

Faculty Mentoring At Historically Black Colleges And Universities: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of faculty regarding mentoring and instructional strategies at HBCUs. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling. They were associate or tenured full professors in the fields of kinesiology and education who have worked in diverse settings at higher education institutions in the U.S. Data collection included a demographic questionnaire and structured individual interviews. A thematic analysis was conducted to find the common subthemes across the participant interviews. These subthemes included (a) supporting for students, (b) culture of care, (c) identity development and inclusion, and (d) professional development for college level students. Implications were drawn from study participants regarding how undergraduate students at HBCUs can benefit from mentoring and specific instructional strategies.

Keywords: HBCUs, Undergraduate Students, Mentoring, Faculty, Diversity

1. Introduction

The current research was conducted at a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

It should be prioritized to understand institutional context and the background of HBCUs to understand the current research connecting undergraduate students and faculty members' perspectives regarding their mentoring and instructional strategies. After the Civil war, HBCUs were

created primarily to serve the African American community for the purpose of empowering students who were excluded from attending predominately white institutions, and to provide educational opportunities and career preparation (Allen and Jewell, 2002; Kim and Conard, 2006). Currently, there are approximately 100 HBCUs in the makes up about 3% of higher educational institutions in the U.S. HBCUs contribute greatly to the overall number of African American graduates. However, low enrollment, retention and graduation rates have been general concerns over the decades compared to the national average of other institutions (Hodge-Clark and Daniels, 2014).

The mission statement of HBCUs emphasizes dedication for student development in the areas of research, teaching, and service of faculty (Copeland, 2006). The primary goal is to provide educational opportunities for student's social, academic and career development during and after their college years. With this mission statement, HBCUs have developed unique cultures, academic environments, and educational practices. The student population at HBCUs is mostly ethnic minorities and first-generation college students (Allen and Jewell, 2002; Kim and Conard, 2006). Students can have equal educational opportunities that are culturally relevant to their individual needs (Palmer and Gasman, 2008; Parks-Yancy, 2012; Tovar, 2015). From the previous literature, faculty and students have more personal relationships compared to other institutions, which has a positive influence on graduation and retention rates (Kim, 2002; Shaw et al., 2012). Beyond academic dedication, mentoring and instructional strategies at HBCUs have an important role in empowering students and continuing their development through adherence in their degree programs (Simmons, 2022).

Mentoring between faculty members and undergraduate students is generally utilized in higher institutions either formally or informally (Inzer and Crawford, 2005; Lucas and Murry, 2002). Mentoring from faculty members can be helpful for undergraduate students in their academic achievement, adherence in their degree program, and improving self-confidence in their academic skills (Chester et al., 2013; Thiry et al., 2011). Mentoring can be beneficial especially during transition periods. Therefore, first year undergraduate students benefit greatly (Crisp et al., 2017). Previous research discusses the benefits of mentoring early in students' academic career. For

instance, undergraduate students who were mentored improved their academic performance, maintained a higher GPA, were more likely to continue in their degree program, and had higher participation in their program-related events when compared to students who were not mentored (Brittian et al., 2009; Dahlvig, 2010). Other studies have shown that mentoring was beneficial for the professional development of students (i.e., leadership, communication skills and the adaptation for college-level courses (Haddock et al., 2013; Hurd et al., 2016; Rohatinsky et al., 2017). Faculty members of HBCUs need effective tactics and skills to lead and teach their undergraduate students (Lucas and Murry, 2002).

