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The Imperative for Teachers of Color in the Schools of the U.S.

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The lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the teaching workforce of the United States has been a source of concern for educators, scholars and policy makers for some time (Astin, 1982; Garibaldi, 1987; ACE, 1989; Green, 1990; Carter and Wilson, 1995; King, Hollins et al. 1997; Donnelly, 1999). A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (1986), the report of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy called for, "mobilizing the nation's resources to prepare minority youngsters for teaching careers" (p.3). One of the Forum's bold strategies was to attract sufficient qualified persons into teaching, to alter the environment of schools, and to create the schools that would prepare our students for the economic and social conditions the U.S. will face in the 21st century. While many of the recommendations of the Carnegie Forum report including the raising of standards for teachers, the restructuring of schools, and the setting of performance goals for schools have been effectively impacted, the mobilizing of resources to prepare minority teachers has been widely ignored. Although there have been very successful efforts at preparing minority candidates for the teaching profession, those attempts have been too limited compared to the need. Many of the programs created to expand teacher diversity have been local in nature, usually the result of committed individuals in educational institutions. Others have been fairly extensive and supported by national foundations such as the multiyear Ford Foundation initiative. We have not, however, as a nation mobilized sufficiently

to make any progress against the crisis of teacher diversity.

Since 1986 the condition of the U.S. teaching workforce has changed very little regarding its racial ethnic composition. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2003), the number of teachers from disenfranchised minority groups (teachers of color) nationwide is not representative of the number of students from those minority groups. For example, in 2001–02, NCES data shows that 60% of public school students were White, 17% Black, 17% Hispanic, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native. In contrast, 2001 data shows that 90% of public school teachers were White, 6% Black, and fewer than 5% of other races. *In summary the national rate stands at roughly 90% White teachers compared to 10% minority teachers. While the student ratios are 60% white compared with 40% minorities. Some 40% of schools had no teachers of color on staff* (NCDTF, 2004).

The crisis of diversity in the teaching profession compelled more than 20 of the nation's leading educational organizations to organize a three-day conference in November of 2001 aptly titled "Losing Ground: A National Summit on Diversity in the Teaching Force". The purpose of the summit was to examine the relationships between educational opportunity, educational achievement, educator diversity, and teacher quality. The summit participants voiced

widespread concern about these demographic disparities and their negative impact on the quality of education for all children. In addition, participants noted that

Although teacher quality has been accepted and internalized as a mantra for school reform, the imperative for diversity is often marginalized rather than accepted as central to the quality equation in teaching.

(Source: "Losing Ground" Summit Proceedings Document, February 15, 2001)

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2003) data on the composition of the American student and teacher populations indicates that the percentage of teachers of color does not even approximate the percentage of students of color in any state with a sizable population of diverse residents except Hawaii. The District of Columbia also is an exception. Teachers of color come closest to having proportional representation in large urban school districts. Most teachers of color are employed in schools that have 30 percent or more students of color. For Native Americans, these schools are located in rural areas and small towns, rather than urban centers.

Teachers of color tend to teach in schools that have large numbers of students from their own ethnic groups. Thus, the highest percentages of African American teachers are found in the Southeast, Latinos in the West and the Northeast, Native Americans in the central and western regions, and Asian Americans in the West.

Attendance at colleges and schools of education follow similar patterns. Minority teacher candidates are geographically isolated from each other and from their White colleagues, in terms of both where they enroll in teacher edu-

cation programs and where they are employed. Within ethnic groups, teachers of color are about equally represented in elementary and secondary schools. (NCDTF, 2004).

The current under-representation of teachers of color is made more ominous by the prospect that this problem is likely to worsen rather than improve. The Education Commission of the States' (ECS, 2004) state-by-state policy overview also expressed serious concern that the demand for teachers of color is soaring while their actual supply is plummeting. To reverse this trend, the report suggests, will require imaginative designs and bold strategies. The report also questions whether policy makers are willing to find solutions to this challenge.

