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Expectations and Experiences of African American Students at Two Predominantly White Universities in Southern Appalachia

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ABSTRACT

This study addressed the academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences of 20 African American juniors and seniors at two predominantly White universities in the Southern Appalachian region of the United States. The participants' described experiences revealed how institutional practices promoted or obstructed their persistence to graduation.

Findings indicated a dissonance between the students' academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences primarily caused by unanticipated racist experiences in the classrooms, on the campuses, and in the campus communities-at-large. Positive relationships with administrators, faculty members, and staff emerged as the most significant contributors to the students' capability to safely and successfully navigate academic, social, and cultural pathways leading to graduation. Recommendations based on the results of the study are provided for university administrators, faculty, and staff who are committed to improving the college experience and persistence to graduation rates for students of color matriculating at predominantly White universities.