

## UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES – WHY BLACK MEN FAILED



African-American males have the highest dropout rate in higher education. They also have the highest unemployment rate of 16.9 percent, constitute 55 percent of drug convictions and 74 percent of prison sentences.

Dr. Charlita Shelton, University of the Rockies president and diversity advocate, conducted a study to determine what black men need to graduate from college. The study included African-American undergraduate male students ages 27-57, who were college dropouts, but went back to finish their degrees.

The study identified four primary factors that influence Black men in earning an undergraduate college degree. Key findings:

**Self Determination:** A new dynamic, not previously explored in formal research, attributed to African-American male graduation. For the participants, interpersonal development and self identity gave them an internal “drive.”

**Instructor Positive Influence:** Classes with immediate [relevance](#) to the participants’ work and/or personal lives were a positive factor. The professors’ teaching approach was significant, and participants felt their professors were approachable. This created a peer-to-peer dynamic.

**Family Support:** Families gave encouragement to complete school requirements even when it interfered with family obligations. Participants had an obligation to complete their degree, because they dropped out during their first attempt at college and felt they disappointed their families.

**Financial and Academic Support:** Once a major obstacle for these participants, financing their degree was not an issue in their return to college. Many received tuition reimbursement or support from government loans and grants. Financial aid and academic counselors made themselves accessible to the participants and alleviated concerns participants perceived as financial or academic barriers to graduation.

Dr. Shelton, a vibrant, enthusiastic leader with strong opinions, especially on diversity issues in higher education, is available for interviews. Her *Influences That Lead To Higher Graduation Rates of African American Males Who Receive Their Undergraduate Degree* white paper, excerpts, or the 113-page dissertation is available upon request.