This skillset includes a comprehensive understanding for supporting students rather than mentoring and instructional approaches that are merely limited to academic achievement. For example, guidance regarding professional skills that will benefit students in their future careers (Umpstead et al., 2015). Furthermore, mentoring and instructional strategies at HBCUs are often related to social justice pedagogy for minority students who are often marginalized in society (i.e., ethnic minority and first-generation students). Mentoring and instructional strategies need to be explored in their specific educational context. For instance, there might be differences in mentoring and instructional approaches across different types of higher institutions including liberal art college, tier 1 research schools, and community colleges. It can be expected that there would be individual differences in mentoring and instructional approaches, however, institutional, and other contextual factors should also be taken into consideration. Accordingly, it is important to explore mentoring and instructional approaches within HBCUs to examine the strategies that are beneficial to students. Thus, the current research focused on the perspectives of faculty who have taught undergraduate students at HBCUs. The ultimate goal of the study was to explore the contextual factors that impact how faculty mentor and instruct undergraduate students to promote academic achievement and career preparation at HBCUs.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Methods and Study Participants

Recruitment

The current study employed an exploratory qualitative

approach to examine the perspectives of HBCU faculty regarding mentoring and instructional strategies. The research questions that guided this study were as follows: (a) What are the contextual factors that influence delivery of undergraduate courses and mentoring at HBCUs?, and (b) What are the unique challenges regarding mentoring and instruction for undergraduate students at HBCUs?

TABLE 1. Demographic information of study participants

Pseudonym	Faculty Years	Types of University	Concentration(s)	Current Duty	Gender	Racial Identity
Dr. Mann	44	HBCU, PWI	Kinesiology, Higher Education Administration	Retired faculty	Male	African American
Dr. Mullins	30	HBCU, PWI	Kinesiology, Motor Development	Retired faculty	Female	African American
Dr. Hawkins	30	HBCU, PWI	Urban Education	Executive Dean	Female	African American
Dr. Duncan	15	HBCU, PWI	Adapted Physical Education, Curriculum Development	Associate Professor	Female	Caucasian
Dr. Moreno	20	HBCU, PWI	Exercise Science Kinesiology	Associate Professor	Female	Caucasian
Dr. Patterson	15	HIS, HBCU	Adapted Physical Education, Kinesiology	Associate Professor	Female	African American

2.2 Data Collection

A demographic questionnaire was collected prior to conducting interviews. Demographic information included teaching experience at HBCUs and other institutions, years of teaching experience and expertise areas regarding research and service as faculty. Structured individual interviews were conducted by the lead researcher. The questions were sent to participants prior to the interview via email. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first researcher conducted the interviews through a virtual meeting platform (e.g., zoom) or face-to-face maintaining social distance. The interviews were recorded for data analysis purposes. The interviews ranged between 60 to 120 min (average 1.5 hour). Additional follow-up e-mails and/or phone calls were needed for several participants to clarify interview responses or

demographic information.

2.3 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

There were several procedures for data analysis. First, the interviews were recorded (with permission) and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then sent to participants to ensure accuracy. Next, a thematic analysis was applied to identify common themes across the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Transcribed responses of each interview were divided into sub-categories that represented common faculty perspectives related to mentoring and instructional strategies. Next, the subcategories were reviewed and compared across interviews. Finally, the researcher identified similarities and differences across the data of participants relating to the topic of the present study. To establish validity and reliability, there were four components; credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability for data trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Lincoln and Guba, 1989). Credibility was established through member checking, triangulation, and peer-debriefing throughout the data analysis process. For triangulation, the recorded interviews and written transcripts were utilized to ensure the accuracy of the data. Member checking was conducted to reinforce credibility of the findings by verifying the researcher's interpretations. In a similar way, if there were any disagreement made, the researcher went back to study data to review them. Also, the lead researcher ensured the accuracy of the data and interpretation with study participants throughout sending emails to check for accuracy. To promote transferability, the researcher included full description connecting the background and environment in the context of the present study. To confirm dependability, the researcher provided full explanation of research procedures and methods. For confirmability, it was required to demonstrate the findings and conclusion attributed from the interviewed raw data. By strengthening credibility, dependability and transferability, it was expected that the current study expected to achieve confirmability (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Yin, 2003).

3. Results

Several common themes emerged based on responses of study participants. These findings include four categories: (a) support for students, (b) culture of care, (c) identity development and inclusion (d) professional development for college level students.

