

Ranking no indication of Morehouse's success

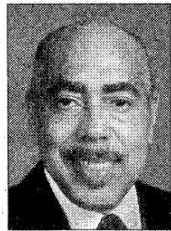
By **WALTER E. MASSEY**

For the past four years, Morehouse has been ranked the No. 1 college for African-Americans on Black Enterprise magazine's biennial ranking of the Top 50 Colleges for African-Americans. This year, Morehouse is ranked 45th.

Our position on the Black Enterprise list notwithstanding, the only significant changes at Morehouse have been for the better. After all, this is the same institution that has produced three Rhodes Scholars over the past 12 years; the same institution that is one of the top feeder schools for the nation's most prestigious law, medical and graduate school programs; and the same institution that has graduated more African-American men with bachelor's degrees than any other college or university in the nation — including 529 young men in 2006, the largest number in the college's history.

Strong in long term

So, what accounts for the change in Morehouse's position on the Black Enterprise list? A combination of two things. First, the magazine altered the way it calculated



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its ranking, placing more emphasis this year on graduation rates. Second, in 2004 Morehouse's graduation rate dropped from 56 percent to 49 percent.

What the Black Enterprise ranking does not show is that 2004 was an anomalous year for the college. Over the past four years, Morehouse's six-year graduation rate has averaged about 55 percent, and in 2005, rose to 61 percent.

To fully appreciate the significance of these numbers, it must be recognized that Morehouse has a unique mission among institutions of higher education in the United States. It is the only college or university whose primary purpose is to serve the needs of African-American men.

Male and female graduation rates differ significantly among African-Americans, with twice as many African-

American women as men enrolled in college, and twice as many earning degrees.

Even so, Morehouse is still No. 1 when it comes to producing black male college graduates. The fact is that at 55 percent — a rate we are continually striving to improve — Morehouse's graduation rate is significantly higher than the national average for African-American men, which is about 33 percent.

It is worth noting that different magazines evaluate colleges in different ways.

U.S. News & World Report emphasizes class size, alumni giving and faculty-student ratio, as well as graduation rates. In the latest U.S. News rankings, Morehouse is one of only three historically black colleges ranked among the nation's best liberal arts colleges.

Confronting a challenge

One positive outcome of Morehouse's change in ranking on the Black Enterprise list is that it presents an op-

portunity to bring to the attention of a larger public the disparity between male and female college attendance and graduate rates, which has been widening over the past several years. As the college that enrolls and graduates the

largest number of African-American men in the nation, Morehouse is on a mission to understand this trend and to develop ways to reverse it.

This year, we will launch the Morehouse Male Initiative, an activity that will allow us to bring together national

research scholarship, as well as the particular learning we have amassed over the years.

Why do this? Because even with our track record of success relative to other institutions, Morehouse is, by no means, content with our current graduation rates. We appreciate that we are a unique institution in the pantheon of American higher education and that the public has high expectations of us, expectations that we will continue to strive to meet.

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