

ABSTRACT

“Perceptions of Writing Skills From Undergraduate Students at HBCUs”

Doctoral Dissertation by
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The purpose of this research study was to examine the perceptions of writing skills from undergraduate students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The study also explored the issues and problems that influence or undergird HBCU undergraduate students' perceptions of writing. Furthermore, the research study explored the types of interventions that undergraduate students at HBCUs use, or desire, to improve their writing skills.

The research study utilized a descriptive research design that was supported by the use of a descriptive survey instrument and data collected from a survey sample size of 189 first- and second-year undergraduate students at four HBCUs located in the Southwest and Southeast regions of the United States. The researcher found that undergraduate students at HBCUs have mixed and multifaceted perceptions of writing skills, as measured by a Daly–Miller Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) mean score of 86.94 with a standard deviation of 15.808. More specifically, 72.5% of the study's survey respondents' Daly–Miller WAT scores reveal a “Moderate Level” of writing apprehension. Contributing factors to the respondents' perceptions of writing skills in the study included demographic profiles of the respondents as well as institutional priorities and practices related to both writing instruction and writing skill development at the respective HBCU where the respondents are enrolled. These results indicate that while some respondents may be confident in their writing skills and welcome opportunities to write, other respondents may be fearful of having to write and, consequently, may be ambivalent about registering for college classes or pursuing careers that they perceive will entail a large degree of writing.

This research study offers HBCU administrators unique, student-centered insights and data-driven strategies to influence, if not improve, HBCU undergraduate students' perceptions of writing skills and ultimately student writing performance, as well as undergraduate student retention and graduation rates.



Keywords: perceptions of writing skills, writing instruction at HBCUs, writing and first-year undergraduate students