3.1. Theme: Support for Students

During the interviews, the participants consistently discussed the need for financial and emotional support for students. The entire interviewed faculty mentioned that many of their students could be characterized as first generation, non-traditional, or working students. The participants discussed that based on these characteristics, there was often hidden constraints related to the lack of financial and emotional support for the students which could impact the students' academics. The faculty mentioned that many of the students they have taught over the years have received financial aid of some type. Dr. Hawkins shared her experiences at HBCUs regarding how many students would have some sort of financial aid and perceived it as,

Students are definitely, it is over 90% who have financial aid. They usually came from households. They don't have extra money. They are not able to contribute a large sum to education. In my 13 years, I only met one student who got support from their parents. Only one. I never met any students who do not need any kind of financial aid here.

Dr. Mann described that even though financial aid is beneficial, and may open the door to admission, for some students, financial aid is not enough support and the student still has to work either full or part time. "A large percentage of students are on the financial aid system and that's a benefit. The hard part is that sometimes it is still not enough money and they are still working full-time.

For a right understanding of the financial system at HBCUs, there were several responses from study participants which described about the criteria. Dr. Hawkins expressed concerns about the system for financial supports and student's awareness,

About financial aid, there is limitation. You can only take out at each level. If you failed in a class, you already spent that money they should pay back and they cannot get the next level classes. If they used money just excited and so on without understanding... some family would not wish but refund request coming home in so that they now understand financial aid impact what things on ..it is a huge problem.

Dr. Moreno described how being a first-generation college student many have an impact on a student's ability to obtain proper financial support,

Our students may have some more variables and they may, through a semester be a little more variable too, which is somewhat bothersome. But it has a lot to do with ... first-

generation college students and I can speak to that as one. (I was one as well). You don't have that role model of how do you go about it ... for instance, I remember filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), my mom was on state aid and we filled out paperwork a lot. But this was overwhelming. We were just like, "what are we supposed to say? And I know our students are experiencing that type of stuff as well.

Additionally, Dr. Moreno explained that first generation college students at HBCUs are often not supported either emotionally or physically if their family members are struggling to make a living and do not value university education. Similarly, Dr. Patterson shared her opinion when discussing instructional and mentoring strategies,

Well, one thing we must be mindful of is our students and what our students bring to the University. We must be mindful that many of them are first-generation college students so many of their parents haven't even attended school. And then you also must look at their background. We have a lot of students that commute because they work. We must look at the financial status of a lot of students.... You have a lot of students that commute; they may be taking care of their parents or grandparents. Then you have students that may be parents themselves.

Considering one of the benefits of mentoring students is retention in their academic programs, Dr. Hawkins mentioned there can be issues for young students when there is a lack of emotional or financial support,

So I think there are lot students who have pressure and not supported from their family side. We have students who are very resilient and some who are not resilient who feel guilty about getting away from their environment and being away from home while their family is struggling...I think biggest issues related to retention issues are concerned with lack of financial literacy and lack of support from their family or social groups.

To synthesize, the participants reported that lack of financial and emotional support can have numerous implications for students. Even if students receive financial aid, often they will still need outside employment which creates another barrier that can take away the focus from their academics. Faculty also discussed that many students who attend HBCUs are first generation students and that can be an underlying reason there is a lack of financial or emotional support.

3.2. Theme 2: Culture of Care

During the interviews, the faculty made it clear that mentoring and instruction in the classroom would not be successful unless there is a positive relationship between the faculty and students. Dr. Patterson expressed that at HBCUs there is often a special bond between undergraduate students and faculty,

Okay, now as far as this, I have known young people that have gone to traditional colleges versus an HBCU, and I think it is already expected that they are going to get more help from their faculty members at an HBCU. They're expecting a more personal relationship with faculty members. They're expecting their faculty members to be mindful, to be more hands-on. Expect them to really break down that information so that they can understand it. They are going to expect faculty members to know them. I know there are many courses where I knew every student's name. And at a traditional university sometimes you do not get to know your students on that level. And so, at an HBCU, you're definitely going to have a closer relationship with your students. I know a lot of details about the lives of my students when they come to my office especially about their family members and this is one of the reasons that attract students to HBCUs.

