



LEADING FOR CHANGE RACIAL EQUITY & JUSTICE INSTITUTE PRACTITIONER HANDBOOK

Sabrina Gentlewarrior & Luis Paredes, Editors

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LEADING FOR CHANGE

RACIAL EQUITY & JUSTICE INSTITUTE

PRACTITIONER HANDBOOK

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FORWARD



FORWARD

Achieving true educational equity remains higher education's "unmet promise" (Witham, Malcom-Piqueux, Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). Nowhere is this more true than for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian and other students of color (Brown McNair, Bensimon & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020; Espinosa, Turk, Taylor & Chessman, 2019). Access to our country's more elite campuses remains severely constricted for racially minoritized students (Nichols, 2020). When students of color are admitted to our institutions – whether private or public – they often report: experiencing racialized mistreatment; a diminished sense of belonging and welcome; lack of faculty, librarians, staff, campus leadership, or Boards of Trustees that are representative of their racial and/or ethnic groups; campus climates that are often openly hostile; and ongoing exposure to policies, practices and pedagogies that are premised in racism – including pervasive Whiteness (Espinosa, Turk, Taylor & Chessman, 2019; McNair, Bensimon & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020; Mills, 2020; Museus, Lambe, Sariñana, Yee & Robinson, 2016; Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2007).

Because of who higher education was designed to serve, "instead of being aberrations in contemporary society, Whiteness and White Privilege are woven into the fabric" of our work (Cabrera, Watson & Franklin, 2017, p. 52). In order to achieve racial equity in higher education we must not only achieve parity in educational outcomes but also commit to the ongoing intentional practice of centralizing the assets, lived experience and needs of racially minoritized students in our work (Bensimon, 2018; McNair, Bensimon & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020).

NATIONAL CONTEXT DURING PERIOD THE REJI HANDBOOK WAS WRITTEN

In the months the *Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute Practitioner Handbook* was written the Black Lives Matter Movement, which began in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, continued its life-saving, culture and consciousness changing work

and call for White America to pay attention, reflect, and act to dismantle systemic racism and white supremacy (Garza, 2020; Black Lives Matter -- <https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>). Recently institutions of higher education have rushed to make statements of support for the Black Lives Matter movement. While some are advancing racial equity and justice, the work on many campuses has just begun (Sangaramoorthy & Richardson, 2020).

America came to know and say the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Rayshard Brooks and so many others, not for the lives they lived, but the excruciatingly violent and racist ways they died. Less well known is that 164 Black men and women were killed by the police in the first eight months of 2020 (CBS News, 2020).

Covid-19 underscored the systemic racial inequities in our country as we all witnessed the disproportionate number of deaths, economic impact, and interruption in plans to attend higher education for racially minoritized students (Fortuna, Toulou-Shams, Robles-Ramamurthy, Porche, 2020; Jack, 2020; Pullisadmin, 2020). One of the many manifestations of racism during this pandemic was an increase in acts of discrimination targeting the Asian American and Pacific Island community, including the shooting of eight people working in Georgia spas -- six of whom were Asian women (Cowan, 2021; Tessler, Choi & Kao, 2020). Higher education has been slow to respond to Anti-Asian sentiments and other acts of racism (Pai, 2021; Stewart, 2021).

A federal Executive Order was signed by President Trump that prohibited diversity and inclusion training at sites receiving federal grants – including institutions of higher education. The implementation of this Executive Order was blocked but it called for, among other things, the discontinuation of the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) which underscores the ways in which racism manifests not only as acts of individual bias but also as systemic

oppression informing many American policies, practices, and institutions (American Council on Education, 2020; Lati, 2021; Sawchuck, 2021).

On President Biden's first day in office he spoke out against white supremacy and systemic racism and signed a number of Executive Orders intended to roll back recent racial justice setbacks. All federal departments are now being required to have plans for addressing systemic racism in the first 200 days of Joe Biden's presidency (The White House, 2021). The impact on higher education could be profound (Murakami, 2021).

In recent months, a number of states have either introduced or passed legislation banning the use of Critical Race Theory in K-12 and college classrooms (Dennon, 2021; Lati, 2021; Sawchuk, 2021). In May 2021, a group of 30 representatives introduced the Stop CRT Act in the U.S. House of Representatives in an effort to codify President Trump's efforts to prevent critical race theory from being taught in a range of settings receiving federal funds (Bishop, 2021); if successful, this could be applied to college campuses as well. In June 2021, a joint statement was disseminated from the American Association of University Professors, the American Historical Association, the Association of American Colleges & Universities, PEN America and many others. It states, "the clear goal of these efforts is to suppress teaching and learning about the role of racism in the history of the United States."

It is clear that the work for racial equity and justice in higher education is desperately needed but not yet fully supported by the wider culture or academia.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT FOR THE INCEPTION OF THE HANDBOOK

The genesis for this handbook began in 2008 at Bridgewater State University (BSU). As the comprehensive teaching university of Southeastern Massachusetts, BSU is the tenth largest higher education institution in the Commonwealth. From 2008-2012, the Nellie Mae Foundation established and funded Project Compass, which was focused on systematizing "institutional-level changes needed to expand, sustain, and integrate evidence based efforts to close educational equity gaps" (Burack & Lanspery, 2016). Bridgewater State University, as one of the four Project Compass campuses, engaged in monthly meetings with a robust campus-based interdivisional team comprised of faculty, staff and administrators in order to obtain and use data and pilot interventions intended to close educational equity gaps. During this period BSU was able to virtually eliminate equity gaps in retention on campus. During the same time period BSU's six-year graduation rate for all students increased by 3.5% – and by 13% for students of color (Gentlewarrior, 2012).

President Emeritus Dana Mohler-Faria and current BSU President Frederick Clark asked Sabrina Gentlewarrior, who was serving as the grant Primary Investigator, to suggest ways BSU could disseminate what was learned from BSU's Project Compass experience. Due to campus-wide support and collaboration from a range of BSU faculty and staff, BSU hosted the Leading for Change Conference in the summer of 2013 with the intention of sharing lessons learned during our Project Compass educational equity efforts. Interdivisional teams from the 80+ campuses in Massachusetts were invited to attend; 49 campuses sent teams to the two-day conference. While the attendees spanned the public and private sector and were from a

range of mission classes, all shared in common the desire to identify data-informed strategies to close educational equity gaps.

Attendees were asked to meet together before attending the conference to examine their retention and graduation disaggregated data in order to determine if equity gaps existed at their campuses and to discuss ongoing institutional efforts to close those gaps. Many of the attendees indicated that they had never worked with their campus colleagues on these issues before being invited to the conference. At the close of the conference, assessment data indicated participants' desire to continue to meet and work together on these issues.

