skeptical at first,” the theme consistently identified was that students did not know what to expect from UA. The AIM Conference was consistently identified as an integral tool for expanding awareness about the University, its facilities, and in displaying an openness to diversity that prospective students initially had not expected.

Minority Serving Institute Partners

In addition to exploring narrative data related to the prospective students, data were collected from stakeholders at HBCUs who encouraged their students to apply to the AIM program. These stakeholders were commonly faculty members who advocated for their students, or institutional administrators who were exploring partnerships and graduate-school pipelines for their students. One faculty member at an HBCU in Virginia, who helped to identify students to participate in AIM, wrote in 2017 that the program,

opened [my students’] eyes to opportunities not located in DC, New York, Atlanta, and Houston...I’ve tried to get them to think about graduate schools in New Mexico, Utah, and Kansas, but they could never envision themselves there until they visited Arkansas.

Another HBCU partner, a staff member at North Carolina A&T University, wrote in his GROF evaluation survey in 2015:

When you came to recruit [my students], they had pretty much settled on graduate schools. They are all big-time researchers, so they had options. I had taken them all to Ohio State and West Virginia universities, and Stanford, Vanderbilt, Notre Dame and Yale came here to visit them. When they first arrived at the airport, they had a cultural awakening, but that Conference changed their lives. When NCAT participant 6 in 2015 finally enrolled, it literally marked the first time one graduate school enrolled four of our top 75 engineering students during the same time.

An archival document from 2016 was a letter from a professor from Florida A&M University who wrote to the AIM coordinator:

As I enter the holiday season, I cannot help but stop and think of the countless blessings that I have experienced over this year. Chief among them is my having met you and established what will undoubtedly be an everlasting friendship and collaborative relationship between you and me, and more importantly, between our two universities... This relationship was further confirmed and, in fact, cemented when I was invited to spend two days visiting your campus and discussing with your faculty, students, and administrators how we could collaborate. Now that I have had an opportunity to recruit and send to your university two bright graduate students who are doing very well, I am pleased to hear them comment favorably on the university's diversity program and how it is helping make minority students feel at home away from home. I made the right decision to send them there, and to (will) continue to seek and identify others that will join them and replace them in a continuous evolutionary process. I wish to thank you and your diversity team and encourage you to keep up the good work and deeds that you are doing to help me, and others achieve our goals of growing future leaders...

The theme of the evaluations that were completed by HBCU partners and post AIM Conference correspondence was one of gratitude to UA for its willingness to give their students an opportunity to consider graduate study, and, for the hospitality displayed to them during their campus visits. These written comments did include technical notes on programming structure, but nearly every participating HBCU partner noted that the design of the program, the welcoming campus, and opportunities presented to students was more than they had expected, but comparable with other research universities.

UA Faculty and Graduate Coordinators

Graduate recruitment and admission are based primarily on individual academic programs or departments recruiting students and admitting them, with logistical and technical support provided by the Graduate School. As the Graduate School was the primary host unit for creating and offering the AIM Conference, they relied greatly on individual faculty members, program coordinators, graduate coordinators, and department chairs to collaborate and inform

students about their programs and to be engaged in recruiting the visitors. The AIM Conference provided potential under-represented students for graduate programs at no financial cost to the academic departments, thus aiding their recruitment process.

In 2017, one faculty member acknowledged the importance of this by saying:

We're doing a poor job of attracting students of color, but we're working on it—attending workshops, revising curriculum, increasing our percentage of faculty of color every year (now at 30% of our department's faculty), and trying to find funds to send recruiters around the state. It looks like we just have to keep at it for the long term but AIM really helps us get a head start.

Most graduate programs had a goal to increase under-represented student enrollment in their programs, and this was an articulated goal of the University's Chancellor as well. Many faculty and program coordinators were unaware of strategies, techniques, or opportunities offered through graduate recruitment designed for this type of targeted student recruitment. For many, in this regard the AIM Conference was the first and perhaps only mechanism of which they were aware. A faculty member in the Health Professions commented that AIM was an important tool for recruiting students, and perhaps even recruiting students who could earn their terminal degree at UA and then join the faculty.

In 2017, another staff member from the College of Engineering commented that minority graduate student recruitment was not something that they had done well, but that they needed “to just keep at it.” A program coordinator in Sport Management commented that “targeted programs allow us to fill unique research needs and cultivate relationships around the country with [feeder] HBCUs.”

In 2016, another faculty member from an English-related field wrote: “although [we] strongly believe in the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference, I'm afraid we won't be helping to sponsor it this year. In our years of sponsorship, few AIM students have been in our discipline

and none has ever applied to our M.A. or Ph.D. program.” The comment seemed to reflect a cost-conscious awareness of investing in programs that produce enrollments, but it is also indicative of an opportunity to remind departments of the patience required in minority graduate recruitment that will be further discussed in chapter 5.

Graduate School and International Education and other partners

By 2010, the GSIE facilitated and managed several domestic and international recruitment programs, and the AIM Conference was one of four that targeted domestic under-represented minorities for campus visits. The overarching strategy for the Graduate School was to develop relationships with undergraduate institutions that had high enrollment levels of minority students. Through their targeted approach, the academic program leaders in addition to the Graduate School recruiters could build relationships that might prove beneficial to the recruitment of minority students in the future. For the AIM Conference, the UA Graduate School was seen as a partner to these minority serving institutions, as they provided fully funded travel for potential students. One senior-level Graduate School administrator wrote in an email in 2014, “[AIM] enables us to bring to our campus those who we would certainly welcome as graduate students.”

But the greatest strategic benefit realized because of AIM was when faculty and graduate coordinators understood the need to enhance their collaboration with the graduate school to recruit competitive students. A faculty member in 2015 wrote in an email message to the AIM coordinator:

I'm on the graduate admissions committee in Physics. We are always looking for ways to recruit excellent grad students, particularly from the US and even better if they help us create a more diverse group of grad students in our department. Please let me know if you could use help from us.

Graduate faculty and program coordinators that were seriously interested in growing diversity within their programs knew that hosting students on campus and introducing them to research and faculty was not sufficient. They needed more students of color to help them tell Arkansas' story.

In addition to working to create an enrollment-feeder pipeline with select institutions, the process of coordinating programs such as AIM by the Graduate School was an effort to contain costs and create institutional agreements and collaboration regarding minority student recruitment. Through the leadership of the Graduate School, multiple campus stakeholders provided resources and opportunities for the recruitment of minority students, including through individual academic programs and colleges, the Division of Student Affairs, University Libraries, and Intercollegiate Athletics. An associate athletic director in the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics sent a hand-written note of gratitude to the AIM coordinator that ended: "anytime we can help the diversity efforts here, you can count on our support. AIM has helped us get reengaged with our academic partners because all of us benefit from increased diversity."

Additionally, the ability to collaborate, especially around issues involving diversity, creates an important perception among the partner minority serving institution. One administrator at St. Augustine's University (an HBCU in Raleigh) wrote:

I was impressed by the commitment the University of Arkansas demonstrated to expanding its outreach to Historically Black Colleges and Universities by sending a live person to campuses on the east coast. After our initial meeting ... we entered the partnership. Your programs have the full support of senior administrators and academic deans at St. Augustine's University. We will continue to support your programs and the University of Arkansas graduate studies as long as they continue to show the commitment they have thus far.

Research Question Answer

Overall, African American graduate enrollment at the University of Arkansas has increased, but these increases have proportionately not kept pace with institutional growth. The AIM Conference was successful in attracting qualified prospected African American graduate students to campus and had a viable opportunity to enroll nearly a quarter of these students. Residual impacts of the AIM Conference, including recruitment coordination and cultural environment construction, might also be important elements to consider in determining the long-term impact of the Conference. Therefore, the AIM Conference could be considered moderately successful in recruiting students to UA graduate programs and perhaps more successful in its construction of a positive cultural environment that supports African American students and their future.

Research Question 2: How satisfied were the various constituents with the format, structure, and design of the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference?

A critical part of any program evaluation and a key component of Program Theory Evaluation is developing an understanding of the satisfaction of those for whom the program was developed. An important element in this examination is understanding that satisfaction does not determine program success, failure, or that the program met its objectives, as satisfaction might mean that participants enjoyed themselves but that they did not accomplish or fulfill the determined rationale for hosting the program. Additionally, the program under consideration in the study had several different constituents, most notably the prospective students, the external partners, and the internal (U of A) partners.

Data initially understood to be available for internal and external partner satisfaction were ultimately determined to be unavailable or so incomplete that they were not helpful in answering

the question. Anecdotal information, including email messages, handwritten notes, and formal correspondence, were maintained inconsistently by different individuals involved with coordinating the AIM Conference. These comments and narratives were unsolicited, and often incorporated with letters and notes of gratitude for hosting the program. The result was that these comments highly praised the AIM program, particularly those letters and emails received from individuals at minority serving institutions and did not objectively or formally provide data to evaluate overall external stakeholder satisfaction.

The initial founding of the AIM Conference did not include or make use of any evaluative materials other than organizer feedback. Similarly, no official materials, self-study, or formal survey of need was used to create the AIM Conference.