Furthermore, statistical projections show that while the percentage of students of color in public schools is expected to increase, the percentage of teachers of color is not expected to rise. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, 1999) conducted one of its pipeline surveys to identify the percentage of students of color in its member institutions. It found that there are higher percentages of individuals of color enrolled in doctorate programs in education than undergraduate and post-baccalaureate teacher education programs. It also found that increased enrollment in undergraduate teacher preparation programs are so small that their overall percentages were not affected. According to the survey students of color are enrolled largely in preparation programs where their own ethnic group members reside and are isolated from each other. In other words Latinos attend teacher preparation programs in largely Latino regions, African American attend teacher preparation programs in the Southeast region of the U.S. where they predominate. The same is true for Native Americans and Asians Americans. If these students follow the established patterns of teachers seeking employment in the same or

nearby locations where they attend college, this regional isolation will be transferred to teachers in classrooms and the location of teachers of color in the teaching profession will continue to mirror what currently exists.

Similar patterns of disparity in performance exist along racial lines in testing, certification and licensing. New testing requirements stipulated in the ESEA/No Child Left Behind legislation requires eighty percent of teacher candidates to pass required teacher certification tests. Teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities risk being closed if those rates are not met. This is especially problematic for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Fifty percent of African Americans receive their teacher preparation at those institutions. HBCU's matriculate a higher concentration of students who are at risk of not meeting testing performance standards. As a result of the testing demands of ESEA/NCLB and Title VII of the Higher Education Act, teacher preparation institutions are frequently requiring the passage of entrance exams prior to admission into their programs. This requirement guarantees high passage rates for their graduates, and enhances their competitive position, but limits the number of persons of color who apply for and enter those institutions.

Why Teacher Diversity Is Important

There is a high level of agreement among policy makers, teacher educators, members of ethnic communities, and school leaders that the teaching profession needs to become more diverse especially regarding the representation of minority teachers frequently identified in the literature as "teachers of color."

The teacher diversity crisis is so alarming because teachers are a key component of any attempt at school improvement. Quiocho and Rios (Quiocho & Rios, 2000) in their analysis

of the impact of teacher diversity point at the important role of teachers of color as it relates to improved school performance for minority and other students. They believe "ethnic minority teachers bring socio-cultural experiences that, in the main, make them more aware of the elements of racism within schooling, more willing to name them, and more willing to enact a socially just agenda for society and schooling" (p. 487).

Teachers are essential to successful school change. Michael Fullan has not only been a student of educational change he has been a constant contributor to that process. He places much importance on the role of teachers and the importance of appropriate professional development in the context of "learning communities" for educational reform to have a possibility of impact. He unequivocally states in his book *The Meaning of Educational Change* (Fullan, 2001) that, "the biggest revolution he is talking about is changing the teaching professions" (p.265). Educational change according to Fullan depends to a large extent depends on what teachers do and think and the context in which their work takes place. The literature on the role of teachers, teacher preparation and school reform has consistently identified the role of teachers as a significant factor in the success or failure of school reform. Numerous authors (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991 November; Darling-Hammond and & McLaughlin, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage and G., 1995; Fullan & Hargreaves and Hargreaves, 1996); Ladd, 1996) have underscored the importance of teacher professional development to successfully implementing reform. Research shows that academic performance, regardless of student background, can change with improved instruction. Performance responds specifically to changes in how time is spent in the classrooms, how learning is organized, what curriculum materials are used, what attitudes are reinforced, what beliefs and values are operant, the degree to which the conditions for teaching and learning are supported {Brophy

& Good, 1986 #207;Knapp, 1992 #7;Sirotnik, 1990 #180

Often the reasons given for this need are to serve as role models for students of color, and to provide opportunities for mainstream students to learn about ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity. Others argue that teachers of color will be able to teach diverse students better because of their shared racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. Thus, the need for teachers of color is assumed to be connected more directly to improved academic achievement and school engagement.

