AGEP: Perceptions of the Participants

Robert L. Lichter

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Background

• AGEP undergoing 10-year examination
  ▪ AAAS/Campbell-Kibler
  ▪ American Institutes of Research (AIR)
  ▪ Quantitative, formal evaluations

• Participant perspectives
  ▪ Needed
  ▪ Useful

• A different set of questions
  • Qualitative
    ♦ A series of semi-structured conversations
Reminder

• A snapshot in time and space
• Not an evaluation
• No outcomes impacting existing programs
• No threat to existing funding or to probability of future funding
• No intent to eliminate AGEP
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alliance</th>
<th>Lead Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates (2009)</th>
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<td>Rice-Houston</td>
<td>Rice University</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>29-31 July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
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<td>Ames, IA</td>
<td>27-29 August</td>
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<td>Stony Brook Univ.</td>
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<td>31 August-2 September</td>
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<td>CUNY MAGNET-STEM</td>
<td>CUNY Graduate Center</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>8-10 September</td>
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<td>Oxford, MS</td>
<td>14-16 September</td>
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<td>Univ. of Mass., Amherst</td>
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<td>29 September-1 October</td>
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<td>Name</td>
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<td>Arturo Bronson</td>
<td>Univ. of Texas, El Paso</td>
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<td>Henry Frierson</td>
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<td>Carlos Gutiérrez</td>
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<td>Wesley L. Harris</td>
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<td>Cheryl Leggon</td>
<td>Ga. Tech</td>
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<td>Theresa Maldonado</td>
<td>Texas A&amp;M University</td>
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<td>Charles McGruder, III</td>
<td>Southern University at Baton Rouge</td>
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<td>Stephen McGuire</td>
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<td>Germán Núñez</td>
<td>Assn. for Institutional Research (ret.)</td>
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<td>Terrence Russell</td>
<td>University of Maryland, Baltimore County</td>
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<td>Janet Rutledge</td>
<td>Lexington, KY</td>
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<td>Virginia Van Horne</td>
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Procedure

• Two days
• Constituencies:
  ▪ Faculty members
  ▪ Program administrators
  ▪ Campus project administrators
  ▪ University leadership
  ▪ Collaborative-program directors
  ▪ Evaluators
  ▪ Students
    ♦ (undergraduates, graduate students)

• Candid conversations
**Outputs**

- **Planned:**
  - Written summaries of individual visits to NSF
  - Overview report on collective impressions

- **Unplanned:**
  - Feedback to project directors and program managers based on observations
  - Not part of reports to NSF
Topics

- Program administration, structure, operation
- Student recruiting
- Faculty perceptions and engagement
- Student perceptions and engagement
- Evaluation
- Summary
Program administration, structure, operation

- Passionate commitment, dedication
- Minimal staffing, often multiple reporting
- Coordinate all AGEP student services
  - Minimal faculty roles
- Mostly loose collaborations
  - MGE → AGEP
  - Apparently not strategically created (one exception)
  - Different operating structures
  - Joint activities
  - Collaborations productive
Use of Funds

- Stipends
  - Mostly supplemental
- Books, travel
- Available to all departments
  - “Lone” student
Student Recruiting

- Mostly same conferences, fairs
- Personal contacts
  - Research collaborations, sabbaticals
- Less from local populations
  - Tendency to assume “best” go elsewhere
  - Recruit local undergraduates back?
- Undergraduate research programs
- Other ABP programs less fruitful
Faculty Perceptions and Engagement

- Favorable
- Most see as fellowship program
  - “2 for the price of 1”
  - “makes recruiting easier”
  - “allows departments to take risks”
- Rely on AGEP staff for mentoring, advising
  - Staff “overworked”
- Notable exceptions
  - Scattered individuals
  - Graduate coordinators
  - Prior departmental histories and successes
  - Strongest engagement where program faculty driven
Almost no AGEP alumni appointed as faculty members

Implications for ending of funding

- “Spirit of AGEP” would remain
- Biggest impact: reduced recruiting
  - Suggestion of removing residency requirements (a single individual)
- Some support programs
- Could continue if funding identified
  - Reallocations?
Student Perceptions and Engagement

• Strong, mutually supportive sense of community
  ▪ On/across campuses, disciplines
  ▪ Important for “lone student”

• Uniformly credit AGEP with their success
  ▪ Financial support
    ◆ Less well aware of other fellowship sources
  ▪ Advising, mentoring
  ▪ “Safe haven” — first point of contact
    ◆ Some climate issues
    ◆ Illegitimacy

• Many not initially aware of AGEP
  ▪ Fellowship program?
Student Perceptions and Engagement

• Large number of non-US-born students in some programs
  ▪ Satisfy eligibility criteria—permanent residents
  ▪ Secondary education mostly outside US
  ▪ A few baccalaureates outside US
  ▪ US/Puerto Rican-born conscious of distinction
Student Career Plans

• Few intend academic careers
  ▪ Reasons to do so not presented
    ◆ Transitions not clear
    ◆ Details left to departments
  ▪ Variable, uneven teaching requirements, opportunities
    ◆ Little pedagogy, guidance
    ◆ Some PFF-type programs, also IGERT, GK-12

• Work elsewhere, then teach

• “Teach on the side”

• Need for postdoctorate
  ▪ AGEP program?
Evaluation

• External evaluators for two Alliances
• Mostly input, output data collection
  ▪ Data quality, consistency, completeness are issues
  ▪ Variable definitions of AGEP students
• Occasional surveys, focus groups
  ▪ Welcoming environment important
  ▪ Younger faculty members more attuned than older
• Little or no input from stakeholders
• No consistent formative evaluations
• No extended longitudinal outcomes
• No examination of institutional change
Suggestions

• Review of program goals
  ▪ Student development?
  ▪ Institutionalization?
  ▪ Institutional change?

• Strategic Alliances

• AGEP as an honor

• External Advisory Committees

• Faculty ownership – explicit faculty roles

• AGEP marketing to constituencies
Suggestions

• Strengthen the “P”
  ▪ AGEP postdoctorate
  ▪ Requirement of guided teaching

• Development of evaluation plan
  ▪ Formative
  ▪ Longitudinal
    ◆ Social networking
    ◆ Résumé collection
  ▪ Budgeted
  ▪ Stakeholder input
  ▪ Consistent and systematic data definition and collection
Suggestions

• Broadened recruiting
  ▪ Undergraduate research
  ▪ Bridging programs
    ◆ Re-examine pathways from LSAMP, Bridge to Doctorate
  ▪ Inter-Alliance recruiting
  ▪ Exchange programs

• Strategic review of stipends
  ▪ Funding level/student expense ratio
  ▪ Avoid financial disadvantages of working with unfunded faculty
Acknowledgments

- National Science Foundation personnel
- AIR personnel
- Visiting team members
- AGEP Program personnel
- Participating faculty members
  Especially
- AGEP graduate students