Graduate program faculty and administrators liked several components of AIM's structure and design. One of them was the cost-efficient way AIM enabled them to recruit minority students for their programs. A faculty member from the College of Engineering wrote in an email in 2016 "I believe that an institutional approach carries more weight [with recruitment] and allows us to be more cost effective in our recruitment. We don't have a lot of resources, so AIM makes a huge difference for us." That same faculty member also wrote: "last week we had some really good AIM students here interested in Engineering...it would have been nice to be able to offer all 16 or 18 a scholarship or fellowship. They were that good."

A staff member from the College of Engineering noted in 2015 that, "if you keep finding me students like that, I will find the money to compete for them," suggesting strong satisfaction with the quality of students being brought to campus for AIM.

MSI partners enjoyed the format of the AIM Conference because their students were exposed to a high-quality research institution at no cost to the student or their university.

Additionally, HBCU partners were particularly pleased that the Conference was in the spring, which prevented conflicts with fall activities on their campuses such as Homecoming, mid-term examinations, and football games. As well, HBCU partners appreciated the priority and commitment UA demonstrates toward diversity. The greatest challenge the MSI partners had often revolved around understanding the type of student that UA was interested in recruiting. Simply locating a student interested in graduate school who had met the GPA minimum requirement did not guarantee they would be an appropriate match for the research or the program in which the student was interested. Another challenge was motivating the student to maintain communication and follow up with the program coordinator about their graduate school choice. Several students missed important deadlines because of the lack of follow up by the student and the lack of intervention by the faculty mentor/advisor.

The organizers of the AIM Conference were generally satisfied with the program, repeating the program in 2009, and then modifying the structure and title of the Conference while maintaining the core program and intent. The most current iteration of the AIM Conference was developed and implemented in 2012, and although slightly modified in 2015, 2016, and 2017, the structure has been deemed to be appropriate and effective by organizers. The current model has been used with few minor revisions generally since 2015. Included as part of the design of the 2015 Conference, and in each subsequent Conference, reformatted student satisfaction surveys were distributed to participating students.

Student Participant Data

As shown in Appendix G, there were variations to each year's Conference student surveys so that the appropriate Conference content was included for the students to evaluate. The surveys were distributed to Conference participants as they concluded their time on campus, and

in 2018, the survey was distributed electronically to participants approximately one week after the AIM Conference had concluded. These student surveys included responses from 9 students in 2015, 12 in 2016, 7 in 2017, and 16 in 2018, and although the number of responses was low, they do provide some initial data to assist in evaluating the overall AIM Conference. The self-report surveys of satisfaction used a rating of 1=Strongly Dissatisfied with the element of the program progressing to 5=Strongly Satisfied.

Six areas of the Conference were evaluated in some way, including: overall student satisfaction, logistics, meals, workshops and presentations, and social activities.

Overall Satisfaction

Overall ratings for satisfaction with the AIM Conference were positive for the 2015 to 2018 time period. Responding students had a $\bar{x} = 4.56$ in 2015, which was the lowest of the four years from which data were available. This rating indicates that respondents were somewhere between agreeing and strongly agreeing with being satisfied with the Conference. The mean ratings increased each year in which data were collected, including $\bar{x} = 4.79$ in 2016, $\bar{x} = 4.83$ in 2017, and $\bar{x} = 4.93$ in 2018.

Logistics

Most of the elements in this area included Conference registration, travel, lodging, transportation during the Conference, and the efficiency in which the Conference was planned and executed. Some Conference attendees might have experienced unusual circumstances that may have affected satisfaction results, such as weather delays that affected travel, but most conferences incorporated similar logistics for travel, registration, transportation, and lodging. On the 5-point Likert-type scale, students were satisfied with their Conference logistics, including mean ratings of $\bar{x} = 4.83$ in 2015, $\bar{x} = 4.53$ in 2016, and $\bar{x} = 4.65$ in 2017, and $\bar{x} = 4.87$ in 2018.

An important note for these data, and for subsequent reporting of the data is that only summary mean scores were recorded and kept in the AIM archives, meaning no additional level of analysis was possible (such as statistically comparing mean scores year to year or reporting measures of central tendency).

Also important to note is that additional pre-Conference elements could affect the efficiency of a student's registration process and that most of those elements were outside of the purview and control of graduate recruitment, BGSA, or the AIM planning committee. Appendix I is an example of the AIM application packet, which included two letters of recommendation, a copy of the résumé or CV, and a copy of the unofficial transcript. The timeliness and efficiency with which a student completed those steps enabled the Conference planners to manage and facilitate their Conference agendas more effectively. For example, if an attendee was interested in learning more about multiple graduate programs, then their itinerary may have required more flexibility in scheduling. If the Conference facilitator did not receive that information in a timely manner, then the student's itinerary was affected, which also impacted their visit and likely their evaluation of portions of the Conference. This type of scheduling issue might be a reason for why departmental visits were the lowest rated items in 2015 and 2016.

Meals

As a guest of the UA, Conference participants were provided a range of meals and snacks throughout the day. The early AIM Conferences provided catering through the UA's food vendor for each meal and kept students on campus. By 2015, however, the AIM Conference organizers began to take students to more off-campus locations to provide greater exposure to area dining and entertainment options. This strategy was noted as a positive by one student in 2018, who wrote on her evaluation: "a big part of my decision to come here was because of the meal we had

at the Catfish Hole and the fact that I located a decent Tex-Mex option.” In 2015, the Conference provided an interaction between the Black Graduate Student Association and Black Law Student Association (BLSA) by having participants attend BLSA’s annual “Taste of Soul” luncheon.

The adaptation of the AIM Conference to explore different meal services reflecting the diversity of culture in the region resulted in agreement that meal service was satisfactory, with mean scores of 4.72, 4.67, 4.88, and 4.81 being reported across the 2015 to 2018 time period. These mean scores reflect perceptions close to strong agreement with the quality of meal service.

Workshops and Presentations

The annual student satisfaction surveys included five elements of programming for students to rate. The very technical presentation on applying for and attending graduate school had similar ratings over the four years of survey data (4.72, 4.70, 4.80, and 4.87). Similarly, the campus tours had positive, consistent ratings (4.54, 4.41, 4.42, and 4.35), although the tours were among the lowest satisfaction ratings of any activity provided to the Conference attendees.

Hosting the AIM Conference in the spring enabled special events on campus to be incorporated into the Conference schedule occasionally, and these often coincided with different programs on the UA campus and in the community. As a result, attendees had the opportunity to participate in lectures and seminars by visiting individuals on campus, such as Nikki Giovanni, Eunike Jones, Condoleezza Rice, Tim Reid and Daphne Maxwell Reid, and Yomi Martin. Additionally, *Soul of a Nation*, a Black history art exhibit was touring at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in nearby Bentonville, Arkansas in 2018 and was included for Conference participants. These programs were generally included in the Community Overview section, as well as the, *Arkansas? For Real?* sessions, which incorporated minority community, civic, university, and business leaders who were not indigenous to Arkansas but have remained,

demonstrating that African Americans can choose Northwest Arkansas and make it work. These data were reflected in Appendix H (Table 17) and had agreement levels that were typically close to ‘strongly agree.’

One of the most critical components of every AIM Conference was the academic department visit. There were multiple challenges associated with arranging departmental visits, especially when considering the that the AIM Conference typically took place over a weekend and arranging for faculty, graduate students, and administrators to be present was difficult. There were also challenges arranging for specific or nuanced research interests to be represented and aligned with available faculty and graduate students. In 2015 and 2016, the satisfaction with these departmental visits was close to ‘agree’ that they were satisfied with the experience (\bar{x} =4.21 and \bar{x} =4.33, respectively). Adjustments to modify the visit schedule, making more use of time on Friday, including participants in research colloquia, and making use of fellow graduate students in 2017 and 2018 resulted in an increase in participant satisfaction (\bar{x} =4.78 and \bar{x} =4.75, respectively).

One Conference attendee in 2017 who spent extended time with an academic department with a revised schedule wrote:

I just wanted to send a formal letter of thanks for the invitation and the engaging days I had at the University of Arkansas during the AIM Conference. Everything that you planned and had us involved in was perfect, in my opinion; I felt as if I would really enjoy staying at the University of Arkansas for grad school. What my Fort Valley friends told me about the place was true and the visit confirmed things (all being good). I took the time to ask random people at the university if they like attending school there, and most said that they love it and would continue to attend if given the opportunity. I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to attend the Conference, as it showed me how the minority community is similar to that of my HBCU. I hope you and your family are doing well, and I hope to see you soon as a student.

Social Activities

Another critical part of the first AIM Conference was the social interaction between participants and UA graduate students. During the first several AIM Conferences, many of these social interactions and activities were unplanned and occurred through personal bonding among hosts, current graduate students, and those visiting campus. By 2015, the concept of structured social activities was incorporated into the itinerary and was included in the student satisfaction survey. Social engagement included activities such as roller skating, bowling, coffee hours, student rap sessions, and evening visits to local entertainment establishments. Participants indicated that they were satisfied to strongly satisfied with the structured social activities (\bar{x} =4.69, \bar{x} =4.88, \bar{x} =4.91, and \bar{x} =4.84).

In 2017, one student wrote on her Conference evaluation: “I developed a friendship that weekend with [a current graduate student] and that ended up being the most important part of my visit, because she supported me through tough times, and ultimately introduced me to my boyfriend.....that made the transition a bit easier.”