In an effort to build on the momentum, colleagues from a range of campuses were contacted and asked to collaborate in creating a diversity consortium. In 2014, the Leading for Change Consortium was launched at Bridgewater State University. University and college presidents in Massachusetts were invited to have their institutions join the consortium. Requirements for membership have remained the same from 2014 to present: Presidents charge and convene an interdivisional team who meet monthly to examine institutional data related to their equity gaps; discuss strategies intended to eliminate the gaps and work together to implement them; campus teams attend the consortium's learning community convenings intended to help support one another's progress; and as campuses identify practices that data suggests are useful in closing educational equity gaps, they agree to freely share this knowledge. During these years while Leading for Change focused on racial equity and justice it was not the group's singular focus.

In 2018 in recognition that racially minoritized students continue to experience equity gaps at member campuses, the Leading for Change Consortium shifted its focus from working on all educational equity gaps to racial educational equity. As a result, the group rebranded itself

as The Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute (<https://www.bridgew.edu/the-university/racial-equity-justice-institute>). REJI member institutions meet monthly on their campuses to complete the REJI facilitator-created curriculum intended to increase our abilities to deepen our work for racial educational equity. The consortium also meets virtually on a monthly basis (and will continue to do so into the future allowing for the expansion of membership beyond the New England region) in educational equity workshops, racial affinity caucuses and twice yearly daylong summits. Members now include institutions from across the region.

The Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute Practitioner Handbook offers readers a range of hopeful, data-informed strategies that have been useful in closing racial educational equity gaps on our campuses. Readers will note that these are not discussed as best practices – or even promising ones. Rather we call what is presented in this handbook emerging practices. This term is intended to underscore that there is still much to learn about these practices. We also want to highlight that what works on one campus may not work at another; institutional context is important. We encourage readers to consider how to best adapt these emerging practices at their campuses after engaging in equity-minded inquiry (McNair, Bensimon, Malcom-Piqueux, 2020). Finally, we use the term emerging practices to underscore that equity work demands humility and innovation in order to address systemic racism in higher education.

It should be underscored that these emerging practices are occurring on campuses deeply engaged in campus-wide racial equity and justice work through their involvement with the REJI and additional campus-based initiatives. Equity-oriented programs occurring on campuses that are not engaged in comprehensive analysis and change efforts undoubtedly offer some aid to racially minoritized students. However, nothing short of institutional

transformation premised in racial equity and justice tenets and practices will provide students of color the institutional experience they deserve or the equity-oriented results campuses desire (Brown McNair, Bensimon, & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020; Love, 2019; Smith, 2020). In order to truly serve Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx and other students of color, we must “not seek to improve, but rather transform the existing education paradigm” (Zhao, 2016, p. 722).

CONSIDER YOUR INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

We encourage readers to pause for a few moments and re-examine your institutional data. Most will find long-standing gaps in retention, persistence and graduation rates between the Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and other racially minoritized students attending your campus as compared to their white peers (AAC&U, 2015). Institutions that have conducted qualitative research on their campuses often find that racially minoritized students attending their campuses are succeeding despite our efforts instead of because of them (Moragne-Patterson & Barnett 2017). What are the racially minoritized students, faculty and staff on your campus telling you about the state of racial equity and justice on your campus? Have you asked and really listened?

Until “race no longer determines one’s outcomes in . . . higher education” we are not making good on our promise to our students (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education). Yet it is possible to do so. Campuses willing to invest the time and energy to identify their racial educational equity gaps, and then design, implement and assess strategies premised in racial equity and justice report that gaps in student outcomes that too often seem intractable begin to close (AAC&U, 2015; McNair, Bensimon & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020).

THE REJI LEADERSHIP

The work for racial equity and justice is only possible in community. The leadership of the REJI is shared across the consortium. A great number of individuals have offered their intellectual clarity, commitment and leadership to the work over the years. These colleagues include:

President Frederick W. Clark Jr.

*Bridgewater State University**

President Yves Salomon-Fernandez

*Formerly at Greenfield Community College,
now at Southern New Hampshire University**

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REJI Convener, Bridgewater State University**

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*Professor of Physics at Massachusetts
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The Racial Equity and Justice Institute's efforts are aligned with and benefit from the Massachusetts' Department of Higher Education's Equity Agenda (<https://www.mass.edu/strategic/equity.asp>) that prioritizes the elimination of racial equity gaps on public campuses in Massachusetts. Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Carlos Santiago and staff are to be commended for their leadership of the Equity Agenda and robust range of resources they make available to campuses in Massachusetts in support of this important work. In the first chapter of this handbook Commissioner Santiago offers readers an overview of the Equity Agenda he is

leading in Massachusetts focused on higher education racial educational equity.

Dr. Edmund Bertschinger (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Ms. Latrina Denson (Mount Holyoke College), Dr. Leo Hwang (University of Massachusetts-Amherst), and Dr. Kate McLaren-Poole (Bridgewater State University) served as reviewers during the submission of the emerging practices from member campuses. Dr. Luis Paredes has provided leadership to this project as logistical coordinator and editor. Ms. Marie Murphy, a long-time and valued employee at Bridgewater State University, provided copy

editing for the handbook. Bridgewater State University's Director of Creative Services and Publications Jaime Knight led the design team. Without the work of these individuals this handbook would not have been possible.

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HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

The handbook is divided into six sections focused on:

- 1) Racial Equity and Justice as the Foundation for Higher Education: The Necessity and Possibilities
- 2) Racial Equity Programming
- 3) Racially Equitable Data Practices
- 4) Academic Excellence Through Racial Equity
- 5) Racially Equitable Student Service Provision
- 6) Racially Just Campus Policing Recommendations.

Every emerging practice in this handbook ends with the contact information for the authors/educators/scholars/practitioners responsible for the work. We hope you contact these authors to learn more – and share what is occurring on your campuses.

