



# PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

A Member of the Texas A&M University System

## WHITLOWE R. GREEN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

### *Doctoral Defense Announcement*

#### ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES AND OTHER ACADEMIC FACTORS AT A HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY IN A SOUTH CENTRAL REGION OF TEXAS

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Lucian Yates, III, Ph.D.

Traditionally, HBCUs have been a viable means of earning advanced level degrees for African American students, where selective admissions policies at many other colleges and universities have not afforded them such opportunities. Although these mission based institutions are focused on educating disadvantaged populations, the path to degree attainment has proven to be quite a challenge for a number of Black students who enter the ranks of academia underprepared. Research shows that African American students continue to have the lowest graduation rates among all race based populations (Bell, 2010). Additionally, this student

populace is the least prepared for the rigors academia (Russell, 2008 West-Olatunji, Baker, & Brooks, 2006); and represent the largest number of students enrolled in developmental courses (McDowell, 2011). These affirmations underpin the importance of this study and highlight the need for HBCUs to undergird the pursuit of degree attainment with effective strategies that promote academic success. In summary, increasing interest concerning the success of higher education institutions meeting the academic needs of this diverse population of scholars is at the forefront of educational policies (Jones, Richard, & Mokhtari, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to unearth relationships between the elements of the learning style stimuli and five academic indicators—high school grade point average (GPA), American College Test (ACT) scores, Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) Reading, Writing, and Math scores for African American students enrolled in developmental courses at an HBCU. The Dunn and Dunn Learning Model was used as a framework for this study. It is a structure of empowerment and sovereignty that builds and strengthens one's self-assurance and self-esteem (Dunn & Dunn, 1996). The researcher amassed data using the Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (PEPS), which identifies five learning style stimuli and 20 corresponding elements. This instrument was developed by Dunn, Dunn and Price and used by the researcher to assess data that was used to evaluate the participants' learning style preferences based on the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the learning style preference scores as measured by the PEPS and the high school grade point average of African American developmental education students at a Historically Black College in a South Central Region of Texas?

2. What is the relationship between the learning style preference scores as measured by the PEPS and the ACT scores of African American developmental education students at a Historically Black College in a South Central region of Texas?
3. What is the relationship between the learning style preference scores as measured by the PEPS and the THEA Reading scores of African American developmental students at a Historically Black College in a South Central Region of Texas?
4. What is the relationship between the learning style preference scores as measured by the PEPS and the THEA Writing scores of African American developmental education students at a Historically Black College in a South Central Region of Texas?
5. What is the relationship between the learning style preference scores as measured by the PEPS and the THEA Math scores of African American developmental education students at a Historically Black College in a South Central Region of Texas?
6. What is the difference between the learning style preference scores as measured by the PEPS and gender of African American developmental education students at a Historically Black College in a South Central Region of Texas?

The sample population for this study consisted of 42 African American students enrolled Reading Basics Laboratory (RDNG 0100), Writing Basics Laboratory (ENGL 0100), and Pre-Algebra (MATH 0100). The quantitative data analysis for this inquiry consisted of descriptive and inferential statistics. The researcher used a Bivariate Correlations (Pearson Coefficient) to aggregate and disaggregate the data to answer research questions one through five. An

Independent Sample T-Test was used to analyze if gender influences the learning style preferences.

In summary, increasing interest concerning the success of higher education institutions meeting the needs of their diverse population of scholars is at the forefront of educational policy. According to Worley (2011), the next generation of scholars is predicted to increase by 75% when compared to learners born between 1980 and 2012. Garner (2007) stated the mission of educators is to produce learning, and to generate innovative technique for instruction. Hence, professors and postsecondary education administrators must attempt to maintain favorable academic settings that promote learning for a diverse population and meet the challenges of adult learners (Worley, 2011). A vast amount of dialogue focused on student learning styles in most postsecondary institutions as it relates to gender and ethnicity, and diminutive attention centers on ways in which educators can incorporate learning style preferences into their teaching methods (Honigsfeld & Dunn, 2006). As such, this study provides a foundation that links educational practice to the learning style preferences of African American students enrolled in developmental courses.

**Date:** July 25, 2014      **Department:** Educational Leadership and Counseling

**Time:** 11:30 am      **Location/Room:** Delco 308

**Dissertation Chair:** Lucian Yates, III, Ph.D.

**Dissertation Committee Members:** **Dr. Pamela Barber-Freeman**

**Dr. Cleveland Lane**

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