Jacqueline Jordan Irvine has been working with and studying the impact of teachers of color for more than twenty years. Based on her work and that of her colleagues {Foster, 1997 #208;Delpit, 1995 #130;Ladson Billings, 1994 #211;Villegas & Lucas, 2002 #210;Zeichner Melnick & Gomez, 1996 #209}, she has concluded (Jordan Irvine 2003) that teachers of color bring more than their race to the classroom. She has formed the following set of propositions.

Teachers of color contribute to the academic success of students particularly students of color, by serving as cultural translators and mediators for students who often fail because the culture of the school is vastly different from the culture of their home and community.

Teachers of color facilitate academic achievement of students of color because their expectations are higher than those of their White counterparts and because they act as advocates and surrogate parents for the students of color whom they teach.

Teachers of color demonstrate unique, culturally based teaching styles that appear to be related to the achievement and school success of students whom schools have failed. (p.55)

Former Secretary of Education Richard Riley (1998) extends the benefits of having teachers of color to all students in all ethnic groups. He proposes that,

All girls and boys need role models that reflect the diversity of our country. Otherwise, children can be left with the subtle but enduring message that people of color are not capable of being teachers or holding other important positions in society. If we want to end these poisonous stereotypes, our teachers should look like America" (p. 20).

Donnelly (1999) contends that if all students are to receive a high quality education they need to be exposed to culturally diverse perspectives and experiences. Teachers from different ethnic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds are needed to help facilitate this learning. Quiocho and Rios (2000) summed up this potential well with the observation that, "The lives of students will be enriched beyond measure by experiencing teachers from minority groups. Students can benefit from broadening perspectives of culture and the sense of social justice that is nurtured by spending time in classrooms with teachers from minority groups" (p. 524). As a democratic society the U.S. may wish to demonstrate a commitment to equity by providing all students, whether they belong to the majority or minority groups, with models of power and responsibility. A diverse teacher workforce would reveal

to our students and communities that minority adults are capable and desirable in positions of authority and intellectual leadership.

Another benefit of increasing the representation of teachers of color is that minority teachers come from disproportionately low-income families and understand the challenges of schooling for disenfranchised populations. The new reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No child Left Behind has, in addition to the requirements for the use of tests on potential and current teachers, brought more focus on the responsibility of all schools to successfully educate low-income and minority students. The population of low-income students is, in many cases, shifting from the inner-city to the suburbs where more affordable housing is sometimes available. Cities in the Northwest region of the United States in particular are finding that because of the growth in the numbers of students from low-income families that have moved to the suburbs some of their schools now have more "students with needs" than was previously the case. In order to serve those students, schools are seeking teachers who understand poverty. As Donna Beegle an educational consultant who specializes in helping schools educate needy students states "Half of the battle is helping educators from middle class backgrounds understand what it's like to live in poverty. You meet these kids where they are not just where you want them to be" (Pardington, 2005).

The need for teachers to understand the poverty issues that affect learning has increased the popularity of the work and writings of Ruby Payne, highly sought after by school districts for their professional development programs. Her book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Payne 1998) and her workshops are in high demand. In part because the NCLB legislation requires that schools disaggregate their achievement data to clearly indicate the degree to which low-income students are benefiting equally at

school.

Obstacles to Teacher Diversity

The reduction of social, economic and racial inequalities has been a stated concern of social policy in the United States since the New Deal. Fueled by civil and political pressures to expand access to minorities and women and based on the American belief that education is the best means of mobility and the elimination of gross inequalities, education became the central focus in the claims against continued minority inequality (Apple, 1996, Meier, K. and Stewart, 1991, Tyack and Cuban 1995). Subsequently, the perception that more education for all our citizens increases the national prospects for economic competitiveness provided additional incentive to bring the college enrollment and success of minority groups to parity with their percentage in the population. The view that schools can ameliorate inequality has been commonly accepted and reflected in alterations of educational policy in our public schools and in the postsecondary education systems. We believed that the educational system could act as a balance wheel of the social machinery, which could equalize access and opportunities to all economic sectors.