If after reading through the handbook you would like to explore membership in the Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute, please contact Dr. Sabrina Gentlewarrior. The REJI campuses would welcome additional institutions into our learning community dedicated to hopeful, data-informed efforts to eliminate racial educational equity gaps in higher education.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE REJI PRACTITIONER HANDBOOK OR TO DISCUSS INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP IN THE RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE CONTACT:

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**RACIAL EQUITY AND
JUSTICE AS THE
FOUNDATION FOR
HIGHER EDUCATION:
The Necessity and Possibilities**



RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: THE NECESSITY AND POSSIBILITIES

Keywords: Equity Agenda, Shared Equity Leadership

**CARLOS E. SANTIAGO, COMMISSIONER
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER
EDUCATION**

STATE-WIDE CONTEXT

The forward of the *Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute Practitioner Handbook* provided readers with a succinct overview of the ways in which American higher education is failing to meet the needs of the Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous and other students of color we have been entrusted to serve. Based on this understanding and an analysis of the state of higher education in the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) adopted a new statewide Vision Statement (on December 11, 2018) to guide the work of developing an equity strategic framework for public higher education (Board of Higher Education Motion 19-03). Nearly three months earlier, members proposed “a new direction for public higher education that would reaffirm the state’s commitment to maintaining high levels of educational attainment among the adult population while emphasizing equitable postsecondary outcomes for students from traditionally underserved backgrounds” (Santiago, 2019). I hope to describe why the BHE came to this decision and how the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) supports this action by providing critical underlying data and analysis. The DHE has also set the stage for a full audit for all system-level, student-facing policy, and program audit.

Massachusetts is recognized as a state that values education at all levels. The sheer number of private and public higher education institutions in Massachusetts is often highlighted with considerable pride. The numbers of selective private institutions also attest to this

recognition. The significant economic impact colleges and universities have in Massachusetts relative to other sectors of the economy stands out. Higher education ranks among the state’s largest industries providing substantial employment levels, and institutions of higher education (IHE) serve as economic anchors in their communities (U.S. News, 2019). The Commonwealth’s characterization as a knowledge-based economy is well placed. It attracts highly credentialed talent regionally, nationally, as well as globally.

Massachusetts ranks first in the nation in the overall percentage of its adult population that holds a postsecondary credential (Lumina Foundation, 2021). Likewise, the state continually ranks high nationally and internationally in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores (MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016). Massachusetts also leads in the import of college students compared to most other states. High school graduation rates and college-going rates also rank high nationally. But these many positive attributes mask significant inequities in who has access to higher education opportunities and in whose prospects of completing a high-quality credential are highest.

Massachusetts fairs poorly in terms of disparities in educational outcomes. These include significant differentials in high school graduation rates, college-going rates, college retention, and college graduation rates, particularly by race and ethnicity. The racial disparities are

not only significant but remain stubbornly immutable, and in some cases, disparities are growing. By all accounts, these outcomes are simply unacceptable. We are genuinely leaving too many Students of Color behind along the entire education pipeline. These racial disparities have serious repercussions. The significant inequities that Students of Color experience run contrary to all of the perspectives and expectations we have when we think about Massachusetts' education. As I have stated in other venues, "Massachusetts will not be able to maintain its position as the most educated state in the country unless we address the systemic inequities that exist within our system of public higher education."

Access to higher education has historically been limited for Students of Color, both nationally and in Massachusetts. Even when accounting for differences in family income levels, the disparities are persistent and large. The DHE's work suggests that affordability alone does not account for the significant gaps, as institutions still graduate white students with unmet need at higher rates than African American and Latinx students with zero unmet need. Race and ethnicity, not just income levels, account for this outcome.

Massachusetts is also known for its singular contributions in launching the American experiment with democracy. This positive attribute is sometimes extrapolated to its racial climate as the bulwark of abolitionist thought and action in the 19th and 20th centuries and the training ground of Frederick Douglas, Booker T. Washington, Martin Luther King Jr., and countless others. Nevertheless, in reality, Massachusetts' engagement with pervasive racial discrimination is contradictory, uneven, and provides little evidence of fundamentally challenging the systemic racism that permeates its society today. Black people grew in numbers as Massachusetts was perceived as a welcoming environment even before the Great Migration of African Americans to the North. But the growth in numbers has not resulted in enhanced political participation or representation in political power's highest echelons. In virtually every aspect of our society, racial gaps can be linked to institutional processes, policies and procedures that reflect and promote systemic racism (Wilkerson, 2020).

The historical antecedents of the critical role Massachusetts played in the development of democracy in America are well-founded. But the reality is that, despite this, broad swaths of its population have not shared equally in the benefits of this democratic tradition. And the dividing line is fundamentally determined by the color of one's skin. The promise of voting rights, school integration, fair housing, equal application of justice, and other attributes of a democratic society have not kept pace with our country's highest aspirations. Even in an area such as the recruitment of Black players to Major League Baseball, Massachusetts has historically fallen short in commitment to the ideal of equality. Its notoriety, in this case, is that it was the last team to integrate and was openly known to forestall integration in this sport (Bryant, 2002).

The promise of democracy and the reality of systemic racism are antithetical. Yet, they have coexisted since before the founding of the country. Systemic racism is the reality that millions of the inhabitants of this country have faced for centuries. There is no way of morally justifying this continued state of affairs. Thus, the desire to address social justice in the United States is the most potent argument for redressing the impact of the forces of inequity and the desire to create genuine opportunities for empowerment and self-actualization. It is the cornerstone of the work the DHE has embarked upon for residents of color of the Commonwealth.

And yet, there is another reality we need to contend with as the Massachusetts population's diversity continues to change rapidly. I would argue that if Massachusetts does not actively seek to assist more residents in obtaining high-quality certificates and degrees, the Commonwealth's economic prospects will be derailed. Massachusetts employers have already been raising the alarm that shortages of highly trained employees are a reality.

For better or worse, Massachusetts is not blessed with a significant agricultural sector or extractive resource-based industries. Perhaps fisheries provide a counterexample, but the fishing industry is experiencing significant challenges as traditional hunting grounds move in response to climate change and the need to move farther out to retain their catch. The industries in which Massachusetts excels and has a comparative advantage are biotechnology, maritime trade, engineering, information technology, finance, tourism and higher education (Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, 2010). What characterizes these industries is that they are knowledge-intensive and require a highly credentialed labor force. In an earlier document, the situation is summed up as follows:

The economic necessity to recruit a highly skilled labor force for the innovation economy, such as that of Massachusetts, requires a greater number of higher education degree holders than we currently have. This goal is exacerbated by the declining numbers of high school to college-going students in the northeast and the significant increase in retiring baby boomers (Santiago, 2019).

Meeting the human capital needs of Massachusetts' knowledge-based economy has become more challenging as population growth has declined throughout New England. While high school graduation rates in Massachusetts have climbed, the overall numbers of potential high school to college students have declined. The only significant growth has occurred among communities of color, mainly in our gateway cities. In particular, the Latinx population's growth has surpassed that of all other ethnic and racial groups in Massachusetts (Pew Foundation, 2014).

