

AFP Research Grant Report

***African American Development Officers:
Confronting the Obstacles and Rising Above them
in the New Millennium***

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Why aren't there more African Americans in the fundraising profession?

Summary of Opinions	Suggestions for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a perception that there aren't many AA in the fundraising profession and the majority of those interviewed believe that this is wrong. There are many AA in the profession and they are not only working at HBCU's. Non-minorities admitted to not always paying attention to AA beyond their networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AA and other minority fundraising networks need to be more visible and active. <i>There are many AA and minority networks around the country; however, AA and non-AA expressed not being familiar with them.</i> ◆ People should be willing to connect more with others who don't look like them – we need to come out of our comfort zones at meetings, conferences etc. and meet other people. <i>Both AA and non-AA shared that they tend to gravitate toward people that they already know and then to people with whom they share things in common – gender, race etc.,</i> ◆ People who are interested in knowing about who the AA are in the fundraising profession should inquire and be careful to not make the assumption that because they don't personally know who they are that they don't exist. <i>One AA interviewee expressed that she was told by a non-AA VP for Development in a casual conversation while attending a conference that there were only a few senior AA fundraisers around the country to which the interviewee asked how did she come to that conclusion and the VP stated that she had met them all at the conference the summer before.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Young AA are often not exposed to the fundraising profession as a viable career option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AA fundraisers should take opportunities to mentor young AA by going into high schools and presenting fundraising as a respected and lucrative career opportunity. They should also go into colleges and speak to students who are undecided about their career path and make them aware that the fundraising profession can draw on their professional education and skills in a variety of areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Many individuals have one job title but they have dual responsibilities with the second responsibility focusing on fundraising, however their job title does not reflect their fundraising responsibilities. This happens more often at smaller institutions and organizations. As a result, there are more individuals both AA and non-AA who are actually working as fundraisers but because of their job title they aren't recognized as fundraisers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AFP should conduct a survey of small organizations and institutions in their local area to learn which ones have fundraising positions under different job titles. ◆ AFP membership chairs should provide information to small institutions and organizations with a description of fundraising responsibilities and criteria for membership in AFP.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Not all AA belong to AFP or other professional fundraising networks so they haven't been counted among the fundraising professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AA fundraisers should help identify other AA fundraising professionals and encourage them to join AFP or any of the other AA or minority fundraising networks.

Why aren't there more African American fundraisers working at majority institutions or non-profit organizations?

Summary of Opinions	Suggestions for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The perception by AA within HBCU's has been that they have limited job opportunities outside of HBCU's. However, the perception by non-AA as well as many AA working within larger majority institutions is that the opportunities exist but the experience of AA at smaller institutions does not always transfer successfully to positions at the same level or higher at large majority institutions. Many of the HBCU's feel that they need more training for their development professionals but not so they can leave to go to other institutions but to better their own fundraising operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ More grants such as the Kresge HBCU Initiative would help HBCU's strengthen their development infrastructure. AA and non-AA are of the opinion that fundraising operations at many of the HBCU's have limited resources and training and have to work harder to be able to compete for the same philanthropic support as large majority institutions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a perception that not all fundraising positions are available to AA. Many of those interviewed agreed that development positions are more available for AA at minority organizations or institutions than at majority organizations or institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Educate hiring managers at sessions during the AFP conferences on how to define the "ideal candidate" in a way that is more inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds. Many AA interviewed who work in majority institutions shared that they are often assigned positions, which focus on fundraising for minority programs. They are also more often assigned positions in corporate and foundation relations than positions that interact with individual donors. The thinking is that AA cannot successfully raise money from non-AA or non-minorities. However, some AA and non-AA in majority institutions said they were being realistic in recognizing that no matter how diverse an institution hopes to be, they still have to be conscientious of the donor's preferences whether they are viewed as right or wrong. For example, some donors may not want to interact with a woman or an African American development officer. ◆ Educate all development professionals at sessions during the AFP conferences on the different "cultural communities". It's important to understand how these diverse communities view philanthropy and recognize that they are free to support the organizations that are effectively achieving the goals they are interested in. AA interviewed expressed a frustration with the "narrow thinking" by both AA and non-AA organizations that AA donors are only interested in supporting AA programs. Their opinion is that more AA donors are beginning to

	<p><i>focus on other organizations that address issues that affect their lives – for example, cancer research or heart disease.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Utilize the many AA development officer networks to mentor and provide outreach to help strengthen the ranks of AA within the fundraising profession and create the necessary pipeline of diverse candidates needed to fill vacant positions at majority institutions. <i>Some non-AA felt that opportunities are available for AA to compete for positions at large majority institutions or organizations but that they don't apply because they have taken the defeatist attitude – suspecting that they won't get the position because they are AA. The thinking by non-AA is that AA should set their goals higher and accept that they aren't going to always get every job they pursue but they will get more positions if they apply for more positions.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Some AA feel uncomfortable about being the first, only or one of only a few AA at a majority institution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Hiring managers or senior development officers need to be sensitive to the discomfort some AA or minorities experience working for majority institutions. <i>AA interviewed expressed that being the only AA at a majority institution can be uncomfortable for a number of reasons including: dealing with racism, suspicion that they were hired only to provide diversity on the staff and being given assignments that are focused only on minority initiatives. Some non-AA admitted that they have never had the experience of working for an organization as the only white person on a staff of all AA. They also admitted that they would not apply for a position at the United Negro College Fund or Black United Fund because the organization's name suggests that it is an exclusively AA organization and might prefer AA employees. This offended AA because they stated that they work for majority organizations all the time. However, when asked if they would consider working for an organization called the United White College Fund or White United Fund or even the Fund for Jewish Charities all AA interviewed said they would not.</i>

Why aren't there more African American members of AFP?