Millions of low income and minority citizens have enrolled and completed college and professional schools because of policy initiatives such as the National Defense Education Act, The G.I Bill. The increase of minority teacher candidates is in part a higher education policy issue. There is direct relationship between college enrollments and the availability of educated candidates for the teaching profession in the U.S. From the late 1950s, in response to national civil rights movement demands for equal opportunity in education, higher education institutions have attempted to increase college access and success for minority and low income students. The

federal government played an important role by creating recruitment and support programs for low income and minority students interested in higher education. The original TRIO programs (Upward Bound, Talent Search and Student Special Services), and the grant and loan opportunities under the federal financial aid programs are examples of those actions. Those programs are operated by higher education institutions and supported with federal funds. In addition, many private and public higher education institutions have independently expanded support services and instituted scholarship and financial aid programs for minority and poor students.

The strategies used to enhance college student diversity have been questioned in recent years. Starting with the *DeFunis*, 1974 and the *Bakke*, 1978 U.S. Supreme Court cases challenges to affirmative action in higher education and the inclusion of minority students in colleges and universities has been disputed and controversial. The road to racial inclusion in higher education took a decisive turn in 2003 when the U.S. Supreme Court approved the use of race as a factor in college admissions in the *Michigan* case. Higher education institutions, which had made meager progress in minority enrollments and graduation, were paralyzed by the *Michigan* challenge and have been cautious in their response. But, after what can be classified as a mixed victory for affirmative action in the *Michigan* cases colleges and universities are reacting cautiously. David Ward, the President of the American Council on Education in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Sellingo, 2004) characterizes the post *Michigan* phase as, institutions moving locally, meaning that there is a lack of national clarity and cohesion about the steps that colleges and universities will take to insure access and success for minorities in higher education. The opposition to affirmative action continues unabated by organized opponents and the George W. Bush Administration which was an active opponent of affirmative action

in the *Michigan* challenges. The enrollment of minority students has declined significantly in many institutions and special programs designed to attract and support students of color are being discontinued, and reevaluated. The ambivalence of the courts ruling regarding the legitimate use of race as a factor in undergraduate admission and the constant scrutiny of the opponents of affirmative action has made colleges and universities hesitant to act and paralyzed the movement to create programs for minority teachers.

The cost of college is another factor that has discouraged college enrollment for minorities whom, as we know, come disproportionately from low-income families. The most recent increases in public tuition are the highest in the past ten years. Over the past year tuition and fees for in state residents have increased approximately fourteen percent at public two-year colleges. Total costs at public four year institutions represent about six percent of income for students from families with the highest income, nineteen percent for middle income families and seventy one percent for low income families by comparison in 1979-80 total costs were thirty one percent for low income families (College Board, 2003).

No structural barrier has had a more profound impact on minority candidates for the teaching profession than admission and certification testing. From the late 1970s until 1991, findings from a series of studies conducted by Smith (Smith 1984; Smith 1987; Smith 1992), reported ultimately the elimination of almost 100,000 minority teachers by teacher education admission and certification tests in 35 states. Specifically, of the 94,873 minority candidates eliminated by admission and certification tests, Smith (1992) reported that 45,468 were African American; 34,562, Hispanic American; 5,099, Asian American; 1,324, Native American; and 8,420, other minorities.

