Recruiting and Advising Minority Students in Cooperative Land-Grant/HBCU Programs

Kevin M. Hunt, Ph.D.
Associate Professor & Director
Human Dimensions & Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory
Goals

- Why is there a need for cooperative programs with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)?
- Introduce types of cooperative degree programs
- Explain work that needs to go into designing and implementing
- 3+3 Degree Program between MSU & TU
- Discuss administrative issues that affect students
- Educational and social challenges students encounter
General Need for Diversity in NR

- Field needs to be diverse to better communicate with diverse cultural publics and recruit them into careers and outdoor recreation activities (e.g., mentors)
- Without diversity, questions will increasingly be raised about the social significance of natural resources programs
- Minority politicians elected by minority groups will start questioning relevancy of agencies and university programs and direct monies elsewhere
- Diversity vigor ~ different perspectives will let natural resources management evolve more quickly
Why Land-Grant Institutions have Difficulties Recruiting African American Students

- Historical relationship of African Americans with Ag & Natural Resources in the South not a pleasant one
- Not a respectable field; need to escape; need to become a doctor, lawyer, or engineer
- Low participation in NR-related outdoor recreation
- Institutional discrimination in recruiting
- No minority faculty!!
Why Cooperative Programs are Needed

- Many African-Americans who have interest in Ag and Natural Resources matriculate to HBCUs or develop interest while they are there
- Federal agencies have strong presence and programs with HBCUs to diversify workforce
- Most HBCUs don’t have large programs in Ag or Natural Resources, and students are under-prepared for work in federal agencies or for graduate school
- Larger Land-Grant institutions can fill the void in student knowledge in respective fields
Types of Cooperative Programs

- **Sole Degree**: 3+1 programs where students attend HBCU for 3 years, LG for 1; graduate from HBCU
- **Joint Degree**: 2+2 programs that result in diploma with both schools listed
- **Dual Degree**: 2+2, 2+3, 3+3 programs
  - Associate degree (HBCU), B.S. (Land-Grant)
  - B.S. (HBCU), M.S. non-thesis (Land-Grant)
  - B.S. (HBCU), M.S. thesis (Land-Grant)
**MSU/TU 3+3 Program Components**

- Students attend Tuskegee University first three years completing 98 hours in Biological Sciences, Liberal Arts, Physical and Mathematical Sciences.
- Students then transfer to MSU for their fourth year to complete 30 hours in Wildlife, Fisheries, Zoology, and Botany; 32 hours in Forestry
- After fourth year at MSU, Tuskegee confers B.S. in Environmental, Natural Resources, and Plant Sciences with an Option in Wildlife or Forestry
$3+3$ Program Components

- During fourth year at MSU, students take the Graduate Record Examination
- Students need to meet normal entrance requirements for admission to the graduate school
- After admission to graduate school, students will complete an individualized program of study, remaining courses needed for certification, a thesis, and final oral exam
- M.S. Degree in Wildlife Ecology (wildlife or fisheries emphasis), or Forest Resources
What needs to be done Administratively?

- Development of MOA (curriculum and infrastructure)
- Designation of long-term liaisons at each university (communication)
- Contacts needed for:
  - Student Support Services
  - Admissions Office
  - Registrar’s Office
  - Provost’s Office
- Curriculum changes at both universities
- 5-year review/update of MOA & Program
Recruiting Students into Program

- Need to know who students are early in their undergraduate program to help foster relationships
- Multiple site visits are essential to get them familiar with the environment and feeling comfortable
- Knowing why!!!: “Appreciating the deep meaning of diversity” (Lee 2009)
- Breaking barriers quickly is essential: “Nurtured Advising” (Williams et al. 2008)
Recruiting Students

- MSU is “The People’s University” with top-down commitment to diversity initiatives
- Highest percentage of African-American undergraduate enrollment in Mississippi outside 1890 Universities at 20%.
- Courageous Conversations (Singleton and Linton 2006)
  - Mississippi “is not burning”
Supporting Social Justice (Lantta 2008)

Creating a “safe” environment
- Décor, posters, and pamphlets in buildings
- Pictures of current students
- Incorporation of diversity and harassment components into courses
Once Students Decide

- Getting students to Land-Grant early so they can become accustomed to their surroundings, town
- Need to apply early so liaisons know if there are any issues from registrar’s review of transcript
  - Pick an Option (5 in FO, 4 in WF)
  - Not listed as senior, they can’t register first and often required MOA classes are filled and they must be forced in by instructor.
  - Sometimes they don’t have required MSU pre-requisites for courses and are blocked by the system.
- Tuition waivers, student aid, books, tuition payments are big headaches
Problems and Preventing Them

- Forcing students into classes and unblocking occurs but often doesn’t sit well with instructor.
- Introducing students to faculty at faculty meetings is important so they know who these “new faces” are.
- Informing college faculty of programs must be done annually.
  - Raise social justice issues.
  - Encourage conversation.
  - Think of program students when job opportunities arise.
## Student Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>TU GPA</th>
<th>MSU GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Adjustment

- Males have adjusted better than females.
- Males have completed their program on schedule; only 1 of 4 females have completed in two semesters.
- Getting them involved in MANRRS is critical because it is something they are familiar with and keeps ties to friends back at TU through regional and national activities.
Advising Students for Graduate School

- Out of 7 students, only 2 have really had a desire to stay for M.S.; 2 have gone elsewhere; 3 started work
- Puts advisor in a awkward predicament as allegiance lies with MSU and goal is to produce grad students
- Do what is best for student and try to convince administration it is still a worthwhile endeavor
- Universities can’t be greedy, we need some consortiums to tackle this as a whole
Contact Information

Dr. Kevin Hunt
Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Box 9690
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9690
Phone: (662) 325-0870
Email: kmhunt@cfms.msstate.edu