Research Question Answer

The evolving nature of the AIM Conference was both identified as a strength to the recruitment program and a challenge in evaluating prospective student satisfaction with the Conference. Once regular Conference evaluations were in place by 2015, students were satisfied to strongly satisfied with most of the elements of the AIM Conference, particularly the 2018 session on debunking the myths of life in Arkansas titled “Arkansas? For Real?”

Research Question 3: What are the degree completion success rates for students who were successfully recruited to the University of Arkansas through the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference, including completion by degree type and discipline?

As shown in Table 15, there were 12 graduate students who enrolled at the University of Arkansas who had participated in the AIM Conference. Of the 9 masters level students who enrolled, all progressed successfully in their academic programs, including the 2018 enrollee in the master's degree in Higher Education who is expected to graduate in the Spring of 2020. For the 3 doctoral students, the 2013 AIM attendee who enrolled graduated in 2017 and the 2015 AIM attendee who enrolled graduated in Spring 2020. The remaining doctoral student, admitted in 2018, was still enrolled at the time of this evaluation.

Research Question Answer

Nearly all (11 of the 12) students who were recruited to the University of Arkansas through the AIM Conference program have successfully graduated from their academic programs. The remaining student was making adequate academic progress toward their degree and, at the time of this evaluation, was anticipating graduating in the Spring of 2021.

Research Question 4: Are there significant differences in the costs associated with recruiting minority graduate students through the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference and the costs associated with general graduate student recruitment?

To answer this question, data were first collected from archival data of the AIM Conference, with additional comparative data provided by the UA Graduate School on average recruitment costs. Data were first compiled into a descriptive table to reflect the overall AIM budget, followed by an analysis of these costs by both AIM participant and enrollments. These costs were then compared to data from the Graduate School to answer the research question.

A limitation of this analysis was that only the direct Conference costs were considered. In addition to the Conference coordinator's salary, this individual had some office-related expenses for making telephone calls and mailing materials to prospective students, but also had

some travel to different HBCUs to recruit students and meet with faculty who would assist in recruiting students to participate in AIM. These expenses were not included directly in this analysis.

A primary element of program evaluation theory includes the importance of collecting and securing relevant data to answer questions about the program and the extent to which it met its goals. The availability of archival data was deemed problematic in attempting to answer the current question despite early indications that such data would be available. There was one archival note that there was \$500 in UA-provided funding for the first 2007 AIM Conference, but no additional data were recorded on Conference expenses or other contributions until 2015, resulting in the focus on the current question being shifted to address only the recent history of the AIM Conference. As shown in Table 16, the University of Arkansas dedicated \$1,800 for recruitment in 2015 and then asked the AIM coordinating team to secure additional funding from other departments and offices on campus as donations. This model of shared expenses for recruiting was present through anecdotal records, but undocumented from the first AIM Conference in 2007 until 2015. The level of contributions to support the Conference increased almost every year, and as an example, was \$12,500 in 2019 (see Table 16).

Table 16.
AIM Conference Costs, 2015–2019

Year	UA Dedicated	Donations	Total Revenue	Total Cost
2015	\$1,800	\$ 8,515	\$10,315	\$ 9,963
2016	1,800	8,500	9,945	10,425
2017	3,564	11,550	15,114	11,026
2018	3,423	12,500	15,923	14,173
2019	4,675	12,500	17,175	17,175

For the five years in which data were available, three of the Conferences (2015, 2017, and 2018) finished with an excess of funds, and these funds were allowed to be retained in a fund for the following Conference (as ‘roll-over’ funds). One year, 2016, finished with a deficit of \$480, and this was charged to the Conference’s carry-forward account. In 2019, the model of funding was changed slightly, as the Conference leadership was again encouraged to solicit contributions from on-campus partners to fund the Conference, and the institutional funding commitment was revised to cover the balance of costs rather than providing an initial commitment of funding.

Table 17.
Example of Contribution Level and Office for AIM Conference (2019)

Office	Amount of Contribution
Career Service	\$ 200
Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences	250
Department of Political Science	500
Department of English	500
Department of History	500
Department of Journalism	500
Intercollegiate Athletics	500
UA Alumni Association	500
Interdisciplinary Public Policy Program	500
UA Library	500
UA Office of Diversity and Inclusion	500
African American Studies Program	750
Graduate Business Programs	750
Department of Chemistry	1,000
Department of Communications	1,000
Business Diversity Office	1,050
Department of Biological Sciences	1,500
College of Engineering	1,500

With the two sources of revenue, there were two levels of analysis of the cost of recruiting graduate students. Again, focusing on the five years of data available and as shown in Table 16, the University of Arkansas, of its dedicated budget, spent an average of \$216 per AIM student on recruitment (with a range from \$138 to \$297). Adding the contributions from different UA offices and departments, the University spent an average of \$901 per AIM participant (for a range of \$766 to \$1,073), and for a student to have attended AIM and enroll at UA, the average cost of recruitment was \$7,562. Note: these are directly identified expenses and do not include associated personnel costs or expenditures by departments, such as hosting candidates with refreshments, for example.

Table 18.
Average Expenditure Per Student and Yield, 2016 to 2019

Year	#	Direct Cost	Cost w/Donations	Yield
2015	13	\$138	\$ 766	\$ 9,063
2016	13	138	802	10,425
2017	12	297	919	3,676
2018	15	214	945	7,086
2019	16	292	1,073	N/A
Average		\$216	\$ 901	\$ 7,562

In an effort to compare the cost of a student recruited to UA through AIM with other recruitment efforts, an attempt was made to identify the average cost of recruiting a graduate student. As noted by Bakken, Connor, Reynolds, Taylor, and Watson (2015), graduate recruitment is a highly decentralized process that incorporates many different elements and layers of activity that result in an enrollment resulting in an estimated exponential increase in cost estimates of approximately 4:1. For example, an academic program might host prospective

students for a luncheon; the program's department might pay for the publication of folders or printed material, and the academic college might pay for the purchase of GRE scores or send representatives to national or regional meetings to recruit students. At the same time, the Graduate School might send recruiters to other meetings for recruitment, and the online education unit might similarly pay for the publication of materials. Such a scaffolding approach to funding graduate student recruitment makes it almost impossible to identify a reliable dollar amount for the recruitment of a single student.

In their annual survey of enrollment management professionals, Ruffalo Noel Levitz (2020) identified that the average public research university spends \$186,169 in the direct recruitment of graduate students, excluding personnel costs. A conversation with a Graduate School staff member indicated that "that figure looks about right. It might be a little high for us, but not by much" (Personal Communication, April 27, 2020). Although the report did not specify an average cost of recruiting a graduate student, their 2018 report (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2018) did use self-report data to identify the average expenditure to recruit an undergraduate in a public university as being \$536.

Applying the Bakken, Connor, Reynolds, Taylor, and Watson (2015) notation that spending on graduate recruitment could be four times greater than the centralized approach, the conclusion could be drawn that the average public research university spends \$744,676 in direct and indirect non-personnel expenses on graduate student recruitment for a fiscal year.

The University of Arkansas, in fall 2019, enrolled 1,209 new, degree-seeking graduate students. Using the Ruffalo Noel Levitz data and multiplied by four, results in the average cost of \$616 for the recruitment of each student, assuming that each student was actively recruited.

Without the actual data available, and working with estimates, the UA spent \$616 on each matriculated graduate student as compared to \$7,562 for each matriculated student through the AIM program. Without a statistical analysis, there was an inability to determine statistical significance.

Research Question Answer

The lack of data availability prevented the question from being directly answered statistically, although there was a large difference noted in the matriculated student recruitment costs for the AIM Conference as compared to other UA graduate students, but that data is skewed because of the lack of important information.

Research Question 5: What are the policy implications for both institutional and public policy based on the program evaluation that could impact diverse graduate student recruitment?

The research question addressed here focused on a synthesis of the data presented in answering the previous four research questions. Additional considerations that were prompted from developing this answer that are of a more speculative nature are presented in Chapter 5.

Institutional Policy Dimensions

The overarching question that was a foundational element of the AIM Conference was how students are recruited into graduate programs. As reinforced in the study, the University uses a decentralized approach, which promotes individual departmental ability to tailor their recruitment to specific student talents or interests. This approach, however, makes evaluation and assessment of programming difficult, and even problematic when justifying funding and support from public sources. Not knowing, for example, how much an institution spends to recruit

graduate students can give the impression to the tax-paying public that the institution is incapable of monitoring its own behavior.

More than addressing public perceptions, the decentralized approach to recruitment also reflects specialization and the inability to craft broad recruitment programs effectively that cross disciplines. The UA Graduate School is particularly effective at interdisciplinary program work, but the decentralized approach to recruitment and program management can result in knowledge silos being constructed that can prevent functional collaboration. This is an important element for academic leaders to consider, as this thinking is often framed around discipline-based organization, such as academic colleges, and although effective for managing the specializations of faculty member, such social constructions are not necessarily productive or helpful for students.