Some believe that one of the significant achievements of the 20th century has been the development of standardized intelligence, achievement, and aptitude tests. Tests, however, have questionable efficiency as tools to identify talents, skills, abilities, and potential across cultural and racial groups in a multicultural, multiracial society. Even the best, most psychometrically sound standardized tests do not have scientifically established predictive validity of sufficient strength to predict who will or will not succeed in a particular educational program or to predict who will or will not perform competently in a particular career field. Despite the admonitions against the misuse of such tests, most institutions of higher education and state agencies misuse test scores as a single criterion to select the “best candidates” for educational programs or to meet standards for licensure in many professions. Because of their link to socio-economic factors tests may always disproportionately eliminate members of minority groups, particularly African American, Puerto Rican, Mexican American, other Latino, American Indian, and some Asian American candidates. Similarly, a test has not yet been developed that does not, more often than not, disproportionately eliminate candidates who are female and who are from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite these shortcomings of testing, the public, policy makers, and members of professional groups have tenaciously clung to the belief that standardized testing constitutes valid practice in the United States even in the face of a research base that says otherwise. This inconsistency between practice and research is true in all professional fields, including teacher education.

Therefore testing is seen by many as effectively nullifying efforts to respond to the teacher diversity crises. Critics point to some compelling evidence to support their claims, including the fact that in virtually every state that uses testing, the performance of people of

color on them is significantly lower than their European American counterparts (Smith, 1987; Latham Gitomer & Ziomek, 2002).

The dilemma surrounding these test performance patterns and their effects on the supply of teachers of color are addressed vividly by Latham, Gitomer, and Ziomek (2002). They point out that:

By design, testing requirements restrict supply; desperate to fill vacancies, many states have circumvented such requirements by granting emergency licenses. Moreover, minority candidates have traditionally scored less well than their white peers on standardized tests, leading to fears that teacher testing will deny a disproportionate number of minority candidates access to the profession. Some view the situation as one in which states must decide between raising academic standards or increasing supply and diversity, with the decision in favor of one necessarily coming at the expense of the other (p. 2).

G. Pritchey Smith (1987) goes a step further in declaring that testing effectively erases minorities from the teaching profession because, candidates and employees of color do not pass the tests, they will not be hired, or be able to maintain the jobs they have.

Solutions

Commitment to Effective Policies.

The lack of ethnic racial and social diversity in the teaching workforce of the

United States can be better understood within the context of the struggle of modern societies to overcome national histories of legal and political segregation of racial and ethnic minorities. Britain, France, South Africa, Brazil, Israel, The Netherlands, Germany and the U.S.A. are among the many democratic nations that confront the challenge on inclusion and equal opportunity {Bleich, 2003 #195; Hanchard, 1999 #219; Holt, 2000 #194}. Racist attitudes supported by religious and genetic arguments have cemented a legacy of exclusion and suspicion that has been seriously confronted only since the 1960s in most of these countries. It was then that many of them passed antiracism and civil rights laws and engaged in the crafting of remedies to prior systematic exclusion. In many of these countries political parties have elbowed their way to success and power in recent decades, capitalizing on anti-immigrant fears and feelings of economic and personal insecurity and created a backlash to the movement for equity.

In the U.S. the beginning of the 21st century is marked by great ambivalence regarding the commitment of higher education to facilitating the access of underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities in higher education. Expanding access to higher education and the teaching profession holds the potential of benefiting the overall society. Education makes our citizens eligible for enhanced income and economic participation, political involvement and leadership and role modeling for members of the racial and ethnic groups. In the critical area of economic gains, the U.S. Census (U.S. Census, 2002) points out the impact that higher education and professional preparation may have on individuals. In 1996, the average monthly earnings of full-time workers with professional degrees were approximately \$7,000, compared with \$2,000 for full-time workers who did not complete high school. Even small amounts of postsecondary education were associated with higher earnings. People who had "some college,

but no degree" studied, on average, less than one year past high school. However, this additional education was enough to increase their earnings by \$340 per month. Women earned less than men did at every degree level. Women with a high school diploma or less education earned just under \$600 per month less than men with comparable schooling. Women with bachelor's degrees earned, on average, \$1,400 less per month than men with comparable schooling. Among those with advanced degrees, the difference was about \$2,000 per month (Tinto, 2004).

