

Review of Formally Organized Units

Each year the Illinois Board of Higher Education requests that institutions provide reviews of formally organized support units serving underrepresented groups. Institutions were asked for reviews this year on units concerning the recruitment and retention of graduate students from underrepresented groups. The University of Illinois at Springfield has one such unit: the Whitney M. Young Fellowship Program.

This program is a memorial to the late Whitney M. Young, Jr, former executive director of the National Urban League, educator, and social activist. It is aimed at increasing opportunities in graduate education for highly self-motivated African American, Hispanic American, and Native American citizens. The program is designed to complement graduate work with research and scholarship in public policy and public service. Fellows have opportunities to assist UIS faculty in research projects, as well as to assist academic programs, public affairs centers, and other campus units in fulfilling their missions. Opportunities also exist for internships with governmental and community organizations that focus on public affairs.

Eligibility. African American, Hispanic American, and Native American students who have completed undergraduate degrees with a minimum GPA of 3.00 (4.00 scale) and who are accepted in a graduate program at UIS are eligible to apply. Fellows must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.00 in all graduate-level courses taken and must meet all requirements of the UIS graduate assistantship office. All academic work for the master's degree must be completed within two years from date of entry into the program.

Financial Support. Fellows receive a monthly stipend of \$706 during the academic year, from mid-August to mid-May for an annual stipend of \$6354. A tuition waiver is granted for 12 credit hours per semester and an additional six hours is waived for the summer term after completing at least one semester as a fellow.

Identification of Participants. The Whitney Young Program recruits nationally, targeting mailings to institutions with large minority populations. Competition among institutions to enroll high achieving minority students is keen, however, and UIS has not always been able to fill all allocated fellowship positions. As the program becomes more nationally known and the number of its graduates increases, the number of applicants is also likely to increase. Nonetheless, it would be appropriate at this stage in its development to formulate a plan to more actively publicize the program.

Program Evaluation for AY94 through AY97

The Whitney Young program was initiated in the fall of 1994. This is the program's first evaluation. Because of its recent implementation and because of the small number of graduates, the campus has conducted no formal alumni surveys as yet for the program. The data presented here were compiled from program records and student transcripts. Staff also made select telephone calls to students to clarify information, and faculty contributed their personal knowledge on the status of some students.

Demographics of Participants. During the four-year period from AY94-95 to AY97-98, a total of 32 students participated in the program. Fifteen students received the fellowship for two years, bringing the total program participation (duplicated) to 12 for AY94-95, 9 for AY95-96, 14 for AY96-97, and 12 for AY97-98. Of the 32 participants, 9 (28.1%) were males and 23 (71.9%) were females. All were full-time students. The ethnicity/race of the students is presented below.

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| African American males | 7 | (21.9%) |
| African American females | 21 | (65.6%) |
| Total African Americans | 28 | (87.5%) |
| Hispanic males | 2 | (6.3%) |
| Hispanic females | 2 | (6.3%) |
| Total Hispanics | 4 | (12.5%) |
| Total program | 32 | (100.0%) |

Program participation for African American males (aggregated 21.9%) is lower than would be expected based on both UIS' African American graduate student population and its graduate population as a whole for the review period. African American males as a percentage of total African American graduate enrollment at UIS ranged from 44.5% in Fall 1995 to 34.9% in Fall 1997. The percentage of male graduate students on campus ranged from 42.7% in Fall 1996 to 41.1% in Fall 1997.

Over the history of the program, 12.5% of the participants have been Hispanic. The number of Hispanic students on campus has been too few to make a reliable estimate of the impact the Whitney Young program has had on Hispanic enrollments. It is not unreasonable to assume, however, that additional opportunities exist to recruit Hispanic students into the program. The program will increase its recruitment efforts toward institutions with significant Hispanic student populations.

Support of Program Goals and Campus Mission in Public Affairs. An analysis of the fields of study chosen by the 32 participants indicates a strong distribution in areas related to public affairs, which supports the campus' special interest in that area.

