Understanding the Prevalence of Geo-Like Degree Programs at Minority Serving Institutions

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Over the decade 2002-12, the percentage of minority students graduating with geoscience degrees has increased dramatically. For example, in 2012, of the nearly 6,000 geoscience BS degrees awarded, almost 20% went to minority students and this was up from just over 13% in 2002. But minorities make up nearly a third of the US population, so we still have work to do.

Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) play an important role in increasing the diversity of geoscience graduates where there are appropriate degree programs or pathways to programs. To better understand opportunities at these institutions, the InTeGrate project collected information on degree programs at MSIs.

Finding 1: Of the 496 officially recognized Minority Serving Institutions in the summer of 2013, 148 (30%) offered degrees that included elements of geoscience.

Finding 2: There are more “geo-like” degree programs at MSIs than we expected there would be.

Finding 3: The name of the academic unit is not a good proxy for the presence of a degree program with elements of geoscience.

Finding 4: Approximately one-third of HSIs and Tribal Colleges and one-fifth of HBCUs offer at least one degree that includes elements of geoscience. The most common degree programs were Geology and Environmental Science, but 21 other types of programs were also categorized.

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