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Doctoral Dissertation Defense
of
Amanda R. Fronek
For the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Higher Education Administration

A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF BLACK WOMEN’S DECISIONS TO ATTEND FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION

October 3, 2023
9:00 a.m.
208 White Hall
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Amanda has over 12 years of experience in higher education administration spanning R2 state universities, public community colleges, and private liberal arts environments. Her professional experiences are inclusive of the following areas: student life, student engagement, leadership development, learning outcomes assessment, retention, enrollment management, student conduct, disability support services, DEI initiatives, admissions, orientation, behavior intervention, and student success.

Amanda currently serves as the Assistant Dean of Student Success at Oberlin College and Conservatory and operates as a faculty member within the College’s Learning Enhancement Across the Disciplines (LEAD) department where she teaches LEAD 110: F1rst at Oberlin, a course designed to support first-generation and high financial need students. Amanda takes immense pride in her role in supporting first-generation students as she is a first-generation college student herself.

A Narrative Exploration of Black Women’s Decisions to Attend For-Profit Colleges and Universities for Graduate Education

Utilizing Iloh’s Model of College Going Decisions and Trajectories (Iloh, 2018) and guided by the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework, this study explored how Black women recounted their decisions to attend for-profit higher education institutions for graduate education. The researcher interviewed eight participants for this study. The researcher found eight themes across participant narratives: (1) recounting the need for flexibility, convenience, and acceleration, (2) recounting researching institutions and programs, (3) recounting academic program decisions, (4) recounting the impact of accreditations, licensure, and credentialing, (5) recounting making comparisons, (6) recounting the impact of for-profit status, (7) the impacts of caregiving, loss, and faith, and (8) the role of the Black woman identity in decision-making. To increase the access and success of Black women in graduate programs, the researcher recommends reflective and inclusive advertising, the legitimization of for-profit institutions through federal legislation, the addressing or Black graduate women’s needs at not-for-profit institutions, graduate program exploration assistance, and the inclusion of tax status policy statements for all higher education institutions. Further inquiry is needed to explore the role of anonymity in college-going decision-making, the impact of loss and faith in college-going decisions and trajectories, and Black graduate women’s success after enrolling in for-profit institutions. These findings are valuable for Black graduate women, legislators, and higher education administrators concerned with access and success of Black graduate women.