In addition, the motivation for the creation of the AIM Conference was twofold: to recruit students and to build an inclusive culture that promotes diverse student enrollment and persistence. Although the AIM Conference could not demonstrate high levels of student enrollment, anecdotal reporting did suggest that the program was meaningful in changing how departments think about diversity and how prospective students see the University as a diverse destination. These departments also demonstrated their commitment to diversity at the University by pledging their funds to help the program operate and be successful. This financial commitment was important to the operation of the AIM Conference, but perhaps was even more important for adding to the symbolic commitment that diversity is important.

The focus both through formal institutional policy as well as informal action that is derived from the current study relates to the enhancement of the minority support community on campus. Unlike their undergraduate peers, graduate students are often separated into their own

specific academic communities and have fewer opportunities to integrate into the mainstream of the campus environment. Whether constructing a more diverse and inclusive environment through centralized offices or through separate divisional programming (perhaps by colleges), growing the cultural capacity of the campus can have important effects for improving diverse student recruitment and participation in graduate study.

Public Policy Dimensions

There are several state, federal, institutional, and private programs (former and current) that support diverse student enrollment in graduate education, including (as previously mentioned) the George Washington Carver Research Program, The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Partnership, the Ronald E. McNair Scholars program, the Benjamin Franklin Lever Tuition Fellowship, and the Southern Regional Education Board's Minority Doctoral Fellowship program. Although most of these programs appropriately focus on funding minority graduate students, they do not address the historical economic and cultural barriers related to graduate study. UA was well equipped with the philanthropic support that created the DAF and DDF programs. Yet without better data on the AIM Conference, determination of non-enrollment by participants could not be isolated to funding. Regardless, programs such as those mentioned that continue to support the enrollment of underrepresented minorities are essential and important tools in creating stronger and more equitable enrollment practices.

Perhaps one of the strongest areas of success for the AIM Conference was in the introduction and support of cultural and social capital. The planning of the Conference brought together key individuals on the UA campus who were able to demonstrate their commitment to diversity and inclusion on campus, and in doing so, help to create a stronger cultural community that values, supports, and encourages diversity.

Cultural construction can result in powerful communities of support that ultimately can transform a way of thinking among individuals. The notion of community power has been outlined by scholars such as Putnam (2000), Lichterman (2010), Derden (2011), and Deggs and Miller (2013), and this community can create expectations for individual behaviors and norms, including acceptance of diversity and the expectation of diverse representation among citizens (i.e., graduate students). Although the AIM Conference demonstrated for possibly the first time that there is an important, powerful, and resourced community of campus leaders who support the increasing diversification of graduate enrollment, there continues to be a need to do more. Through specialized public resourced programs dedicated to the demonstration of commitment for recruitment programs such as AIM from the highest levels of institutional and public authorities, programs such as these can be successful in transforming campuses and communities over a longer periods. Whether society can wait for such a transformation, however, has yet to be established.

The goal of building a more inclusive society relates to the agenda setting process. Within the sphere of public policy, the importance of the current study suggests and reinforces the need to construct effective programs that bring diverse populations into advanced education. Efforts such as AIM are early steps in this process, and institutional leaders can use this type of programming evaluation to help secure for diverse student enrollment a permanent and continuing place on public legislative and administrative agendas.

Research Question Answer

The program evaluation did not demonstrate that the AIM Conference was highly successful in diversifying graduate education at the macro level, although the assessment did suggest important social and cultural elements were positively impacted. The continued ability

to position AIM as an effective tool in promoting minority graduate enrollment may be the greatest opportunity for policy impact.

C. Chapter Summary

The chapter provided a Summary of the Study, highlighting the need for graduate education to find new ways of recruiting underrepresented students. Answers to the research questions were provided and illustrated that AIM was moderately successful in bringing prospective diverse students to the UA campus, but that there were relatively few enrollees from among the program participants. All students who did enroll from the AIM program were successful in completing their graduate degrees. An analysis of the costs of the program demonstrated an estimated higher recruitment-yield cost, although the lack of available data resulted in extreme caution in answering this question. An analysis of policy elements was also presented, highlighted by the transformational potential of the AIM program in creating cultural and social capital that values diversity.

Chapter V: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Discussion

As graduate schools across the country continue to address the challenges of increasing minority student enrollment, universities continue to investigate their own graduate admissions and enrollment strategies. The purpose of conducting the evaluation of the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference was to describe it and its success in recruiting academically competitive minority graduate students for the University of Arkansas. The Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference was designed in 2006 and first offered in 2007 to help enhance minority graduate student enrollment. The design of the Conference included a recruiter from the University of Arkansas visiting various minority-serving colleges and universities and recruiting, either directly or through faculty colleagues, potential UA graduate students. The graduate school then augmented the typical costs associated with traveling, such as transportation, housing, and meals for select students to visit and learn about graduate education at UA. The current study tried to evaluate the effectiveness of the AIM Conference and related recruitment activities.

This chapter provides a summary of the findings, a presentation of the conclusions of the program evaluation, recommendations for practice and further research, and concludes with a discussion of the study's findings and a chapter summary.

A. Summary of the Study

The University of Arkansas, like many southern universities, struggles to increase its underrepresented minority graduate student enrollment. Low minority graduate enrollment, especially among African American students, is common throughout higher education (Clark, 2011). The response for many institutions is the creation of intervention strategies—diversity programs, initiatives, and projects—designed to recruit minority or under-represented populations into graduate education. The literature provided multiple examples of intentional

recruitment programs that target underrepresented minorities, programs that promote hiring minority faculty, dedicated funding for under-represented graduate students, and initiatives that decrease barriers to graduate education (e.g., standardized test training, summer internships, and summer bridge programs).

The AIM Conference was created to help increase minority graduate student enrollment. The program is unique to UA, but despite its presence on campus since 2007, it has never been comprehensively evaluated. As universities and their supporters continue to amplify their investments toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and equality, the need to understand the effectiveness and impact of diversity programs such as AIM becomes more important than ever. With demands for increased fiscal accountability coupled with the need for increased diversity of enrollment, program administrators and institutional leaders must be able to demonstrate which of their programs make a difference to enrollment, and similarly, which activities are inefficient.

The study used Program Evaluation Theory to explore whether or not AIM accomplished its objectives. The study incorporated historical archival data that were housed by the Conference facilitator, the UA Graduate School, and members of the Black Graduate Student Association. These materials included both electronic documents as well as paper records.

Research question one was devised to establish parameters regarding the definition of success, who determined it, and which benchmarks were used to evaluate it. Using historical data, the success of the program was identified as relative to the needs of each stakeholder. Success for many graduate programs is simply to increase racial and ethnic minority enrollment within certain areas of research, while graduate recruitment uses a guideline of cost efficiency measures achieved through collaborative recruitment as an accomplishment. Ultimately, it was determined that AIM did not aggressively increase minority graduate enrollment, but it was a

key contributor in establishing critical long-term relationships with external and internal stakeholders that could lead to increased minority graduate enrollment in the future.

Research question two asked about stakeholder satisfaction with the format, structure, and design of the program. Like question one, the design and structure of the Conference did not categorically determine program success or failure, or determine if it reached its intended objectives, but the study evaluated the degree to which those things contributed toward increasing minority graduate enrollment. In addition, the question was not created to ascertain the attitudes and beliefs toward AIM of UA graduate faculty, GSIE staff, MSI/HBCU partners, and other staff; instead, the question was designed primarily to measure the satisfaction with the Conference structure, format, and design through the eyes of the prospective students. The data confirmed that most Conference participants were generally satisfied with how the design, format, and structure promoted a collaborative approach to minority graduate recruitment. Although the changing nature of the Conference was viewed as a strength and an obstacle regarding the ability to analyze the data and use the information for future Conferences, participants were generally satisfied with the structure and format of the program.

Research question three relates to the graduation and attrition rates of AIM participants who enrolled at UA. The data confirmed that 11 out of 12 students (with the one student scheduled to graduate after the completion of this report) successfully completed their graduate programs. The study also confirmed that one of the areas of interest was the number of doctoral students who enrolled at UA (n=3) since 2007.

Research question four regarding cost efficiencies of AIM used data that was consistently maintained regarding the Conference revenues and expenditures for the last five years. The process of data collection and analysis was determined to be problematic, as the exact cost of

recruiting graduate students was not documented as a single amount and includes too many unknown variables that are part of a decentralized recruitment process. However, the method of collecting archival data managed by the Graduate School and the AIM coordinator and comparing it to the national average of recruitment costs revealed that the cost of recruiting an AIM student might be substantially more than general graduate student recruitment.

Research question five explored the potential impact the study could have on institutional and public policy. The study first examined the effect on institutional policy that the evaluation could have at UA regarding minority graduate enrollment. Institutions typically have autonomy over the policy and practice that governs the racial composition of their campuses, so an examination of current policy regarding minority recruitment and enrollment at Arkansas is appropriate. But the study also confirmed the importance of decision-making from graduate faculty, coordinators, and directors in graduate admissions decisions that could help promote a diverse and inclusive culture. The de-centralized framework of graduate study enables graduate faculty and program coordinators to have the discretion over holistic admissions, student enrollment, and graduate funding.

Apart from the decision-making ability of graduate faculty and administrators, AIM assisted in two important aspects of graduate recruitment: the creation and sustaining of an inclusive and engaged community with existing graduate students, and the recruitment of new minority students. The study confirmed that clarity regarding job responsibilities between instructors and recruiters is clear, but it also confirmed uncertainty of recruitment responsibilities within a framework where graduate recruiters are responsible for attracting and encouraging students to apply for programs in which someone else is responsible for deciding their admission.