Numerous Massachusetts residents leave the state for an educational experience. Still, Massachusetts is a net recipient of non-residents seeking study, given its many higher education institutions. The major difference between out-of-state and in-state students is that the former, by and large, leave the state after graduation, and the latter do not. Ninety-five percent of Massachusetts resident public college students stay within the state after graduation. This degree of residential stability is an essential consideration as we ponder Massachusetts's knowledge-based economy's long-term viability.

As early as 2014, a report by MassInc/University of Massachusetts Donohue Institute highlighted the challenge that Massachusetts faces in meeting the needs of its economy in the coming years:

Massachusetts saw enormous gains in the share of residents with college degrees over the last two decades. From the life sciences and defense sectors to software and renewable energy, the leading industries in Massachusetts, in a self-reinforcing cycle, both fed off and helped generate the Commonwealth's unique concentration of raw human talent. With employers now heavily dependent on an increasing volume of skilled workers flowing from the pipeline, a slow-growing and aging population raise serious questions about the state's ability to keep the labor force on pace with future economic development (Melnik, Koshgarian, Hodge, Wong & Wallace, 2014).

There is little doubt that increasing the educational attainment of the Massachusetts population segments that are growing (racially minoritized populations) is a critical strategy for achieving social justice and empowerment, and economic viability in the long run.

The previous report also concluded that focusing on improving the educational outcomes of minoritized students could go a long way in mitigating the effects of a shortage of highly qualified workers. While the numbers will not result in closing the worker shortage gap entirely,

they would significantly reduce the gap. Again, the Apex report argues convincingly that:

Eliminating large racial and ethnic college completion disparities would have a significant impact on the growth trajectory of the state's population with college degrees. Likewise, bringing college completion rates for students in Gateway Cities up to those for students raised in other Massachusetts communities would make a real difference. While this may seem like a tall task, it is important to keep in mind that recent attempts to reduce achievement gaps by dramatically overhauling education are relatively new compared to the historical factors that have produced these large disparities. (Melnik, Koshgarian, Hodge, Wong & Wallace, 2014, p. 24).

The last sentence is particularly compelling as it will require a reconceptualization of education, notably higher education, to achieve long-overdue results.

CATALYZING RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE: THE EQUITY AGENDA

For this moment in time, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's Equity Agenda, and all that it encompasses, is justified in terms of two needs. First, the need to address centuries of racial injustice in this country in the form of social justice, and secondly, the need to grow the knowledge-based economy. While both are important, it is crucial to state that each does not carry the same weight. The former, social justice, stands on its own and goes to the very heart of our democratic beliefs and values. The latter reflects changes in population growth and composition, which ebbs and flows over time. The economic imperative, however, does not stand on its own. It requires a commitment to social justice if it is to succeed.

The four goals of the Equity Agenda are quite expansive. They require significant change in a relatively short period of time. The first overarching goal is for 60% of working-age Massachusetts residents ages 25-64 to hold an associate degree or higher and an additional 10% of the population to hold a high-quality credential by 2030.

The second goal is for 43% of African American and 32% of Latinx Massachusetts residents ages 25-64 to hold an associate degree or higher by 2024. Thirdly, by 2030, the rate at which the Massachusetts public higher education system graduates African American and Latinx students will increase to 51% and 50% respectively, outpacing the current rate of increase by 10%. And the final goal requires that the DHE will track and report on racial disparities in first-year success metrics incorporated into the Performance Measurement Review System (PMRS) including completion of college-level math and English in the first year, on-time credit accumulation, and persistence to a second year of postsecondary education.

What steps are necessary to bring more Students of Color into the college-student pipeline in Massachusetts and ensure their retention and, ultimately, graduation with a high-quality credential? In essence, the question asks what the key elements of a non-racist agenda for higher education are.

In leading efforts to address racial inequities in Massachusetts public higher education, the DHE must model all institutions' behaviors through our convenings, policy recommendations and funding priorities. As outlined in the Massachusetts Department of Education's Equity Agenda documents and presentations, ultimately, we will know the degree of success we have achieved when we move closer to our overarching goal of ensuring that race no longer determines one's educational outcomes. To do so requires an anti-racist approach that must necessarily be embedded systemwide and permeate the department's structure, culture and policies. Asset-based language is necessary to minimize the threat of harm, deficit and stereotype reinforcement on students. We seek to define people by their aspirations and contributions rather than the systemic barriers and challenges they face. An anti-racist approach also requires acknowledgment, remedy and repair of policies and practices that have excluded or created barriers. This work is at the heart of the Equity Agenda.

Additionally, it is necessary to recognize that clarity in language, goals and measures is vital to racially equitable

practices. This requirement enables institutions to promote culturally sustainable campus climates in which all students can thrive and are regarded in the totality of their human dignity. “Culturally sustainable” means recognizing, maintaining and developing cultural identity and diversity, as they are assets, not weaknesses (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012). Likewise, encouraging the support and participation of relevant stakeholders is essential in cultivating an inclusive environment. Engaging People of Color in the pursuit of racial equity in meaningful ways requires acknowledging the experience and knowledge of Communities of Color. These efforts will result in the development and support of racially equity-minded, evidence-based solutions that benefit access, retention and successful graduation of racially minoritized students on public higher education campuses.

COLLABORATING FOR RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE

It falls to the campuses to implement these evidence-based, equity-minded solutions that redress the impacts of systemic racism and support the flourishing and success of students of color. The Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI) campuses are among those in the forefront of the work in the Commonwealth. The emerging practices shared through this handbook offer examples of how higher education professionals can interrogate their practices, centralize racial equity and close educational equity gaps.

The REJI is led by a dynamic team of leaders from public and private campuses. Two of these leaders are President Fred Clark from Bridgewater State University and former President Yves Salomon-Fernández of Greenfield Community College. Their leadership, and that of their peers across the state, is essential for Massachusetts to achieve the promise of the Equity Agenda. In what follows, President Clark and President Salomon-Fernández share about the campus communities they lead and how those campuses are working to advance racial equity and justice.

FREDERICK W. CLARK JR., PRESIDENT BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Educational equity is in the institutional DNA of Bridgewater State University (BSU). BSU, a four-year public comprehensive teaching university and the 10th largest institution of higher education in Massachusetts, was founded in 1840 by Horace Mann who famously said “education is the great equalizer, the balance wheel of the social machinery.” As one of the first normal schools in America, the premise that everyone deserves a safe, welcoming, quality education is one of the cornerstones BSU was built upon.

In 1869 Sarah A. Lewis became BSU’s first Black graduate – a year before Harvard University awarded its first undergraduate degree to a Black student (Massachusetts Hall of Black Achievement, 2008). Her memory inspires the BSU community daily as the center dedicated to the success of Black, Asian, Latinx, Indigenous and other students of color, the Lewis and Gaines Center for Inclusion and Equity (LGCIE), carries her name.

