

Minorities and Underrepresented Groups in International Affairs and the Foreign Policy Establishment

1. Executive Summary

Today, the demand from the government, business and education sectors for qualified personnel with international skills far outstrips the supply. To bring home the point, more than eighty federal agencies and offices rely, for example, on personnel with foreign language proficiency. According to a policy proposal issued by the American Council on Education (Hassen, P. F., McDonough, T., 2002), a March 2002 General Accounting Office study of the foreign language needs of five federal agencies found shortages of staff with needed foreign language skills. Indeed, it would appear that the personnel challenges confronting those agencies is a microcosm of sorts of a broader systemic shortage of personnel with foreign language and area skills required to meet security needs across the defense, intelligence, foreign policy, and commerce agencies. Compounding the problem, the apparently stark underrepresentation of minorities in the nation's foreign policy apparatus deprives America of a range of perspectives, inputs, and human resources to draw upon in meeting the challenges that we are called to confront in this new century. This paper considers the role of the nation's institutions of higher education in that regard and points to the urgent need for a diversified set of research activities to address and inform the issue. Without reliable data, it is difficult, if not impossible, to generate broadly applicable, solution-oriented human resource development strategies.

This paper articulates a research agenda to address the issue of minority underrepresentation in international affairs. It presents a synopsis of the problems posed by minority underrepresentation in international education at U.S. colleges and

universities, and it points up as well as the ramifications for the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. It then examines, through a review of select and prominent literature, the types of research necessary to inform efforts to improve minority enrollment in international education programs, most importantly the development of data banks on emerging trends. If and when available, such information can be used to assess the nature of the relationship between minority enrollment in certain programs in higher education and minority underrepresentation in international affairs, to see if a correlation can be established as is presumed. However, given the inconsistency and scanty availability of data, formulating authoritative conclusions about the status of minorities in international affairs is at best difficult. Even though existing literature seems to suggest an apparent growing movement toward internationalization on many of the nation's campuses, including a small set of minority institutions, current research has yet to focus on the role of higher education in integrating minorities into the foreign policy establishment.