The study also demonstrated that AIM was influential in promoting the importance of graduate student diversity and introducing prospective students to graduate opportunities about which they otherwise would have been unaware. A larger opportunity exist to influence informal institutional policy in creating a culture of diversity and inclusion, promoting a welcoming community for minority students, and informing doctoral students of the funding opportunities that are unique to UA.

The study also examined public policy in the context of the larger society on and off the campus with an ability to influence policy agendas. The study noted that the societal commitment to building a more inclusive society is evocative of the agenda setting process. In public policy, the importance of the current study reinforces the need to construct effective programs that bring diverse populations to graduate study at UA. Efforts such as AIM are early steps in this process, and institutional leaders can use this type of programming evaluation to help secure diverse student enrollment a place on the public legislative agenda.

B. Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the program evaluation of the AIM Conference:

1. The study did not attempt to determine a cause and effect relationship with the recruitment practices of the AIM Conference. The process of the evaluation did identify that after a series AIM Conferences and then different iterations of the Conference, the AIM program was moderately effective in developing a sense of goodwill toward UA and its efforts to increase minority graduate enrollment.

2. The AIM Conference was identified as an important component in minority graduate recruitment, particularly when it connected with the entire structure of minority graduate

recruitment, admissions, enrollment, support, retention, and career placement. A singular program alone does not improve minority enrollment, but a system that engages graduate faculty and students, incorporates flexible funding policies for departments to compete for highly qualified minority students, and encourages personal follow-up with prospective students can solidify recruitment and enrollment strategies.

3. The AIM Conference as a singular recruitment practice was not highly effective in generating admissions from potential African American graduate students. The Conference was effective, however, in generating a sense of community among academic and academic support departments on campus that lend themselves to helping to create a more inclusive campus environment.

4. The overall format, design, intent, and structure of the AIM Conference was satisfactory to many stakeholders. Additional reporting with graduate programs related to their departmental recruitment strategies and their impact on program enrollment, the number of African Americans who were awarded doctoral fellowships, and the number of existing minority graduate students who could benefit from more student engagement opportunities could strengthen the overall framework.

5. The evaluation of the AIM Conference identifies the need for strong policy leadership at the institutional and public levels to create an agenda that supports programs that might take time to develop, are likely a necessary investment, and that over time can enhance the enrollment of under-represented populations.

C. Recommendations for Future Practice

1. Create a system of analysis to measure the impact that diversity programs are having on their intended objectives. This means that campus administrators and leaders must be

purposeful in their creation of diversity and inclusion programs, and that there must be forethought given to the intended outcomes of these programs. In addition, as discussed in the literature, these outcomes do not need to be strictly numeric measures but might relate to building a culture of inclusiveness and a greater receptivity to encouraging or incentivizing diverse student recruitment.

2. Scholars at UA, along with diversity and inclusion professionals and those working in Institutional Research and Enrollment Management should invest time and resources into developing predictive models based on different types of minority recruitment programs. This type of assessment can lead to encouraging creative thinking about different ways to recruit students and can encourage the effective and efficient investment of institutional resources.

3. Tell the story of UA and the institution's commitment to recruiting diverse students, particularly diverse graduate students, and do so more effectively. The AIM Conference is one of the oldest of its kind, and other institutions would benefit from learning about its successes and challenges. In addition, this kind of messaging can positively affect the public perception of UA, and that in turn can lead to a more positive consideration of UA by diverse graduate students.

4. Create a social media presence for all UA diversity programs in a way that is easy to identify and access. Historically, the Black Graduate Student Association managed social media portals, but no longer does so because of the transient nature of the organization. In addition, the Graduate School very adeptly manages several social media accounts, but more exposure for BGSA and AIM is needed. The compelling rationale for this is that a major part of AIM was helping others understand that UA is a welcoming, diverse environment; sometimes the appearance of diversity must be conveyed before the true realization of diversity is felt. The

placement of social media access, as well as other related information, such as AIM and other diversity initiatives, should be permanent fixtures on the Graduate School website.

5. Continue to work with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to develop a comprehensive diversity plan that includes the Graduate School and its graduate recruitment programs. Several opportunities exist that may have shorter timeframes and achievable goals attached to them. The following points represents some of those opportunities that were evident during the study:

- Publicize existing diversity support programs on campus. Many faculty members are unaware of the existing programs that are designed to help them meet their diversity goals. Additional opportunities may exist or can be created to help departments evaluate the effectiveness of their current (department) recruitment strategies so they can insert the appropriate graduate recruitment program into their existing blueprint.
- Use Program Theory Evaluation principles, where it can be shown that one “single intermediate outcome [helps a] program achieve its ultimate outcome” (Rogers et al., 2000, p. 7). Stakeholders should be able to view the chain of objectives, where activity A will attain objective B because it is able to influence process C. It is through the understanding of all three factors—program, objective, and intervening process—that stakeholders can interpret what AIM was designed to do and how to integrate it into the departmental recruitment strategies. This is important because the current template with which departments are recruiting to reach a goal, while graduate recruitment is recruiting to reach a (sometimes competing) goal creates significant overlap, a lack of continuity, and often confusion. Clearly defining goals and objectives and supporting these with a structured timeline, concise strategies, and an effective evaluation, can

enhance collaboration among partners and reduce cost inefficiencies due to competing goals and overlapping objectives.

- A mechanism should be created that incorporates a communication plan with each department that has graduate programs on campus. In order for programs like AIM to be sustained, departments must be aware of the recruitment support in can provide.
- Internal and, if possible, external policy stakeholders must prioritize AIM to ensure its overall sustainability and success. Historically, diversity, equity and inclusion programs are often eliminated or defunded during fiscally stressed times. Keeping AIM as an elevated priority demonstrates commitment to enhancing minority recruitment and enrollment.
- Find out where students from the regional HBCUs are attending graduate school. Data in the study reported that students from area HBCUs attended graduate school all across the country, which was one of the reasons minority recruitment programs initially recruited students outside of the state. Yet the university remains committed to cultivating meaningful relationships with minority education partners around the state and adjoining regions, particularly with HBCUs. One of the reasons AIM has elevated costs is because few, if any, of the attendees are from regional institutions. Their participation in AIM therefore requires significant travel costs. A recommended strategy would be to enhance regional recruitment of underrepresented students, while also encouraging departments to provide appropriate research incentives.

D. Recommendations for Further Research

1. One of the areas that could merit additional research includes understanding the differences between and similarities among recruitment strategies, including the

engagement of discipline specific faculty and graduate school recruiters. The early engagement of faculty in the current study indicated that their role was vitally important in attracting potential students, but a greater understanding regarding how faculty members recruit students versus how graduate recruitment does could be beneficial to everyone.

2. Investigation regarding the effectiveness of data sets designed to create predictive models for successful minority student recruitment should occur. This research should discuss the roles of each stakeholder and the impact that exposure to different elements of graduate study, such as participation in research, has on students' graduate school decisions.
3. Future research should explore differences in decision-making among prospective minority graduate students, differentiating variables by degree program, discipline type, and other potentially important variables (i.e. student perception of university, geographic location etc.). These data should also differentiate between research-intensive graduate programs and more professional graduate programs.
4. Future research should focus on creating a return-on-investment metric to help institutions make strategic decisions about how to allocate their resources in comparison to expectations.
5. The current evaluation focused on one institution. A survey of other southern or similar institutions should be conducted to review their minority student recruitment, and from this larger data set, attempt to identify generalizable findings about why minority students make the graduate enrollment decisions they do. This must also

- include an analysis of the content of these programs and the engagement of the variety of stakeholders who are involved in the recruitment process.
6. Another approach to evaluating the AIM Conference could be considered, including a participant-observer methodology that provides an analysis of the program's experiences from the perspective of a potential minority graduate student. This type of analysis might provide important, meaningful information about how well the program responds to potential student interests.
 7. Future research should include multiple perspectives on minority student recruitment, including engaging internal and external stakeholders in the process. Graduate recruiters and faculty, for example, might have important and critical observations about the AIM Conference and similar programs. External stakeholders, such as private corporations, similarly might have valuable input about the execution and content of such minority recruitment programs.
 8. Future research should be conducted to tell the stories of programs that historically have been successful and those that have failed. Through a cataloging of success and failures, institutional leaders will be better equipped to understand the cultural and pragmatic elements of minority student recruitment.
 9. Research can occur that offers an accurate insight into the actual costs of recruitment of students. Although the study by Bakken, et al. (2015) offered valid insight into the varying layers that can affect cost estimates, the UA comparisons assumed that all 1,209 new enrollees in 2019 were recruited. Data that indicates the actual number of recruited students would offer a more accurate cost analysis.

10. An analysis that examines the impact that continued communication with AIM attendees has on other graduate school opportunities (doctoral and post-doc) as well as faculty and staff opportunities at the UA could provide useful information. The study confirmed that some of the highest achieving black students considered UA. Even if they attended other graduate schools, they are a part of a very unique pool of talent. Terminating contact after AIM may be imprudent.