In the last three decades, Bridgewater State University has made significant progress for diversity and student success under the leadership of my two predecessors, President Emerita Adrian Tinsley and President Emeritus Dana Mohler-Faria. Their efforts resulted in BSU being named by The Education Trust as ninth in the nation among four-year public institutions for educational equity gaps (Eberle-Sudré, Welch & Nichols, 2015).

The campus’ values statement summarizes BSU’s long-standing institutional ethos, as well as the aspiration of the type of campus we want to exemplify: “In response to growing and widespread incivility, bigotry and hostility, we reaffirm the values of our community as a welcoming, compassionate, and intellectually rigorous learning, working and living environment. We reject all forms of bias, discrimination, xenophobia and violence. We re-commit ourselves to actions that put into practice our individual and institutional values of diversity, inclusion and equality for all.”

As shared in the Forward of this publication, in 2014, due to the leadership of Vice President of Student Success and Diversity Sabrina Gentlewarrior, Bridgewater State University launched the Leading for Change Diversity Consortium. In 2018, in order to emphasize the centrality and necessity of the work for racial educational equity, this vibrant group of campuses from across the region rebranded itself as the Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute.

PRIORITIZING STUDENT SUCCESS

“Supporting the success of every student, one student at a time” is the mission statement of my presidency and is deeply informed by BSU’s history as a catalyst for individual and cultural transformation through education. BSU’s institutional strategic plan (2018) prioritizes the success of all students and delineates our campus-wide aspiration to lead the nation in our institutional mission class for the elimination of educational equity gaps. It is understood and embraced by the campus that in order to reach this goal, every student must feel welcome, know that they matter, and believe that all members of the campus are committed to their success.

To ensure progress in this area, I established the Division of Student Success and Diversity in 2015 to support the educational equity work led by faculty/librarians, staff and administrators. Campus members collaborate in developing, implementing, assessing – and when effective – scaling equity-minded strategies intended to eliminate educational equity gaps. Actualizing tenets discussed in the *Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute Practitioner Handbook*, these strategies are informed by equity-minded data (Bensimon, 2016; Dowd, Witham, Hanson, Ching, Liera, Castro, 2018), build on the cultural wealth and assets of students, families, and communities of color (Bean-Folkes & Lewis Ellison, 2018; Harper, 2012; Yosso, 2005), and support the academic excellence of the students served (Bowman & Culver, 2018; Smith, 2020).

Four of these practices are featured in this handbook and are offered as exemplars of educational equity work at BSU. Moving from Who to What: First to

Second Semester Predictive Retention Model provides an overview of the campus’ equity-oriented data efforts. Supporting Racial Educational Equity Through A Summer Bridge Program introduces readers to BSU’s Summer Bears Program that offers curricular and co-curricular resources intended to support the success of all participants; students of color retain at especially high rates after program participation. The emerging practice titled Inclusive Honors Program Admissions demonstrates some of the equity-minded, nationally recognized work being done at BSU in our High Impact Practices. Finally, at the request of the ACLU of Massachusetts, BSU participated in a two-year process co-authoring the model Recommendations for Racially Just Policing, which are offered in this handbook’s final chapter. These practices and many others at BSU support the work for racial equity and justice. However, in the summer of 2020 we realized that BSU has not done nearly enough.

EXAMINING THE CAMPUS THROUGH THE LENS OF RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE

On June 3, 2020, in the wake of the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd, as well as an on-campus incident of racism, 25 Black, Asian, Latinx, Indigenous and other students and alumni of color and their white allies gathered on our campus quad. I immediately met with them and listened as they shared their pain – not only due to systemic racism in America -- but also at Bridgewater State University. I listened to their concerns – including experiences of implicit and explicit racial bias and quickly came to understand that Bridgewater State University had far more work to do to serve our students of color. As I wrote to the campus after these conversations “we can and will do better”.

On June 12, 2020, Bridgewater State University’s Special Presidential Task Force on Racial Justice was formed. This 70-member task force comprised of students, alumni, community members, faculty, staff and administrators engaged in in-depth equity-minded inquiry focused on “examining the elements of policy, practice and culture that are impeding racial equity at BSU, and to identify remedies and recommendations for corrective action” (Bridgewater State University Racial Justice Taskforce, 2021, p. i).

Malcom-Piqueux (2020) reminds us that “being equity focused means interrogating existing policies and practices to understand why they are not serving racially minoritized students well” (p. 16). Commissioner Santiago, who provides the vision, leadership, passion and support for the Commonwealth’s Equity Agenda aptly said in this chapter that “an anti-racist approach also requires acknowledgment, remedy and repair of policies and practices which have excluded or created barriers. This work is at the heart of the Equity Agenda.” As part of my task force charge, I asked that they examine every aspect of the university. Six sub-committees carried out this work as they examined the following at BSU: 1) curricular and co-curricular practices; 2) work force; 3) racial justice programming; 4) student services and organizational structures; 5) policing and safety practices; 6) and practices and resources for support after instances of bias.

The work was guided by the values of equity, honesty, truth, empathy, dignity and unity. Multiple members of the task force remarked that the process of equity-minded inquiry, while often difficult, resulted in a renewed sense of community and purpose as the group worked together to identify next steps the campus needs to embark upon in our efforts to centralize racial equity and justice at BSU. The RJTF’s intensive 10-month equity audit process, involving approximately 1,000 members of the BSU community, resulted in an extensive final report outlining their data-informed recommendations that will aid Bridgewater State University in our work to become an anti-racist university. At the writing of this chapter, the Racial Justice Task Force recommendations have been shared in multiple forums with students, trustees, alumni, faculty/librarians, staff and administrators. Intensive action planning is underway to immediately implement recommendations offered by the task force.

DEEPENING BSU’S RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE EFFORTS

Based on the task force report, explicit racism, while still evident on campus, does not appear to be the pervasive obstacle to racial equity and justice at BSU. Rather it is the practices of universalism and unexamined whiteness (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2017; Brown McNair,

Bensimon, & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020) that are the clearest obstacles to racial equity and justice. Despite the good work that has occurred, the focus on racial educational equity and justice at Bridgewater State University needs to move from dedicated and skillful individuals and centers of excellence to a coordinated campus-wide approach that integrates racial equity and justice into all aspects of our work. This will require BSU to create an approach that takes “advantage of relevant embedded activities and people who are passionate, that mobilizes others to join, and that builds an appropriate infrastructure so that the vision can be sustained” (Smith, 2020, p. 292).

