Supporting Black and minority ethnic students (BME) at the University of Birmingham: an update

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The context….the attainment gap

The attainment gap measures the difference between the proportion of first degree undergraduate qualifiers within two groups who obtain a first class or upper second class honours degree.

NB : the two groups are UK BME and white students
The national and local picture

NATIONALLY

- More BME students than ever are accessing higher education
- Over the past seven years, the proportion of UK-domicile BME students has increased from 14.9% in 2003/04 to 18.1% in 2009/10
- Over the past seven years, the percentage of UK-domicile leavers achieving a first class or upper second class honours degree has steadily increased for most ethnic groups
- For UK-domicile qualifiers, the difference between the proportion of white qualifiers who obtained a first class or upper second class honours and that of BME qualifiers (the attainment gap) increased from 17.2% in 2003/04 to a peak of 18.8% in 2005/06 and was at 18.6% in 2009/10
- In 2010 for UK-domicile leavers, BME leavers (12.6%), particularly Chinese (14.7%) and black (14.3%) leavers, were more likely to be assumed to be unemployed than white leavers (6.2%).

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

- More BME student are coming to UoB
- Over the past 7 years, the proportion of UK-domicile BME UG students has increased from 21.4% in 2003/4 to 22.3% in 2011/12
- Over the past four years, the percentage of UK-domicile leavers achieving a first class or upper second class honours degree has slightly increased for most ethnic groups
- For UK-domicile qualifiers, the difference between the proportion of white qualifiers who obtained a first class or upper second class honours and that of BME qualifiers increased from 15% 2005/06 to 17% 2010/11
  unknowns = 10%
- In 2010 for UK-domicile leavers, BME 14.4% leavers compared to 8.25% white leavers were assumed to be unemployed.
The Supporting BME Student Success event - 25th July

SUPPORTING BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC STUDENT SUCCESS AND NARROWING THE ATTAINMENT GAP

- This half day event explores issues around the experiences of BME students and the 17% attainment gap at the University of Birmingham. It is clear that many academics, Heads of Education, and those with a concern for student performance are keen to consider what the issues are that impact on attainment, and what interventions could improve the experiences of students.

- **Keynote speaker - David Gilborn**, Professor of Critical Race Studies, Editor, ‘Race Ethnicity and Education’, School of Education.

- **Other contributors** – BME students discuss their experiences; Jane Tope to discuss the issues as highlighted in the latest research (including her own PhD research on BME student experiences), and an overview of what other universities are engaged in. Michael Tefula, alumni, will discuss his experiences and his book ‘How to Get a First’. Plus, Joel Blake a local successful consultant talking about the University’s BME mentoring scheme.

- Time will be allocated to consider what can be achieved at the University Birmingham.

- **Venue: Kingfisher Room, Peter Scott House, Conference Park.**

- Thirty free places allocated on a first come first served basis.

- **Email: d.j.tope@bham.ac.uk to book a place**

- **Date: 25th July 12.30 - 5pm, lunch included**
What were the main issues highlighted at the event?

- The importance of having a curriculum that reflects, in some part, the experiences of BME students, and lack of diversity in the curriculum as a whole.
- Feelings of isolation by some BME students who expected the UoB to more reflect the wider community – ‘whiteness’ of the campus.
- The importance of the Guild of Student groups, such as the ACS and BEMA.
- How the staging of such an event and the focus on the experiences of BME students improves awareness and helps students to feel acknowledged.
- …..and many more (see last presentation!).
Higher Education Academy (HEA) awarded funds for the project:

Developing and evaluating the use of BME mentoring as an intervention to narrow the attainment gap

- Developing and expanding the existing BME peer and external mentoring scheme.
- Peer mentoring – train 2nd and 3rd year students to peer mentor first year students
- External – student mentees are paired with workplace BME mentors who act as role models, critical friends, networking contacts, and support for students
- Investigate/ conduct research about whether targeted interventions, such as mentoring for BME students ‘problematises’/ negatively stereotypes the students, or is actually beneficial in narrowing the gap
More about the Project....

- Runs from September 2012 until December 2013

- Employing a student researcher

- Developing a website to provide a focal point for all the information and research available

- Evaluated by a team from Aston University

Any questions?