E. Additional Limitations of the Study

1. The study was designed to evaluate the AIM Conference using data that were believed to be available from different UA current and former staff members. Many of these data were ultimately not available, and consequently the evaluation yielded important findings that, however, were in some ways limited or inconclusive in answering the research questions.
2. The evaluation was further limited in that cost of recruitment data proved to be impractical and problematic to identify. As noted, recruitment costs were not centralized or even consistently reported or categorized, making a true return-on-investment analysis difficult if not impossible, to complete.
3. An evaluation using PTE does not allow for the exploration of causation. The current study identified a recruitment program and analyzed how well it did in achieving its expectations. The study referenced the successful recruitment of students but did not attempt to establish causation between activities and outcomes.

F. Discussion

As racial and ethnic diversity continues to increase throughout higher education, it is important to understand where, how, and why the growth is occurring and what effect specific

programs or strategies have had on that growth. In addition, university leaders must value all racial and ethnic diversity, and strong increases in one racial category cannot lead to decreased emphasis in others. This means that although Asian American and Hispanic student enrollments have increased dramatically, there cannot be a reduction in emphasis on recruiting African American students.

The University of Arkansas, like many institutions, uses creative strategies to attract, recruit, and enroll underrepresented minorities in graduate school. Previous research has indicated that some schools commit resources to increase the visibility of the institution by sponsoring high profile events, while others invest in funding highly qualified minorities in certain areas of research. The recent escalation in the use of virtual and digital recruitment strategies that target Minority Serving Institutions has also been reported to have worked for some institutions (Griffin & Muñoz, 2011). The majority of academic research findings, however, suggests that engaging students while they are undergraduates is the most effective way to get them to consider graduate education as a serious option.

The focus of the current study was the need to understand the impact that intervention strategies have on minority enrollment at UA, particularly the Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference. With great importance placed on this recruitment strategy, it is critical to develop an understanding of whether or not it is helpful in bringing underrepresented students to campus for graduate study. The data identified in this program evaluation revealed marginal success in actually recruiting African American students to campus, and those who did enroll were expensive to recruit.

Of the students who were recruited to UA, they were academically high-performing students who successfully navigated their graduate programs once enrolled. The AIM

Conference seemed to be highly successful in finding good prospective students, and these students were successful while on campus. A future study describing their experiences once enrolled on the UA campus might also yield further understanding of the AIM Conference. This research might attempt to answer the question of whether or not the UA experience lived up to the expectations presented in the AIM Conference.

The evaluation of the AIM Conference allowed for the answering of the study's questions, but also identified perhaps a more important element to be studied and considered in the future, by administrators, faculty, and those concerned about diverse student enrollment. Although AIM did not produce large numbers of enrollees from participants, it did bring key campus leaders and departments together toward a joint showing of commitment to diversity. Through participating departments that made financial contributions or provided social or human capital expended through volunteering on campus to offer areas of expertise to AIM participants, UA was able to demonstrate its lived commitment to diversity. The evaluation did not quantify or prove whether or not this community made a difference in the recruitment of students, but it does show an important value of the institution, and this cannot be underestimated or undervalued.

Part of the motivation to conduct this evaluation was because of the concern for the future of AIM and similar kinds of programs. Since 2010 the graduate school has coordinated over 20 minority campus visit programs for students and faculty, but many programs have since been eliminated. Some have been replaced by other minority visit initiatives with similar goals and objectives, formats, and structures. Yet, when program facilitators were asked about the data that suggested previous programs be eliminated and replaced by the alternative programs, they responded that such data did not exist.

Scholars and policy professionals maintain that the elimination of unconscious bias while promoting awareness regarding social and cultural connection must be intentional. That is a large part of what AIM did. For the program to be sustained, constant training and coaching on strategies that affect minority graduate students must exist. Participation and commitment from the entire university community is required, especially sponsors and allies who do not represent the group at which the intervention is targeted. If these steps are not followed, then engagement among stakeholders will stop. If engagement stops, the questions and suggestions regarding the improvement of AIM will stop. If the questions and suggestions stop, then AIM will be eliminated, and all of the prior work to get the program to its current position would have been in vain.

The exciting part about AIM and the University of Arkansas is that it is a small component within a larger diversity and inclusion strategy at a university that is making a genuine commitment to reducing the educational inequality of underrepresented students. The commitment that has been made by UA through programs such as AIM demands that they be taken seriously in the area of minority recruitment.

Policy scholars as well as diversity and inclusion professionals have illuminated some troubling data. Recently the revenue that public colleges and universities receive from tuition exceeded the revenue from government appropriations. Simultaneously, racial and ethnic diversity is increasing around the country. Not only does this shift the costs of education on to the students and their parents, but it also affects investments in diversity programs. This threatens to increase economic polarization and social division that is often mitigated through higher education and is also a relevant example of institutional racism (Brownstein, 2018; Blackwell, 1984).

The impact that a strong AIM program has on shaping the external impressions of the University can be significant. AIM was instrumental in shaping the perception about the University of Arkansas graduate school in the minds of the HBCU partners, prospective students, and diversity professionals around the country. By design, the people who contributed the most to that favorable impression were outside of the university. Students who attended AIM but enrolled in other graduate schools continued to refer classmates and friends to UA graduate school because of the experience they had during their 48-hour visits to Fayetteville.

Yet, the greatest opportunity for shaping perception is when graduate programs at UA facilitate the successful matriculation of *every* minority student. Throughout the study, the evaluation confirmed that graduate recruitment is a specialized exercise in which specific students are attracted and recruited for customized research or study within a graduate program. Relationships with every department at every HBCU are not necessary, but consistent, genuine relationships with partners who help promote the UA graduate school to their students and colleagues are invaluable.

Throughout the years, many UA graduate faculty have informed graduate recruitment personnel of the schools they thought could provide the highest achieving, best prepared graduate students for UA. It was the cultivation of those relationships at those institutions that affirmed the perception of AIM and made UA a conceivable option for their students. A stronger AIM does not necessarily mean a larger AIM. A stronger AIM does not necessarily mean more African American doctoral students. A stronger AIM does not necessarily mean increased minority enrollment. All of those components comprise an *effective* AIM. A stronger AIM means consistent improvement from previous years, where 5% minority enrollment becomes 5.3%, which becomes 5.9%, which grows to 6.8%, and so on (Agho, et al.,2004).

Too often minority programs are terminated because the results do not occur fast enough or the return on investment is perceived to be too low. One of the areas that this study hopefully addressed was that any evaluation of a program absent of culturally appropriate established goals is misguided. But understanding what to measure within an evaluation is only half of the question. Equally important is incorporating evaluation and reporting designs within the program so that an understanding of how to assess the program exist.

For the University of Arkansas to improve its graduate minority enrollment will take collaboration and coordinated efforts among key stakeholders and multiple partners. The University and the Graduate School are committed to enriching racial and ethnic diversity, and program coordinators and faculty are striving to fulfill those commitments. The foundation for minority recruitment is established and is respected among the HBCU and MSI communities. The next step is to assess the progress that has occurred, critically evaluate what is not working, and create the steps to help improve those areas. This evaluation of the AIM Conference fundamentally contributed toward that end.

G. Chapter Summary

The current chapter provided a summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the program evaluation, recommendations for further research and for practice, a notation of additional limitations identified as the study was conducted, and a discussion of the AIM program at UA. Broadly, the evaluation identified that the AIM Conference program was well designed and well received by participants, but that it did not result in a dramatically higher enrollment of African American graduate students. The program did, however, prove to be a focal point in bringing together the campus community for a visible and collective approach to

recruiting minority students, as well as assisting some graduate programs in achieving their minority enrollment goals and objectives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

University of Arkansas IRB Approval Correspondence



To: Michael T Miller
GRAD 320

From: Douglas James Adams, Chair
IRB Committee

Date: 03/23/2020

Action: Exemption Granted

Action Date: 03/23/2020

Protocol #: 2002249188

Study Title: The Attracting Intelligent Minds Conference: An Assessment of Graduate Diversity Recruitment

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Alfred Thomas Dowe, Investigator

Appendix B

Sample AIM Conference Program

A.I.M. Conference 2018
Agenda, February 22–25, 2018
Theme: Where am I now and what am I Doing?