Participants commonly pointed out that there is a clear defined line between 'close relationships' and 'strict discipline'. For instance, Dr. Duncan described it as, So the culture, again it is a culture of care. We are developing professionals, but at the same time we have that care and compassion that we have that is like an extended family and so, and it isn't just because it is small faculty and student ratio but also because...You know, we do still have to be firm. I am still firm... It is really just an atmosphere where there's definitely a strong relationship between a student and a professor. There is a, it is like it is a friendship there, but it is also the same as when you are a parent you can't be friends with your kids even though you can have a great relationship with them. But there is sometimes when you have to discipline them, you got to correct them, but also it is similar between faculty and students at HBCU. But we want to encourage them to really try to bring out their gifts and sometimes we don't know what people go through. But we also have to put away disrespect, we have put away language and some ways that they should do away with, we really have to be corrective in that manner. I will correct them, but at the same time I guess I am known as being nice but they also know when I am serious. That's that atmosphere...And over

time this is something that is developed because every university has its own culture... It's a culture of care, to me. It is a culture of care, I want you to make it, but you still have to do your part.

As described in the above, many students at HBCUs have close relationships with faculty, which is an important component to successful mentorship and learning in the classroom. While it is necessary for faculty to have strong positive relationships with students, they also need to be strict and distinguish that certain student behaviors (e.g., disrespect, foul language) are not acceptable.

3.3. Theme 2: Identity Development and Inclusion

All the study participants discussed institutional context of HBCUs and diversity concept. The population of student, faculty, and staff at HBCUs are more homogenous than heterogeneous. Dr. Moreno mentioned as,

We are trying to be more diverse, but we still as we should, we are HBCUs, most of the population is African American.

Accordingly, faculty perspective and their explanations were helpful to understand regarding student's decision making to study at HBCUs. For instance, Dr. Hawkins shared her opinion as, They (students) want that they experience one time in their life which would not see as minority. Students who want to study at HBCUs are brilliant. One study indicated kind of culture are huge, I mean black students who were from places where they were minority. They can feel comfortable. Here it is different, and it is empowering them and more powered when more numbered. This is one reason if they have specific reason to study at HBCUs.

Dr. Mann shared his life experience regarding inclusive environment of HBCUs for black students at HBCUs, Many students, sometimes they get a little restrained, but they feel more comfortable when they come, they see more people like themselves. It's like ... if you have one or two black students they would feel like "Oh wow, I feel so overwhelmed, I'm outnumbered. (And like I told my own kids, two of them went to A university (anonymous name, predominantly white institutions), the other one went to University of B (anonymous name, PWI). The last one went to C University (anonymous name, HBCU). Now the two that went to A and B university, I told them, "I said you get there it will be fine. They will show you all the grandeur of the big university and all the specifics they have. But the culture itself you will find it is not what you think.

Also, they have contributed to culture and community for young students. Culture and community of HBCUs provided important opportunities for these young students to ponder the past and contemporary social issues. HBCUs offer social network and capital which were driving force for student's empowerment. Students celebrate black history and culture throughout campus events. They also require several courses relating to their cultural identity and societal issues (e.g., African American History, and African American Health). Dr. Hawkins explained regarding unique culture at HBCUs like the followings.

Other cultural atmosphere thing, another unique thing in our campus is that so many activities outside of the classrooms. As an instance generational identity, and gender identity. There are events little bit for everybody, know some about them themselves and learn to respect others which would not about their cultural identity as well. I think this is a lot of fun and good things like we have writers' series events and so on. We have cooking classes exercise exposing student like I say students doing yoga tachi. It is not such widely talked about traditional African American culture, but it is seems everywhere in the world, kind of interesting some other things about cultural atmosphere we are doing in a campus like emphasizing on 'health matters' that respect disparities among minority on our campus. I think that make cultural atmosphere different in at HBCUs. We capitalize on helping our students making them to be more academic ways. We approach with holistic ways, physically, mentally, spiritually and healthy. So I think that unique batteries are here. There are American history course also black experience related history course. There are so many unique things that are not anywhere else easily.