The central mission of higher education is the academic enterprise and therefore much of the work for racial equity and justice in higher education must emanate from this sphere. To signal the importance of this effort and the centrality of the academic teaching and learning process to the work of racial equity and justice, BSU’s Provost Dr. Karim Ismaili is assuming the role of Executive Vice President in addition to his leadership of Academic Affairs. Executive Vice President and Provost Ismaili will coordinate institution-wide efforts as Bridgewater State University transitions from a campus that engages in racial equity and justice work to an anti-racist higher education leader.

The work ahead will require a campus-wide commitment that calls on the vision, skills and work of all at the university. In short, this will require a shared leadership model for equity (Kezar, Holcombe, Vigil & Dizon, 2021).

Shared leadership is defined as moving away from the leader/follower binary; capitalizing on the importance of leaders throughout the organization, not just those in positions of authority, and creating an infrastructure so that organizations can benefit from the leadership of multiple people. Shared approaches to leadership capitalize on the broader knowledge of the institution and foster learning needed to advance equity (Kezar, Holcombe, Vigil & Dizon, 2021, p. 3).

Core to this work will be centering the needs, experiences and assets of Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous and other students of color in our work (Kezar, Holcombe, Vigil

& Dizon, 2021; McNair, Albertine, Cooper, McDonald & Major, 2016; McNair, Bensimon, & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020) and measuring our progress by the extent to which the students of color attending BSU report that they know they are valued and they matter (Museus, 2010; Museus, Lám, Huang, Kem, & Tan, 2012; Nunn, 2021). BSU will also use equity in educational outcomes as a “primary measure of success” (Malcom-Piqueux, 2020, p. 17).

Once BSU sets a campus-wide intention, we demand much of ourselves on behalf of the students we serve. However, due to the history and dynamics of systemic racism, it will be important that we not only remain persistent (Kezar, 2008) but also remind ourselves that this work will take time (Suarez, 2018). As we advance our efforts, Bridgewater State University will hold itself accountable to the work ahead through multiple means including a Board of Trustee committee monitoring our progress, strategic priorities with clear metrics, and transparently sharing our progress on meeting these goals on the Racial Justice at Bridgewater State University website.

In the past year, members of BSU have spoken with gratitude of the courage demonstrated by the small group of students of color and their white allies that loved Bridgewater State University enough to demand that we do better. As stated in the Racial Justice Taskforce report:

“We thank our students and other members of our community who lifted their voices and shared their experiences and perspectives with honesty and candor. As we apply the lens of equity and inclusion to this work and to our campus community, we do so with a desire to strengthen the bonds between us and to create a stronger, more equitable living and learning community” (p. ii).

Bridgewater State University commits itself to the vision shared by Commissioner Santiago in this article when he wrote that our students should not only succeed, but also flourish and feel they “are regarded in the totality of their human dignity”. Only then will Bridgewater State University realize the “emancipatory vision of higher education as the great equalizer” (Pendakur, 2020, p. 88) offered by Horace Mann at our inception.

YVES SALOMON-FERNÁNDEZ, PRESIDENT GREENFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Greenfield Community College (GCC) is located in rural western Massachusetts and serves a student body that is more diverse than the population of Franklin county where the college is located. Nearly a quarter of our student population are students of color while only eight percent of the county represents people of color. Our student body is increasingly more representative of the racially plural country we are becoming. Our faculty and staff at GCC, much like most of the higher education sector, is mostly white (93 percent) and does not mirror the students we serve.

At GCC, we believe that higher education faces many challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. Among them is responding effectively to the changing faces, needs and responses to the assets that students bring that enrich learning, the classroom and our campuses broadly. As our country becomes more racially and ethnically plural, our curricula, pedagogies and services must respond to this change. We must also adapt to students’ and society’s rising consciousness around social and environmental justice issues. In addition, we must also find ways to support faculty and staff of color on our campuses whose experiences on our white-dominant campuses often differ from those of the majority. At the same time, we are challenged to help our white colleagues develop the level of cultural dexterity that can support student and employee success for all.

To better understand and serve our students, and centralize racial equity and justice in our work, we have undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at engaging faculty and staff in developing the cultural dexterity needed to serve students whose identities, heritages and lived experiences are different from theirs. In addition to initiatives, we have worked hard to ensure that our institutional documents are crafted with racial justice and equity in mind and that we are moving toward fostering a culture that promotes equity in opportunities and outcomes for all students.

RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE-ORIENTED INITIATIVES

GCC has been engaged in racial equity work for some time in an effort to support the success of our students of color. Two of these are featured in the handbook and are described below. More details are provided on both projects in the handbook.

The Seeds of Success Participatory Action Project focused on the experiences of students of color and other underserved students. Select faculty and staff involved in GCC's Racial Equity and Justice Institute team trained student researchers to conduct interviews of their peers and elicit from them their definition of success in their lives and how the college helps them with achieving success. It is worth noting that the small group chose to engage in a participatory action research project because this methodology allows for "acknowledging lived experiences, and contributing to social justice agendas to counter prevailing ideologies and power relations" (Reid & Frisby, 2008). The goal of this project was to listen to the voices of students of color and other minoritized student groups and learn about their individual and cultural assets and institutional resources leading to their success. By emphasizing these students' voices and lived experiences, the dominant deficit-based paradigm too often characterizing higher education was disrupted leading to a model at GCC based on the experiences of the students we serve.

Two cohorts of students participated over the course of two years. Students were able to hone their undergraduate research skills as one of the outcomes of this project. This initiative also sought to identify practices that were not conducive to student success based on students' perceptions. The interview data allowed for the collection of rich, insightful and nuanced data using a methodology that allowed us to glean more deeply into the student experience. Because of the asset-based approach, we were also able to focus not on the deficits with which students may enter the first two years of their undergraduate journey, but on the assets that they bring upon which we can build to ensure their success.

The qualitative data collected was then combined with quantitative data on student success to provide more comprehensive and complete insights on how well we are doing as a college. It is also worth noting that, during this time, the college engaged in developing a Student Success Plan whose members overlapped with the faculty and staff engaged in the asset-based participatory action research.