Thursday, February 22

10:30am–4:30pm	AIM Scholars arrive (XNA)
11:00am–5:00pm	Check-in, Comfort Inn & Suites 1234 Steamboat Drive Fayetteville, AR 72704 479.571.5177
6:30pm–8:00pm	Dinner & Dialogue with BGSA and BLSA members Catfish Hole
8:30pm	Return to hotel

Friday, February 23 Morning sessions will be in ARKU 312

7:00am–8:00am	Continental Breakfast at Comfort Inn & Suites Pick Up/Shuttle to Campus
8:30am–9:15am	Welcome Remarks (Dr. Calvin White, Chair History, Dr. Charles Robinson, Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs, and AIM Committee member)
9:15am–10:00am	Workshop 1: <i>Graduate school presentation</i> (Romona West, Karl Anderson, Laura Moix, Graduate School and International Education)
10:00am–10:15am	Break
10:15am–11:30am	Workshop 2: <i>How do I pursue graduate school?</i> Panel of faculty and graduate students (Dr. Paul Adams, Chemistry/Biochemistry, Dr. Barbara Lofton, Director of Diversity Programs, WCOB, Alexyss Scott, President, Black Graduate Students' Association)
11:30am–1:30pm	Workshop 3 and Lunch and Panel Discussion

Multi-Cultural Center

Arkansas?!?! For real?!?! Leadership panel (Dr. Constance Bailey, English; Dr. Pearl Dowe, Chair, Political Science; Wayne Hamilton, Senior Director, Global Tax Controversy, Walmart, Inc.; Mike Byron, Senior Director, Supplier Diversity, Walmart, Inc.; Grace Flowers, graduate student, Recreation and Sport Management)

Lunch sponsored by University Housing

1:35pm–1:45pm	Official Group Picture--ARKU
1:45pm–4:00pm	Campus Tour and Department Visits, starts from ARKU
4:00pm–6:00pm	Free time (optional Library tour 3:00p)
6:00pm–7:45pm	Dinner Hog Haus Brewing Company Restaurant
8:00pm–9:30pm	Ozark Escape
9:30pm	Return to the Comfort Inn & Suites or BGSA Social Activities

Saturday, February 24:

8:00am–9:00am	Continental Breakfast at hotel
9:00am	Shuttle Departs
9:10am–12:30pm	Guided Community Tour (see below for tour participants)
1:00pm–2:30pm	Lunch, Williams Soul Food Express
2:30pm–4:30pm	Crystal Bridges Museum of Art. “Soul of a Nation”
5:00pm	Depart for hotel
5:30pm	Captivating Creations Mobile Picture Booth Hotel lobby
7:00pm	Movie “Black Panther,” Malco Theatre
9:30pm	Dinner and Social Activities, Buffalo Wild Wings Fayetteville

Sunday, February 25

9:30am	Departure
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Saturday Tour Participants

Historic St. James Missionary Baptist Church

Combs Street Church of Christ

Restoration Church

Trendsetter Barbershop

Hair Couture

Sola Salon

Spectrum Apartments

University House

Hill Place Apartments

Appendix C

Sample McNair Conference Program



McNair Scholars Visit

Tentative Agenda

November 4–5, 2010



Thursday, November 4, 2010

11:00am–4:00pm	Graduate School Fair	Red Lounge
10:00 am–3:00 pm	Student Arrival & Conference Registration	Outside Ballroom
4:30 pm–5:30 pm	Opening Session	Union Theatre
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greetings from the Graduate School• The Application Process• Funding Your Graduate Education• Graduate Student Services	
5:30 pm–7:00 pm	Dinner	
	Ballroom	

Friday, November 5, 2010

8:00 am–9:00 am	Breakfast w/ Grad Students	Ballroom
9:15 am–11:15am	Department Visits for students	
	Visiting Administrators meet with Provost	TBD
11:30 am–1:00 pm	Lunch w/ Graduate Students	Union Food Court
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Poster Session/Oral Presentations	Union 5 th floor

3:15 pm–5:00 pm	Practice GRE	Union 5 th floor
5:00 pm–7:00 pm	FREE TIME	
7:30 pm–9:00 pm	Closing Dinner	Ballroom
	Keynote Address	

Appendix D

Sample Triple AAA Conference Program

*U*Aspire *U*Apply, *U*Achieve Diversity Conference
March 31–April 2, 2013

Sunday, March 31

1:00pm–5:00pm	Conference Registration <i>Chancellor Hotel Lobby</i>
3:30pm–4:15pm	University of Arkansas Campus Tour
5:00pm–5:45pm	Opening Session/Presentations <i>Arkansas Union</i>
6:00pm–7:00pm	Dinner <i>Arkansas Union Rooms 512–514</i>
7:00pm–8:00pm	Keynote Address <i>Arkansas Union Theater</i>
8:00pm–9:00pm	Reception <i>Arkansas Union Multicultural Center Lobby</i>

Monday, April 1

8:00am–9:00am	Breakfast <i>Chancellor Hotel Room: Eureka Springs</i>
9:15am–11:30am	Department Visits Various
12:00pm–1:00pm	Lunch with Graduate Students ARKU Food Court
1:00pm–1:15pm	Meeting Space for Transportation <i>Arkansas Union 514</i>
1:30pm–3:30pm	Strengths Quest Session <i>Chancellor Hotel Bella Vista rm</i>
3:45pm–4:15pm	BREAK
4:30pm–5:30pm	Faculty/Student Panel <i>Chancellor Hotel Bella Vista</i>
5:30pm–5:45pm	BREAK
5:45pm–6:30pm	Remarks <i>Chancellor Hotel Room: Bella Vista</i>
6:30pm–7:30 pm	BREAK
7:30pm–9:00pm	Dinner & Presentation <i>Chancellor Hotel</i>

Tuesday, April 2

Departure

Appendix E

Sample GROF Conference Program

Graduate Opportunities Research Forum
Wednesday, March 5, 2014—Friday, March 7, 2014

Time	Faculty Agenda	Student Agenda
Wednesday, March 5, 2014		
12:00pm–4:00pm	Arrival, Inn at Carnell Hall	Same
4:30pm–6:00pm	Reception Meet and Greet	Students with Condoleezza Rice
7:00pm–9:00pm	Distinguished Lecture Series (DLS) Barnhill Arena	Same
Thursday, March 6, 2014		
8:30am–9:30am	Breakfast with the Deans-Carnell Hall	Same
10:00am–11:30am	Departmental Meetings	Same
11:30am–1:00pm	Lunch with Faculty or Administrator	Lunch with graduate students
2:00pm–3:00pm	Graduate School Presentations	Same
3:00pm–5:30pm	Free Time	Same
6:00pm–7:30pm	Dinner and Panel Discussion Alumni House	Same
Friday, March 7, 2014		
8:00am–9:00pm	Departure	Same

Appendix F

Presentation of Conference Data by Year, Tables 4-14

Table 4.

AIM Conference Attendees, 2007

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	M	LSU	Geo-science	N
Participant 2	F	Miss College	Business	N
Participant 3	F	Tougaloo	BISC	N
Participant 4	?	Miss College	Business	N
Participant 5	M	Miss College	English	N
Participant 6	F	Tougaloo	Music	N
Participant 7	M	Miss College	Health	N
Participant 8	M	Miss College	Theater	N
Participant 9	F	Miss College	Nursing	N
Participant 10	M	Tougaloo	English	N
Participant 11	F	Tougaloo	Economics	N
Participant 12	F	Miss College	CSCE	N
Participant 13	F	Miss College	Bio-med Eng	N
Participant 14	F	Wiley College	English	N
Participant 15	F	Miss College	Business	N
Participant 16	M	Wiley College	Bio-med Eng	N
Participant 17	?	Miss College	Communic	N
Participant 18	M	Miss College	CSCE	N
Participant 19	F	Arkansas	Business	N
Participant 20	M	Ark-Pine Bluff	Theater	N

Table 5.
McNair Conference Attendees, 2010

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	M	Ark-Little Rock	Ed Leadership	N
Participant 2	M	Missing	Health	N
Participant 3	M	Missing	Higher Education	N
Participant 4	M	Oklahoma	Anthropology	Y (MS)
Participant 5	M	Missing	Anthropology	N
Participant 6	F	Missing	History	N
Participant 7	M	Oklahoma	Pub Admin	N
Participant 8	M	Missing	Missing	N
Participant 9	F	Missing	Rehabilitation	N
Participant 10	M	Ark-Little Rock	Missing	N
Participant 11	F	Missing	Missing	N

Table 6.
AIM Conference Attendees, 2011

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	M	North Car A&T	Electric Eng	N
Participant 2	F	Ark Baptist	Business	N
Participant 3	F	North Car A&T	Electric Eng	N
Participant 4	F	Texas A&M	Indust Eng	N
Participant 5	M	Prairie View A&M	Public Policy	N
Participant 6	M	Grambling State	Physics	N
Participant 7	F	Hampton	Health	N
Participant 8	F	Tenn State	Rehabilitation	Y
Participant 9	M	Tenn State	MBA	N
Participant 10	M	Prairie View A&M	Industrial Eng	N
Participant 11	M	Ark-Pine Bluff	Ag Business	N
Participant 12	M	Prairie View A&M	Electrical Eng	N
Participant 13	F	NCA&T	Electrical Eng	N
Participant 14	F	Hampton	Health	N
Participant 15	F	Alcorn State	English	N
Participant 16	M	Tenn State	Health	N
Participant 17	F	Prairie View A&M	Ag Business	Y
Participant 18	M	Tenn State	Health	N

Table 7.
AIM Conference Attendees, 2013

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	F	Claflin	Business	N
Participant 2	F	Wiley	English	N
Participant 3	M	Claflin	Business	N
Participant 4	F	Claflin	Busines	N
Participant 5	M	Grambling State	Business	N
Participant 6	F	North Car A&T	Bio-med Engin	Y
Participant 7	F	Hampton	Health	N
Participant 8	F	North Car A&T	Communications	N
Participant 9	M	North Car A&T	Rehabilitation	N
Participant 10	M	Ark-Pine Bluf	Computer Eng	N
Participant 11	M	Midwestern State	Pub Admin	N
Participant 12	M	Midwestern State	Business	N
Participant 13	?	Midwestern State	Business	N
Participant 14	M	Midwestern State	Computer Eng	N
Participant 15	F	Grambling State	Biology	N
Participant 16	F	Grambling State	Cell Biology	N
Participant 17	F	LSU	Psychology	N
Participant 18	M	LSU	Sociology	Y
Participant 19	F	Prairie View A&M	Biology	N
Participant 20	F	Prairie View A&M	Chemistry	N
Participant 21	F	Prairie View A&M	Chemistry	N

