

In 1998 the Model Institutions for Excellence (MIE), NSF grant gave me the opportunity to understand the value of diversity. MIE was an initiative of NSF and NASA to increase the STEM graduates among the African American, Native American and Hispanic American institutions of Higher Education. Six Minority Serving Institutions were selected for the grant. Three African American: Spellman College, Bowie State University, and Xavier University of Louisiana. Two Hispanic American: Universidad Metropolitana, and University of Texas, El Paso, and one Native America: Oglala Lakota College. The grant lasted ten years and in the case of Universidad Metropolitana was a great contribution to transform a marginal college into a leading college in undergraduate research, thanks to the mentoring and preparation of the scholar with extensive research opportunities in Puerto Rico, US mainland and abroad. All our students were economically disadvantage and the majority were women. We were able to graduate over 300 BS, 70 MS and 65 Doctoral degrees (48 Ph.D.). Due to the success of the MIE at Universidad Metropolitan, I was Awarded the US Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring at the White House by President Bush, on November 2007. With the implementation of the MIE we were able to demonstrate that minority institutions with proper support and mentoring for economically disadvantage students can increase the graduation rate from as low as 15% in STEM-C disciplines to 85%.