HBCUs are not only nurturing their own culture but also valuing universal culture. This part is describing about how HBCUs could make a balance by maintaining black culture and running mainstream culture in parallel. There is a tendency that people simplify the concept of diversity. The concept of diversity is defined with factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political tendency, religious belief, socio-economic status, and disability and/or ability. All the research participants mentioned the importance of diversity at HBCUs. Among them, two participants provided crucial explanation.

Dr. Duncan described regarding the error that people frequently make with the concept of diversity is that making it too simple, The other thing to think about is if you are from

the outside and you are looking at an HBCU you may say hey it is very diverse in culture or race or background or whatever. And there is that, but in some sense, it is more heteronormative. So more of the same than different. So, if you think about it, HBCU usually about 80 percent are, you know, Black students or Brown students or come from that African American culture. It depends on where they are, they are not all African Americans. Black students and brown students, I'm just looking. The term is Black and Brown. So, like, Taylor (Anonymous, Student Name), where did she come from? She is not African American. She is Black student, that's how she would say her background, it's Black. And then we have YYY who is a faculty member from us, she's not African American either and if you look at her history, she has no slaves in her family history at all. So but if Taylor comes to an HBCU, it is more heteronormative because maybe there is more spiritual background, Some cultural things are the same. There are still many different religions, many different cultural backgrounds, but there are more similarities than differences.

3.4 Theme 4: Professional Development for College Level Students

When specifically discussing mentoring and instructional strategies, many faculty members discussed that there is a need to view students based on their academic year to determine appropriate techniques. Faculty members recognized that their role as instructor and mentor is critical for a smooth transition for their students. For instance, instructors can support students by sharing expectations, and highlighting the differences between high school and college. Dr. Mann further elaborated on this topic, specifically mentioning an event called "academic showcases" where faculty would describe, in detail, what would be required and expected of students going through that specific academic program.

So for fresh and sophomore level- they should know more about the basic elements before going to next level. I think that's another thing we need to do as they move through. Let's go back to our freshman versus sophomore, I think the other thing that we need to really do, that we did at one time and we are not doing as well now, is make sure that the students are fully aware of what is expected for the degree. In the program. And that has to start from freshman level. If you want to do this, these are the courses that you are going to be taking. So those meetings that we used to have that we

don't have anymore. Academic showcases that we used to have that we haven't had any in the last few years.

Dr. Hawkins explained the importance of early professional development for first and second year students. She mentioned how faculty in upper-level courses recognizes the value of professional development for their students but thinks that freshman and sophomore students can benefit from it as well.

I think even in a first or second year, I know in higher level courses we emphasize professionalism but, I really think they need to be exposure to professionalism early. For instance, we can make our students to go conferences, even they are not present the whole time, attending a certain number of professional development sessions, interacting with people to learn about courses and their major for their degree.

Students can be more equipped with skills and knowledge that they require to adapt into a new academic environment. Students require knowledge of the resources of their college (e.g., academic learning center, library resources, and student advising). They also need to master the skills their courses will require (e.g., mechanism of online resources - the ability to follow instructions). Throughout college period (typically, four years), students need to develop professional knowledge and skillset conforming to their major programs, critically thinking ability and professionalism and attitudes. These skillsets are not only required for successful academically achievement in terms of short -term period, but also empowering students being more organized and having strong lifetime skills.

