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Enhancing Diversity in Physics: The Fisk-Vanderbilt Masters-to-PhD Bridge Program¹

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We describe the Fisk-Vanderbilt Masters-to-PhD Bridge program as a model for partnering with minority-serving institutions to increase the representation of women and minorities earning PhDs in astronomy and related disciplines. Since its inception in 2004, the Fisk-Vanderbilt Bridge program has attracted 30 minority students, 60% of whom are female, and with a retention rate of 94%. When the first Bridge students completed their PhDs in 2010-11, the program will become the top awarder of astronomy PhDs to underrepresented minorities in the United States. Already, Fisk has become the top producer of physics Masters degrees to African Americans. We summarize the program's structure, approach, and research basis with the goal of providing a replicable model for other institutions seeking to build similar collaborative, research-based bridging partnerships.

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