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| Child, Family, and Community Services | 6 | Educational Administration | 1 |
| Communication | 4 | English | 1 |
| Community Arts Management | 3 | Health Services Administration | 1 |
| Public Administration | 3 | History | 1 |
| Public Health | 3 | Human Development Counseling | 1 |
| Individual Option | 2 | Legal Studies | 1 |
| Biology | 1 | Management Information Systems | 1 |
| Business Administration | 1 | Political Studies | 1 |
| Economics | 1 | | |

An important goal of the Whitney Young program is to complement graduate work “with research and scholarship in public policy and public service.” To fulfill this goal, the program has provided the following types of placements:

- Illinois Arts Council (community arts management student);
- Development Department of the Illinois State Museum (community arts management student);
- Astronomy/physics program, research on astronomical data/information on the Internet and the development of a history of geometry (history student with an interest in the history of math);
- child, family, and community services program to develop workshops on Adlerian psychology theory and practice (child, family, and community services student); and
- public health internships in The Gambia and India (public health students).

Academic Success of Program Participants. Analysis of transcripts at the conclusion of the Spring 1998 semester provided the following data on the academic success of the program’s 32 participants.

- Master’s degrees awarded 8 (25.0%)
- Closure exercise course on transcript, enrolled as of Spring 98 7 (21.9%)
- Completing coursework, enrolled as of Spring 98 5 (15.6%)
- Persistence rate (% graduated plus enrolled) 20 (62.5%)
- Closure exercise course on transcript, not enrolled 7 (21.9%)
- Withdrawn 5 (15.6%)
- Total 32 (100.0%)
- The requirement that all academic work for the master’s degree be completed within two years of entry into the program is not being met. Rather than change this requirement, the program is considering increasing the minimum course load required from 8-12 hours to 12-16 hours and reducing the service role.
- Staff attempted to telephone the seven students (or, in some cases, their advisers) whose transcripts suggested that they might be working on closure exercises without being enrolled. Six are still working on their thesis/projects and intend to graduate. The status of the seventh is unknown.
- Fellows withdrew for the following reasons: one transferred to UIC to study for an M.S.W., one moved out of state, one withdrew for personal problems, and one was suspended for incomplete hours. The reason for a fifth student’s withdrawal is unknown.

- The average GPA for program participants was 3.43 (4.00 scale). The average GPA for program graduates was 3.37.
- At this point in the program's history (when some participants have just entered the program), male fellows have been more successful in graduating than female fellows, with 4 of 9 males versus 4 of 23 females having graduated.
- Data show that males have persisted at a somewhat higher rate than females across the history of the program. Females, however, have earned a higher average GPA.

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| Persistence rate – male | 6 of 9 | (66.7%) |
| Persistence rate – female | 14 of 23 | (60.9%) |
| Average GPA – male | | 3.19 |
| Average GPA – female | | 3.52 |

- Success of two Hispanic fellows in the group is exceptional. A Hispanic male graduated in three semesters with a 4.00 GPA, the only perfect GPA in the history of the program. A Hispanic female is completing coursework and has a 3.95 GPA.
- Three (9.4%) Whitney Young participants have been awarded the Illinois Consortium for Educational Opportunity Program (ICEOP) fellowships.

Comparison of Academic Success of Participants. The campus does not compile cohort retention data for graduate students. As a rough benchmark, however, the total number of master's degrees awarded to students in FY95, FY96, and FY97 was divided by the total number of students enrolled in graduate programs in the fall of these fiscal years. (FY98 degree data were not available.) The result was an estimated graduation rate of 15.3% for the campus as a whole. The Whitney Young program's aggregated graduation rate of 25% compares favorably with this rough estimate.

Use of Resources. The program is supported by 0.95 FTE total faculty and staff (0.2 FTE for the director, 0.25 clerical staff, and 0.50 fellow). The FY98 budget for the program was \$121,987.

Summary. At this early stage in its development, the Whitney Young program is already meeting its goal of increasing opportunities in graduate education for African American and Hispanic citizens. Thirty-two students have participated to date. According to their selection of fields of study, students show a keen interest in public affairs, which supports UIS' mission. In addition, the program has taken special care to see that each student's placement complements his or her graduate work with research and scholarship in public policy and public service. The persistence rate (percentage graduated or still enrolled) is 62.5%. As the program becomes more nationally known and the number of its graduates increases, the number of applicants is also likely to increase. Nonetheless, it would be appropriate at this stage to formulate a plan to more actively publicize the program. Overall, the program appears to be effective in meeting its goals and supporting the campus' priorities.