Table 8.
GROF Conference Attendees, 2014

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	F	Florida A&M	Food Science	N
Participant 2	M	Fayetteville State	Business	N
Participant 3	F	S Carolina State	Bio-med Eng	N
Participant 4	F	S Carolina State	Mech Eng	N
Participant 5	F	Clark Atlanta	Biology	N
Participant 6	F	Clark Atlanta	Biology	N

Table 9.
AIM Conference Attendees, 2015

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	F	Fort Valley State	Bio-med Eng	N
Participant 2	F	Spelman	Chemistry	Y
Participant 3	F	Hampton	Health	N
Participant 4	F	Spelman	Psychology	N
Participant 5	F	Florida A&M	Psychology	N
Participant 6	F	Howard	Social Work	N
Participant 7	F	Florida A&M	Business	N
Participant 8	F	Howard	Business	N
Participant 9	M	Florida A&M	Business	N
Participant 10	M	North Carolina A&T	Civil Eng	N
Participant 11	F	CAU	Cell Biology	N
Participant 12	F	East Tenn State	Health	N
Participant 13	M	Morehouse (GA)	Journalism	N

Table 10.
Diversity Scholars Visitation Attendees, 2015

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	F	Southern	Mechanical Eng	N
Participant 2	F	Prairie View A&M	Animal Sci	N
Participant 3	M	Kentucky State	Env Dynamics	N
Participant 4	F	North Carolina A&T	Nursing	N
Participant 5	M	Univ of Texas-El Paso	Psychology	N
Participant 6	M	Prairie View A&M	Animal Sci	N
Participant 7	F	Univ of Texas-El Paso	Info Systems	N
Participant 8	F	Texas A&M CC	Animal Sci	N
Participant 9	F	North Carolina A&T	Civil Eng	N
Participant 10	M	Morehouse	Journalism	N
Participant 11	F	Kentucky State	Env Dynamics	N
Participant 12	M	Univ of Central AR	Mechanical Eng	N
Participant 13	F	North Carolina A&T	Psychology	N

Table 11.
AIM Conference Attendees, 2016

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	M	Lincoln (PA)	Physics	N
Participant 2	F	Cleveland State	Health	N
Participant 3	F	Hampton	Health	N
Participant 4	F	Hampton	Journalism	N
Participant 5	F	North Carolina A&T	Bio-med Eng	N
Participant 6	M	Jackson State	Business	N
Participant 7	F	St. Augustine (NC)	Cell Biology	N
Participant 8	F	Lincoln (PA)	English	N
Participant 9	M	Neumann (PA)	Health	N
Participant 10	F	Hampton	Health	Y
Participant 11	F	Spelman	Bio-med Eng	N
Participant 12	F	North Carolina A&T	Mechanical Eng	N
Participant 13	M	Morehouse	Public Admin	N
Participant 14	F	St. Augustine (NC)	Cell Biology	N

Table 12.
AIM Conference Attendees, 2017

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	F	North Carolina Cent	Education	N
Participant 2	M	Fort Valley State	Geoscience	Y
Participant 3	F	North Carolina A&T	Bio-med Eng	N
Participant 4	F	North Car Central	Public Admin	N
Participant 5	F	Clark Atlanta	Biology	N
Participant 6	F	N Carolina State	Ag Business	Y
Participant 7	M	N Carolina State	Electrical Engin	N
Participant 8	F	Hampton	Anthropology	N
Participant 9	F	Hampton	Health	N
Participant 10	M	Hampton	Health	Y
Participant 11	F	North Carolina A&T	Mechanical Eng	N
Participant 12	F	North Carolina A&T	Mechanical Eng	N
Participant 13	F	Lincoln (PA)	English	N

Table 13.
AIM Conference Attendees, 2018

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	F	Texas-El Paso	Geosciences	N
Participant 2	F	N Carolina Central	Biology	N
Participant 3	M	Penn State	Geosciences	N
Participant 4	F	N Carolina A&T	Civil Eng	N
Participant 5	M	N Carolina Central	Nursing	N
Participant 6	F	N Carolina A&T	Biomed Eng	N
Participant 7	F	Sam Houston State	Higher Education	Y
Participant 8	F	Tuskegee	Ag Business	N
Participant 9	F	N Carolina Central	Business	N
Participant 10	M	City Coll Hong Kong	Mechanical Eng	N
Participant 11	M	Missouri	Bio-med Eng	Y
Participant 12	F	Hampton	Health	N
Participant 13	F	Hampton	Health	N
Participant 14	F	St. Augustine (NC)	Biology	N
Participant 15	M	Virginia Tech	Geosciences	N

Table 14.
AIM Conference Attendees, 2019

Participant	Gender	UG Institution	Discipline	Enrolled
Participant 1	M	Claflin	Computer Eng	TBD
Participant 2	M	Florida A&M	Biological Eng	TBD
Participant 3	F	Grambling State	Health	TBD
Participant 4	F	Jackson State	Health	TBD
Participant 5	F	Sam Houston State	Higher Education	TBD
Participant 6	F	Missouri	Psychology	TBD
Participant 7	M	N Carolina A&T	Communications	TBD
Participant 8	F	Claflin	Psychology	TBD
Participant 9	F	Southern	Ag Business	TBD
Participant 10	F	Florida International	Biology	TBD
Participant 11	M	Claflin	Communications	TBD
Participant 12	F	Claflin	Social Work	TBD
Participant 13	F	Claflin	Business	TBD
Participant 14	M	FAMU	Industrial Eng	TBD
Participant 15	M	GSU	Health	TBD
Participant 16	M	Claflin	Business	TBD
Participant 17	M	Morehouse	English	TBD

Appendix G

Sample Student Satisfaction Survey



A.I.M.

Attracting Intelligent Minds
2015 Conference Evaluation

“Cultural Fluency: Recreating Your Comfort Zone”

General Conference Organization

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Conference Information (Registration Packet and Application)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Arrival/On-Site Registration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. A.I.M. Organizing Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Coordination of Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Lodging (check one) ___Holiday Inn ___Mt. Sequoyah	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Speakers

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. “To be determined” — Dr. T.A. Walton	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. “To be determined” — Dr. Pearl Dowe, Dr. Clinnesha Sibley	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. “To be determined” — Dr. Barbara Lofton	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. “To be determined” — Mr. Stacy Williams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Meals

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Welcome Reception	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Continental Breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Conference Luncheon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Closing Reception	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix H

Presentation of Student Satisfaction Data

Table 17.
Student Self-Report Satisfaction with AIM Activities

Evaluation Area	2015 <i>n</i> =9	2016 <i>n</i> =12	2017 <i>n</i> =7	2018 <i>n</i> =16
Registration documents and conference packet, lodging, and travel experience	4.83	4.53	4.65	4.87
Meals	4.72	4.67	4.88	4.81
Conference workshops				
Campus Tour	4.54	4.41	4.42	4.35
Department Visits	4.21	4.33	4.78	4.75
Community Overview	-----	4.81	4.43	4.87
Graduate School presentations				
GS: How do I Pursue GS?	4.72	4.70	4.80	4.87
Arkansas? For Real?	4.87	4.56	4.67	5.0
Social activities	4.69	4.88	4.91	4.84
Overall	4.56	4.79	4.83	4.93
Open-ended responses				
What was not covered				
Other reactions				

Appendix I

AIM Student Application Sample

Name _____ First _____ Last _____

Current Address

_____ Street Address _____ City _____ State _____

_____ Zip Code _____

Is this your permanent address? _____ Country _____

Phone Number _____ Email _____

Date of Birth _____

Gender _____

Race (Check all that apply)

African American Asian Caucasian Native American Pacific Islander

Native Hawaiian

Ethnicity

Hispanic _____ Non-Hispanic _____

Special Needs Yes No Accommodations Needed _____

Allergies ? Yes No

Emergency Contact Name and Information _____

US Citizen Yes No

College or University _____

Major _____ GPA _____ Expected graduation _____

Anticipated start t graduate school _____

Degree Type _____ Graduate Program of Interest _____

GRE Score or Scheduled GRE test date _____

T-Shirt Size S M L XL XXL Other

Essay Questions

Please complete the following essays

1. Write a short statement of your research interest(s) and experience
2. What are your plans for future professional or graduate education and eventual plans for a career?

Checklist (The following are required. Your application will NOT be reviewed until ALL items are received.

Before submitting this application, you need each of the following documents in a digital file (doc or pdf_

- A copy of your academic record (transcript)
- Resume/Vitae _____ Will upload with this form _____ Will follow
- Two letters of recommendation _____ Will upload with this form ____ Will follow

To the best of my knowledge, the information submitted in this application and accompanying materials is complete and accurate _____ Yes _____ No

Please respond to the following statements

I certify that all information given is complete and accurate ()

I agree to inform the Attracting Intelligent Minds Program of any changes in my plans to participate in the program ()

I understand that withholding information or giving false information may make me ineligible for participation or subject to withdrawal ()