4. Discussion and Limitation

Many African American students chose to study at HBCUs because it provides more an inclusive environment for all, financial support or scholarship opportunities, and preparation for post-graduation (Gallup-Purdue Index Inaugural National Report, 2015). Funding related problem: students could utilize the system. There would be pain. However, interviewed faculty argued that the financial system has both sides and the most important point is that many students can have tremendous learning opportunities in their life. There is a recent change on population of HBCUs being more diversified compared to the last few decades, but it is not surprising that most population at HBCUs are African Americans (U.S Department of Education, 2005). It was estimated that non-black students are approximately 24% of total enrollment of HBCUS at 2018, while 14% of total

enrollment were non-black students during late 1970's (Alsmadi et al., 2020). There are more variables during semester to take accountability. This is attributed to complicated circumstances or situation surrounding students mainly due to economic stats and family-related situations. We cannot generalize but many of students would not have sufficient emotional and financial support from their circumstances. This indicates the importance of support system in the educational context of HBCUs which would rather be different from other types of higher educational institutions.

In terms of financial aid system at HBCUs, there is no specific statistics, but most students have financial aid, funding and scholarship opportunity when attending in their programs. Approximately 90% of students at HBCUs have financial aid from state as governmental resource base (Thurgood Marshall College Fund, 2019). This financial system for students at HBCUs has the rationale in that the students have been generally recruited from underrepresented population (Yancu et al., 2012). Financial aid system is necessary for many students to continue their studying at college. However, somebody would question why most students have full or part time working schedule at the same time. This is just because those financial supports are insufficient to manage their life. Moreover, it is worse if they need to handle their duties for family. There is one other fact which directs our attention. Retention rate of HBCUs is regarded as higher than other type of universities (Richards and Awokoya, 2012).

The findings of this study are related to faculty member's perspective how they mentor and instruct undergraduate students in the context of HBCUs. There is general notion regarding student characteristics of HBCUs which indicated lack of academic preparation. It is important to know the basic root of these institutions though. HBCUs have been an important role in preserving cultural legacy and providing academic learning opportunities for African Americans. There were two historical lines including Civil Right Act (1964) and G.I Bill (1944) which would impacted on the choice of types of higher education institutions for African Americans, however, it is remain that HBCUs have tremendously contributed for academic opportunities for African Americans. HBCUs are accountable for approximately 20% of bachelor's degree recipients of African Americans (Hunn, 2014; Saenz et al., 2007). All the faculty discussed the unique characteristics of students in the

context of HBCUs. Interviewed faculty frequently mentioned student characteristics using concepts such as first-generation college students, low-income family, financial aid, and non-traditional students. There is a difference depending on resources, regarding information of listed variables in the above. Among those resources, based on report by Higher Education Research Institute and the Foundation for Independent Higher Education, Cooperative Institutional Research Program (2007), it is guessed that 52% of HBCUs students are first generation, and it is guessed that more half of them from low-income family (Saenz et al., 2007). More than 90% receive some sort of financial aids. There is a link between first generation college students and low-income family showing first generation college students were more likely based on low-income family (Freeman and Thomas, 2002; Gurin et al., 1975). Thus, financial status of African American students is important consideration choosing HBCUs. Also, African American students at HBCUs have benefits meeting social justice paradigms such as environmental constructure, political agenda, equality/equity issues in the society, while attending in other types of institutions would have other benefits. We cannot generalize however, many students at HBCUs relatively low criteria for admission (e.g., low score of SAT) and comes from nearby areas in the same state (Allen, 1992). Based on the data of this study, it was apparent that academic preparedness and financial consideration of students are big important factors to choose studying at HBCUs, but we found that students chose to attend HBCUs for several reasons. For instance, research findings showed that there are many reasons such as socio-economic factors including low tuition and financial support, family member's influence, cultural awareness of HBCUs, nearby locations from home, opened admission (Freeman, 1999; Hearn et al., 1995). Interesting part is that cultural awareness is a big part to make young black students being motivated to attend in HBCUs, while black students attending in PWI would have expectation not just staying in their own culture (Freeman, 1999). HBCUs have been provide comfortable zone for young African American students than other types of higher education institutions. As an instance, HBCUs consist of lots of African American faculty and staffs and provided field works and internship opportunities using an alumni network.