In addition to the research project, our REJI team led a book club that read Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. A group of 20 faculty and staff convened regularly to discuss reading the book. The chief purpose of this group was to increase the cultural capacity of faculty and staff in their everyday interactions with students and colleagues of color. With a racially mixed group of colleagues, participants were also able to share their experiences from their unique vantage points. Another objective was to encourage folks to think through and address their individual limitations while encouraging them to take initiative and responsibility for addressing the equity gaps that are within their locus of control. The discussions that emerged from the book club demonstrated how the group embraced a broad definition of diversity and fostered a deeper sense of community among participants

As a result of their participation in this group, many faculty requested their disaggregated student outcomes data from the Institutional Research office. With these brave faculty willing to confront outcomes in the classes that they taught, others that had not participated in the book club began requesting their own data organized by student groups. As acknowledged in the focused chapter of this handbook, participants were reflective about their own growth and experiences and were able to shift their thinking about race and racism. The evaluation data collected at the end showed that participants made progress on their journey in understanding race and their role in advancing or curtailing racism.

INSTITUTIONALIZING EQUITY

In 2019, GCC began the process of revising our mission, vision, purpose and core values statements as part of developing a new strategic plan. This process prominently

featured the student voice and resulted in us articulating a vision that squarely placed equity at the center. Going beyond achieving equity just on our campus, we adopted the following as our vision statement:

“GCC aspires to be an agent for a more equitable, just, vibrant, and resilient world through education.”

As a campus, it is important to us to prepare leaders and citizens who will themselves work for a world in which all can thrive, regardless of identities and lived experiences. Thus, equity in our vision refers not just to our espoused values in terms of how we teach, learn, and operate, but also in terms of the work and careers for which we are preparing students.

While we were working on developing our strategic plan over the course of two years, our Diversity Committee, a smaller committee, was working on developing a Diversity Equity, and Inclusion Plan (DEI Plan) for the college. Most of the members of that committee were also part of our campus’ REJI team. This allowed us to develop a DEI Plan that was aligned with the ideals, recommendations, desired outcomes and work of the larger REJI group. We identified three strategic priorities. Each strategic priority had an associated goal as outlined below.

Strategic Priority 1: Support Student Success

Goal 1: Create a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office and Budget

Goal 2: Achievement Gap Assessment Project

Goal 3: Institutional Support for the Inclusion and Diversity Center

Goal 4: Coordinated speaker/event series focused on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Goal 5: Racial Equity and Justice Team, Leading for Change Diversity Consortium

Strategic Priority 2: Diversify Faculty and Staff

Goal 1: Revision of Hiring Guidelines/Practices

Strategic Priority 3: Increase Cultural Dexterity

Goal 1: Develop a Diversity Requirement for the Liberal Arts General Degree

Goal 2: Supporting the LGBTQ+ community

Goal 3: Supporting Latinx Populations

Goal 4: Supporting People of Color at GCC

Goal 5: Supporting Immigrant Populations

Goal 6: Facilitated Dialogues and Dialogue Outcome Activities

Goal 7: Action Research Focused on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Goal 8: Eating With Our Neighbors

Goal 9: Social Justice Reading Group

Goal 10: Summer Institute for Social Equity Scholars

In addition to adopting these goals, the plan also included a budget to support implementation of the goals. The college immediately began funding what was financially feasible in year one of the plan with the intent of including the other areas in subsequent years. Development of our strategic plan continued alongside implementation of the DEI Plan. GCC’s recently approved strategic plan makes it abundantly clear that we seek to achieve equity in the opportunities available to students and our outcomes as they relate to student achievement. Our plan includes four goals with the first being focused on student success as shown below.

Equity is also a running theme of the Institutional Strategic Plan with its emphasis on meeting the needs of the region’s minoritized students through equity-oriented data, equitable student service provision practices, and academic offerings that build on the assets of the students we serve in order to fill the workforce needs of our region. Excerpts of this plan are shared with readers below.

ENSURE EQUITY IN ACCESS AND SUCCESS AS A STUDENT-READY COLLEGE

GCC will open doors to success by increasing access and enrollment for students of color, adult, economically disadvantaged and other historically underserved populations. The college will confront its equity gaps by developing an integrated approach to academic and support services that promotes student well-being and attainment through an equity lens. Objectives for this goal are:

- A. Meet the Needs of All Students as a Student-Ready College
- B. Increase ACCESS for Students of Color and Underserved Populations
- C. Increase SUCCESS for Students of Color and Underserved Populations

INTEGRATING EQUITY INTO INSTITUTIONAL AND PERSONAL PRACTICES

As readers of GCC's strategic plan will note rather than being simply a set of practices that are engaged in by some, the result of GCC's DEI and strategic plans will be that equity mindedness will be the standard guiding us in all that we do. Nothing less will result in campuses meeting the opportunity set forth in the Equity Agenda.

At GCC, our approach to equity has focused on institutionalizing equity, strengthening the level of cultural dexterity among our faculty and staff, incorporating students' voices and active participation, and integrating qualitative and quantitative data to allow us to disaggregate data and access rich and nuanced information. By institutionalizing equity and adopting plans developed by members who are both within and outside of our REJI group, we have been able to facilitate learning among members who have not participated in the multi-state initiative even when time does not allow for their inclusion. Our strategic plans also allowed for the creation of a mechanism through which we can hold ourselves accountable for implementing and achieving the goals that we set for ourselves as an institution.

As we address educational inequities both on our campus and more broadly in society, it is important that we examine the ways that we internalize unequal practices and perpetuate them. On our campus, we believe that we can do that by beginning to reflect on our identities and the privilege therein and acknowledging the assets that others, including our students bring. If our goal is to become an anti-racist campus, we must begin by working on ourselves. Thus, developing the cultural dexterity to better serve students and work alongside colleagues who

may be different from us was where we began at GCC. By centering students in an age where the demographics are changing, we can begin to adopt curricula and pedagogical approaches that acknowledge and validates all students and the contributions of diverse scholars and practitioners in ways that allow students to envision their future selves and contribute toward a more just and equitable society. The Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute has supported GCC's REJI team in working at the intersection of these opportunities and challenges.

CONCLUSION

A primary focus of this chapter is underscoring the necessity of statewide and institutional leaders prioritizing racial equity and justice in higher education, setting the agenda, providing resources, and holding others accountable for progress toward goals intended to help ensure parity in educational outcomes. Our colleagues who serve with us then work within these often expansive and aspirational parameters to identify strategies and implement them in an effort to help higher education at long last fulfill our joint mission to educate and elevate all in this country by eliminating racial educational equity gaps.

What follows in this handbook are 25 chapters outlining strategies that equity-minded faculty, staff and administrators from a range of REJI institutions have created in order to close racial educational equity gaps and increase racial equity and justice. Some of these practices may be able to be directly applied to your campus setting. Others will need to be adapted to meet your institution's needs. All of the practices, however, illustrate that the work for racial educational equity and justice is necessary and possible.

