A conference supporting ways to boost black male student success around the world was held this month in the United States. On the heels of President Obama’s revamped rollout of the “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative, academics, researchers, non-profits, policy makers, and students convened at the “International Colloquium on Black Males in Education” at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. The goal of the three day conference was to highlight best practices in the quest to close the achievement gap between black male students and their peers.

“We consistently try to bring a cadre of young and seasoned academics to think about the kinds of questions our community needs, and try to address those problems,” said co-founder, James L. Moore, Ph.D. of Ohio State University (OSU). With topics like resiliency strategies for black male students; examining the black male experience in graduate school; and black women’s perspective on black male student achievement, the symposium highlighted programs, research, and evidence on what works and what doesn’t when it comes to effectively educating black male students from London to New York State -- which had the lowest black male high school graduation rate in the U.S, according to a 2012 Schott Foundation report.

“We asked, ‘What would it look like if we got (together) all the top researchers in the world who study black males in education?’” said colloquium co-founder, Jerlando F. L. Jackson, Ph.D., director of Wisconsin’s Equity and Inclusion Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. “What kind of environment would it create? What kind of discourse? And what could we learn from each other?”

Moore and Jackson established the colloquium after authoring a report that found many black male students across the globe experienced the same achievement gaps.

“We believe, in order for countries to revitalize themselves, they will have to focus on the low achievement of males -- and black males in particular,” said Moore, director of OSU’s Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male.

The colloquium is also an opportunity to connect evidence and successful strategies with schools and organizations like the Boys and Girls Club, that can put the research into practice.

“We’re talking about how entities should change,” Jackson said. “We do that with empirical evidence, so it’s not purely a social justice argument, or a do-gooder argument. It’s empirically grounded.”

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