Demographic variables including low income and first-generation college students are regarded as risk factor to graduation rate of undergraduate students (Chen, 2015;

Choy, 2002). Low-income and first-generation college students are likely to be older than their peers, ethnic minority, have a disability, economically independent from their family and parental obligation (U.S Department of Education, 2005; Zhang et al., 2005). In terms of social and cultural capital, first generation college students would have limited availability (Perna and Thomas, 2008). Lack of social and cultural capital would yield any form of social inequality and injustice inherent in their physical and social environment. According to Bourdieu (1986), hierarchical structure of the society is closely related to intergenerational transfer of predominant attitude, norms and values, knowledge, information, or social network (Bourdieu, 1986). There is an empirical study which showed such a gap. For instance, private university students expressed that their main foci are academic achievement and other activities are their minor concern while, full time working students had survival mode to aim a degree. Currently, the status quo will be more likely to be continued. At this point, there is a need to discuss regarding faculty roles depending on the specific type of universities (e.g., minority serving higher education institutions in the U.S). There is empirical research which pointed out that faculty have a crucial role for emotion, knowledge and information of underrepresented students (McCallen and Johnson, 2020). For students who came from underrepresented groups, a sense of camaraderie with faculty members were one factor to maintain retention, and institutional support for degree completion and nonacademic support from family and friends promoted student's enrollment on their programs (McLean, 2013). Relationships between students and faculty at higher educational institutions can be described either formally or informally (Inzer and Crawford, 2005; Lucas and Murry, 2002). Mentoring and instruction for students can be an effective tool to guide students for their academic development and emotional well-being (Crisp et al., 2017; Jacobi, 1991). Mentoring and instruction from faculty members can be helpful for undergraduate students in their academic achievement, adherence to their degree program, and improving self-confidence in academic skills (Chester et al., 2013; Thiry et al., 2011). We need to aware faculty can be a good avenue for their students to have enhanced understanding about their curriculum and pedagogical skills (Dolan and Johnson, 2009). Especially during a transition period, first year undergraduate students would be the most benefitted (Crisp et al., 2017). The findings of this study were

consistent with the previous literature in that participants explained there should be different emphasis depending on academic year of students. At the beginning year, student can be more strengthened by having techniques, technologies, curriculum information for university level courses and then introduced the next level intermediate and higher-level courses to learn and experience about their program. This would be more important for HBCUs courses assuming that there are many and unspecified students who need more disciplines due to reasons such as lack of academic learning experiences and break after high school degree. With this notion, early mentoring and instructional process between faculty and student will be more likely to connected long-term relationship which implies the importance of stable and time needed socializing process (Crisp et al., 2017). Research findings exhibited that undergraduate students had improvement in their academic achievement such as higher average GPA or retention for their degree attainment, more participation in their program-related events and professional development of students (i.e., leadership, communication skills and the adaptation for college-level) (Hurd et al., 2016; Rohatinsky et al., 2017). In this study, interviewed faculty emphasized the importance of dedication and support need for students, while they distinguished the difference between those dedication and strictness for discipline. In the previous literature, there are unique characteristics of relations between faculty and undergraduate students in the context of HBCUs. For instance, faculty and students at HBCUs are connected more intimately compared to the other types of higher education institutions (Shaw et al., 2012). In terms of academic achievement, there are individual differences even though situational and individual factors cannot be underrepresented (Alsmadi et al., 2020). Admission criteria to enter HBCUs are more open to diverse populations such as having low socio-economic status, and not intense K-12 level experience comparatively (Hodge-Clark and Daniels, 2017). Thus, it was understandable that faculty members of this study emphasized dedication and support about student advising in the context of HBCUs. Additionally, not limited to academic support, professional administrative skills will necessary for faculty members for assisting undergraduate students (Umpstead et al., 2015). The mission statement of HBCUs emphasizes dedication for student development not merely limited the areas of research, teach and service (Copeland, 2006). The primary focus is to empower