Summary of Opinions	Suggestions for Improvement
<p>◆ There is a perception that most AA, who are not members of AFP, work for institutions that cannot afford the membership fee.</p>	<p>◆ AFP chapters should poll non-members both AA and non-AA to learn the reasons why they are not members. <i>Both AA and non-AA development professionals interviewed expressed that they were not members of AFP for reasons other than lack of money available in their budget for the membership fee. Several AA stated that they had been a member of AFP in another chapter but didn't find consistency in what was offered between the old chapter and the new chapter. Comparing the two experiences, they felt that the new chapter didn't provide the same quality of resources and programming and wasn't worth the membership fee.</i></p>
<p>◆ AA that have a non-fundraising title but have dual responsibilities that include fundraising are often not targeted by AFP for membership.</p>	<p>◆ AFP should conduct a survey of organizations and institutions in their local area to learn which ones have fundraising positions under different job titles and provide them with the criteria for membership in AFP.</p>
<p>◆ Many AA development professionals are not aware of the benefits of membership in AFP</p>	<p>◆ AFP should reach out to AA and minority networks to provide information, attend meetings, sponsor workshops and demonstrate a genuine interest in attracting AA to AFP. <i>One AA shared that the local AFP Chapter has been invited on numerous occasions to present at their AA network meetings and no one from AFP has attended.</i></p> <p>◆ AA members of AFP should invite people to attend meetings as their guest to introduce them to AFP and to introduce AFP to potential members.</p> <p>◆ AFP should provide an introductory period at either a free or reduced rate. <i>This would give potential members both AA and non-AA an opportunity to experience the benefits of AFP membership and would expose AFP to more AA and minority development professionals to add their potential membership list.</i></p>
<p>◆ Some AA work for institutions that cannot afford to put AFP membership fees in their budgets.</p>	<p>◆ AFP should provide information to individuals and organizations on the benefits and rewards of membership to both the development professional and the organization.</p> <p>◆ AFP should consider providing trial memberships, memberships on a sliding fee scale based on the size of the institution or organization, and more opportunities for financial assistance.</p>

Why aren't there more African American fundraisers at the director level or above at majority institutions?

Summary of Opinions	Suggestions for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Many institutions and organizations don't have senior-level development positions available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Individuals who work for mid-size to smaller organizations and are successful in their current position should present a proposal for adding senior, director, associate vice president etc. to their current title. This would include a pay increase but the individual should make the case that it would cost more to hire a new professional and start from scratch than to promote the individual in the position and increase the fundraising goal and add more responsibilities. <i>One AA interviewee shared that he was interested in a director's position at another organization but it was a mid-level position with a mid-level salary. He saw the potential for changing the position's title with additional responsibility, a higher salary and a clear plan for taking the organization to the next level and raising more income.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Many of the high-level development positions require experience that AA in mid-level development positions don't have. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AA and minority networks should create opportunities for senior-level development professionals to mentor mid-level development professionals. These mentors can be minority or non-minority. ◆ Organizations should take a chance by promoting talented professionals within their organization understanding that although they lack direct experience, they have demonstrated potential and initiative which has made them successful in their current positions. <i>Interviewees expressed that hiring or promoting someone that does not have direct experience in the position for which they are interested is no different than promoting an assistant coach to a head coach position recognizing that they may have never been the head coach before but they have the talent and potential to be an outstanding head coach. It also saves time and money when someone is promoted who knows the organization and can avoid the learning curve.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Many AA don't have the necessary education required for senior-level positions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Universities with advanced degree programs in philanthropy should increase the number of fellowship opportunities they offer for AA and minority professionals. <i>Many of those AA who are currently in senior-level positions have 15+ years of experience and can get positions based on their years of experience since most jobs state that they require an advanced degree or 7+ years</i>

	<p><i>of experience. For those seeking senior-level positions with less than 7 years of experience (or in some cases 5 years of experience) an advanced degree is required. Many don't have the means for completing an advanced degree and need financial assistance.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Some AA development professionals are of the opinion that a majority organization is not going to have an AA or minority in the chief development officer position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Educate hiring managers at sessions during the AFP conferences on how to define the "ideal candidate" for a senior-level position in a way that is more inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds.◆ Provide opportunities for mid-level development professionals (AA and non-AA) who are interested in senior-level positions in development to meet and greet recruiters from executive search firms and hiring managers from organizations during AFP conferences.◆ Provide a forum at AFP conferences for AA and minority development professionals to share their concerns and provide possible solutions for resolving these issues and concerns. <i>For example, with this issue, one of the conclusions that could be drawn from a discussion is that it may be a fact that needs to be accepted that some institutions are not ready for an AA or minority to be in the chief development officer position.</i>