Expanding higher education participation and success to minority and low income students remains a central concern, as Harvard President Lawrence Summers declared recently, (Summers, 2004) that "the most serious domestic problem in the U.S. today is the widening gap between the children of the rich and the children of the poor, and education is the most powerful weapon we have to address that problem" (p.5). He feels that whatever the reason inequality in access to higher education must be confronted. A new instituted initiative has been instituted to encourage talented students from families of low and moderate income to attend Harvard College.

Retaining these population of students in college can be attained with systematic actions that higher education institutions are capable of employing. Tinto (2004) believes that an extensive body of research on student retention and successful retention programs for the last twenty five years points to several institutional actions that enhance retention. They include 1) providing clear guidelines about what they have to do to be successful, 2) provide clear academic and personal support, 3) Carefully assess the institutional activities and the activities of the students, 3) Involve the students with other students, faculty, and staff paying particular attention to those activities that are related to student learning.

The Education Commission of States (ECS, 2004) conducted a state-by-state overview of programs and policies for the increase of minority teachers. It revealed a varied landscape of teacher diversity initiatives many so weak as to be perceived as ineffective. It concluded that “increasing the diversity of the teacher workforce is not a high priority among either federal or state policymakers” (p. 20). Clearly a policy analysis is the first priority. We know that increasing college success for minority and low income students in teacher preparation programs is possible what is required is the commitment to do so.

Eliminate Obstacles to Teacher Diversity

According to acknowledged experts (Richardson & Bender 1987; Tinto, 2004) those obstacles include lack of financial, academic and social support. Financial support is a crucial ingredient in any solution to the minority teacher shortage. Summers (2004) reminds us of the impact the “happy accident” of the GI Bill had on our history of promoting equality in higher education. That bill transformed higher education and our notions of which students can succeed in college. One out of every two students in higher education was financed by the GI Bill by 1947, and the proportion of young people going to college almost doubled.

One of the political obstacles to the creation of large publicly funded initiatives that expand minority participation in college and professional schools is the opposition to “race based” programs. A national teacher diversity initiative that focuses on attracting and supporting candidates for the teaching profession who have the background, interest, experience and commitment to work with minority and low income populations and does not require minority group membership for admission, will avoid the political turbulence surrounding race based programs. Such strategy may enlist politi-

cal support from a broad section of constituents Julius Wilson and Kahlberg (Kahlenberg, 1996; Wilson, 1999) have advocated the creation of cross-race and class-based alliances of working and middle class U.S. citizens to pursue “affirmative opportunity” policies that benefit them.

In view of the negative impact that standardized tests have as an obstacle to minority student admission to teacher preparation programs, it seems imperative that colleges and universities resist pressures to incorporate testing wholesale as instruments for admission and certification. The validity and reliability of these tests as measures of the efficacy of potential teachers needs to be seriously questioned. Just as important teacher preparation programs may prepare students to take and pass required tests. Grambling State University in the state of Louisiana instituted such a program with a high degree of success

Create Successful Teacher Preparation Programs

There is a rich history of successful programs for teacher diversity. Large scale programs created by national initiative three decades ago included the Career Opportunity Program, (Carter, 1977) the Urban Teachers Program and New Careers for the Poor teacher career ladder programs. They began to affect the number of teachers of color in our classrooms and provided a bridge to the teaching profession for minorities and the poor. Both of these programs came about in a unique political period during which opportunities for minorities to enter higher education and the professions were a priority. They were also the beneficiaries of political commitments made in the mid 1960s to close the educational opportunity gap through increases access and support by the federal government. The teacher career ladder programs that were initiated in 1964 were an outgrowth of the new careers for the poor strategy put forth by Pearl

and Riesman (1965). The state of California has replicated the career ladder for teachers program with unique success. That program is contributing to the pool of minority teachers in California. Approximately seventy five percent of the California career ladder programs are members of minority groups. While it has been demonstrated that career ladder and similar programs that offer a subsidized admission into existing teacher education programs can prepare desired teachers, (Amram, F. Flax, S. & Marty, G.) those programs have faced continuing opposition. Opposition ranges from those who are overtly racist to those who don't want to spend tax dollars to ameliorate social problems. Political support for large-scale minority teacher programs will be necessary if our nation is to close the gap between the number of minority students and teachers.