undergraduate student by providing educational opportunities for their student's social, academic and career development during and/or after their college years. Lastly, it is the fact that many African American students attending at HBCUs, however, there should a caution to make generalization merely based on race and ethnicity. Based on interview, it was also found that HBCUs is providing balanced curriculum (e.g., course requirements including both American History and African American History) for their undergraduate students not merely considering their culture and legacy. Moreover, there are school-based events, both including black and universal culture. This approach would satisfy HBCUs students who have expectations about knowing their own identity and globally common practices to all societies simultaneously. Moreover, this notion is integral part for HBCUs undergraduate students to maintaining their cultural legacy and mainstreaming dominant societal values (Hodge-Clark and Daniels, 2014; Clark, et al., 2016). In other words, HBCUs students should not limited in their background and should be exposure to outer world to a community and society; therefore, they will have a balanced view about a real world setting through multicultural experiences.

There are several limitations in this study. First, this study is case study conducted at one HBCU. However, interviewed faculty had a wide range of faculty experiences at multiple universities including HBCUs and PWIs. Another limitation is that interviewed faculty primarily worked in kinesiology and exercise science, health, and physical education programs, and one participant was recruited from a general education program. However, participants' diverse working experience and expertise provided insightful information regarding mentoring and teaching practices for undergraduate students at HBCUs. Study participant's average working years at higher education institutions were approximately 26 years and they have worked in administrative positions, while continuously fulfilling teaching responsibilities and conducting research across the fields of kinesiology and education. There were also a limited number of participants. However, this qualitative study was exploratory in nature, and the authors' intent was to simply provide insight regarding this topic. Even though participant views were diverse because their experiences were unique, common themes emerged from the data, providing insightful information and implications. However, the findings of this study should not be generalized to other educational

contexts due to the small number of participants and the focus on HBCUs.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore faculty perspectives regarding mentoring and instruction for undergraduate students at HBCUs. The current study extended the literature on mentoring and instruction for HBCU undergraduate students from a multidimensional viewpoint. All the study participants who constituted this study consisted of not only HBCU faculty but also individuals who have experienced diverse type of institutions. There were similar responses and perspectives among the participants' interview in the study. To know about student characteristics in the institution context will be important for promoting student learning and their professionalism as a college level. For instance, there are several types of high education institutions such as HBCUs, PWI, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AAPISIs), and Minority Serving institutions (MIS) in the U.S. In each type of institution, population and culture will be one factor needed to be considered when planning and implementing curriculum. In the same context, consideration for instruction and mentoring can be different when faculty delivers courses and mentoring students in their programs. Most undergraduate students at HBCU have some sort of funding or financial aid. There is a clear guideline about the system. Once they enter the institution, there should be more instruction to make students to be more perceived and accountable. There is unique atmosphere of HBCUs which could attributed to characteristics of students at HBCUS which frequently described with terms such as non-traditional student, underrepresented population, and ethnic minority.

The faculty view of this study was consistent with the previous literature which described regarding culture of teaching and mentoring practice at HBCUs. Faculty role will be integral to lead student success at HBCUs. From the findings of the study, it was found that HBCUs generally provide more close relations with students which were consistent with the previous literature. However, participants of this study indicated that there should be strict distinction between intimate relations with students and clear guideline, discipline, and training for students both in and out of the class. For instance, faculty could

understand their student better when the new semester starts like surveying how many students are working full time. There is an assumption that HBCUs are open to more diverse students. Thus, there is large variability between students in terms of their academic preparedness. To guide students to utilize diverse resources on campus will be beneficial for their academic learning and professional development. For instance, students can get support through tutoring system, learning center and counseling center on campus. There can be several reasons why students choose to study HBCUs (e.g., cultural identity and supportive atmosphere). To promote self-growth, it will be important for encouraging students to have diverse experience not only limited to their cultural legacy. Students at HBCUs could broaden their perspective depending on what they experience during four-year college years.

Data Availability Statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article. This was qualitative study that does not have a raw dataset outside of transcripts. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to SP.

Ethic Statement

Written informed consent was obtained from the participants for the publication of data included in this article. The stated names are pseudonyms.

Author Contributions

Seungyeon Park was the sole author of the manuscript; conceptualization, methodology and analysis, and writing-original draft.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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