Higher education in general and teacher preparation institutions in particular have been unwilling to change policy and practices. In fact higher education has moved in the opposite direction, as indicated earlier, with raised standards, higher tuition and the expanded use of admission tests.

Private entities have also attempted to impact the minority teacher shortage. The Ford Foundation among others supported a very successful multiyear program. That program was envisioned as a model to be replicated widely by foundations and higher education partnerships. In spite of its success it was discontinued several years ago without a replacement.

At the local level, universities, community colleges, and school districts have come together to create pipeline programs. One such program is the Portland Teachers Program in Portland, Oregon where a partnership between the local university, community college and school district collaborates on the identification and preparation of teachers of color for the

Portland Public schools. That program includes tuition waivers at the community college and university levels, academic support, social support, exposure to the profession and employment assistance.

The National Education Association (NEA) and the Joyner Foundation (Kochuk, 2005) recently announced the creation of the Student to Teacher Enlistment Program (STEP) which guides minority youngsters from high school through college and into the teaching profession. The NEA Joyner foundation partnership is aimed at keeping more minority teachers in the classroom by helping them boost their qualifications and complete their certification. In part the program will focus on bridging what they call the "licensure gap" and in collaboration with seven Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) will prepare minority candidates for licensing exams.

Pathways to Teaching Careers Programs has successfully demonstrated that institutions can recruit and re-educate a minority pool of prospective teachers – some from paraprofessional ranks and others from non-traditional age second career areas. In this country, there are nearly 500,000 para-educators who represent a promising source of prospective new teachers, at once more representative of and more rooted in the communities they serve. What makes this approach different and most significant to those who wish to criticize alternative approaches is that it does not diminish the importance of the content-knowledge of the profession or the importance of guided practice over time. Para-educator-to-teacher programs hold significant promise for creating a more qualified, diverse, and culturally responsive teaching force. They expand the pool of potential teachers from underrepresented groups: Para-professionals are frequently mature individuals with extensive classroom experience, especially in critical-need areas, such as special education and bilingual

education. They have far lower rates of attrition than many graduates of traditional teacher education programs. Para-educator programs attract highly motivated individuals already familiar with challenging classroom environments. Those programs are most successful when they provide the tuition assistance, academic advisement, and the social support mechanisms needed to succeed in challenging collegiate programs. In so doing, they make higher education more accessible, more affordable, and more relevant to the demands of contemporary classroom life. What is needed is the replication of these models in larger scale. It now must be replicated and institutionalized by colleges of education and schools as an alternative way to recruit and retain quality teachers of color.

A national teacher diversity program is needed that focuses on attracting candidates who have background, interest, experience and commitment that will increase their likelihood of success in teaching under-achieving communities and populations. The Carnegie Forum recognized the need for large scale nationally and state supported initiatives for teacher diversity. They state in their report.

"But so many students are lost from leaks in the educational pipeline, that the pool of minority college graduates is too small to provide teachers in numbers anywhere near approaching the mix of students. In this area, partnerships of community-based organizations, higher education institutions and schools funded from state and federal sources will have to address the education of disadvantaged students starting at pre-college levels, in order to produce more minority teachers". (Carnegie Forum 1986).

Almost twenty years after the release of the Carnegie report the problems and obstacles to a diverse teaching force in the U.S remain in place. The crisis of diversity in our teaching force is not given the significance it merits in our efforts at school reform. The change in the political tone of the country regarding diversity in higher education fuels the opposition to the necessary coherent national initiative for teacher diversity. Although, the Carnegie Forum and others have envisioned some of the policy changes and initiatives recommended here what is required now is the commitment to carry them out.

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