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RACIAL EQUITY PROGRAMMING



RACIAL EQUITY PROGRAMMING

Higher education professionals enter the field out of the desire to serve students, but many completed professional studies at institutions informed by universalism and whiteness (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2017; Joseph, Janes, Badwall & Almeida, 2020; Winnings, 2019). In addition, most individuals employed in academia do not yet have all the needed self-awareness, knowledge or competencies to centralize racial equity in their work. We are reminded that doing so “does not come naturally. It requires a knowledge base and a lot of practice” (McNair, Bensimon, Malcom-Piquex, 2020, p. 108) that must be ongoing in our personal and professional lives (Radford, 2008).

Throughout the *Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute Practitioner Handbook* readers will find emerging practices intended to aid in dismantling racism at the institutional level. This section of the handbook shares three emerging practices that emphasize individual-level change and the importance of personal growth and support in order to advance racial educational equity.

EMERGING PRACTICES

“Ram Inclusion Week” at Suffolk University was designed to deepen the campus’ knowledge of and commitment to that campus’ work for diversity, equity and inclusion. In order to educate the campus about and encourage additional participation in the campus’ equity efforts, members of Suffolk’s Racial Equity and Justice team launched the week’s activities by sharing racial equity goals focused on equity-minded data use, professional development, and curriculum enhancements. The week also included events intended to deepen the sense of welcome and community for minoritized members of the campus and offered majoritized members an opportunity to reflect and learn so they can take action (McNair, 2020; Patten and Haynes, 2020; Pedersen, Walker & Wise, 2005; Radford, 2018). In the wake of on-campus racism targeting members of the Asian and Pacific Islander Community, the Ram Inclusion week’s activities also became a way to signal allyship and support for the campus’ AAPI

community. The importance of programming to support the sense of mattering and belonging of minoritized students is underscored by this emerging practice.

Disrupting whiteness in higher education is essential in order to advance racial educational equity. Predominantly white campuses are often characterized by practices that obscure or deny the realities of racism and its impacts on people of color at our institutions (Edwards, 2006; Joseph, Janes, Badwall & Almeida, 2020; Patten & Hayes, 2020; Winnings, 2019). This work necessitates that white people examine the ways their lives are advantaged and engage in efforts to disrupt racism individually, interpersonally and systematically (Waters, 2010; Winnings, 2019). Members of Greenfield Community College, a campus where 93% of its faculty and staff are white, engaged in “The White Fragility Book Group” (Diangelo, 2018) in order to support not only the self-awareness of the participants but also as a strategy to advance educational equity work. Program evaluation underscored the ways intentional conversations focused on racial justice and equity can deepen individuals’ awareness and abilities.

Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous and other people of color working in higher education experience many of the same forms of implicit and explicit racism experienced by students of color ranging from unexamined whiteness to overt racialized hostility (Dade, Tartakov, Hargrave & Leigh, 2015; Louis, Rawls, Jackson-Smith, Chambers, Phillips & Louis, 2016; Patton & Haynes, 2020). In order to support faculty, staff and administrators of color, affinity or employee resource groups can provide safe spaces for support, networking and community building (Frey, 2020). The groups can also offer a network that – if suggested by its members – can be a source of expertise and wisdom in support of the campus’ goals for racial equity (Bethea, 2020; Smith, 2020). Salem State University’s “Employee Resource Groups” offers a model that provides vitally important support for minoritized employees. The group members also partner with racially minoritized students in order to invest in their success and deepen students’ sense of welcome on campus.

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RAM INCLUSION WEEK

SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

BY CAMERON BREITHER, ALINA CHOO & BEATRIZ PATIÑO

Keywords: Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Programming, Professional Advancement

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Ram Inclusion Week initiative intentionally aligns with Suffolk University’s mission of “education, inclusion and engagement to change lives and positively impact communities.” With a widely diverse student population, the university holds itself responsible and accountable to provide opportunities to incorporate diversity and inclusion across campus to ensure that students gain an appreciation for differences, become informed members of the community and be civically active and engaged.

Demographic enrollment data for FY20 indicates that Black, Brown and other students of color make up 26.7% of the student population, with the largest populations being Hispanic (11.61%), Asian (6.87%), and Black/African American (5.83%). White students comprised 51.5% of the student body, international students were 18.2% of the population, while 3.5% of the population’s race and ethnicity is unknown (Institutional Research, Suffolk University, 2020).

A retention gap exists at Suffolk University with Black, Brown and other students of color being retained at rate of 74% compared to their white student counterparts at 79%. Although the percentage points between the two groups related to retention are fairly close, it is important that the university strive for no difference in retention rates among all student groups. Additionally, it is understood that retention does not equate to satisfaction or belongingness for students of color attending the university.

Another important group to note is our first-generation population. The Suffolk student population is comprised of 37% first-generation students, of which 41.69% are white, 20.90% are Hispanic, 12.42% are Asian, and 7.13% are Black/African American. (These numbers are pulled from the common application using the following definition: A first-generation college student is defined as a student


whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have not completed a bachelor’s degree.) This definition does not account for associate degrees, siblings and/or close relatives who have received degrees, nor degrees acquired outside the country. However, regardless of the varying definitions used to identify first-generation students, what is most important is that first-generation students are acknowledged and served. As stated by Ward, Siegel, & Davenport (2012), “the inconsistency [in definitions] matters much less than whether or not a given institution responsibly addresses the needs of its first-generation students, however that institution defines them.”

PROGRAMMING FOR DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Co-curricular diversity, inclusion, and equity programming and activities that offer diverse opportunities for interaction have a substantive impact on students (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003; Zúñiga, Williams, & Berger, 2005). In an effort to support the Suffolk 2025 Strategic Plan related to diversity and inclusion, and offer participants skill-building opportunities and knowledge about diversity, equity and inclusion through intentional programming and dialogue, a week of intentional programming was created encompassing both formal interaction between peers as well as structured and unstructured discussions on race, equity and inclusion. This effort has been named Ram Inclusion Week.

From November 2019 through February 2020, a committee of interdivisional staff and student affinity group leaders met to plan Suffolk’s inaugural Ram Inclusion Week. This planning culminated in a week of inclusive and intentional equity-oriented programming in February 2020 -- purposefully scheduled to align with Black history month. An overview of the week’s events is provided, but additional information on key events follows on the poster on the next page.

**Suffolk University's INAUGURAL
Ram Inclusion Week
Spring 2020**



MON Feb. 3

RACIAL EQUITY & JUSTICE COMMITTEE PRESENTATION
Campus team members from the Racial Equity and Justice Institute/ Leading for Change Diversity Consortium will provide an overview of initiatives to deepen Suffolk's institutional infrastructure. Opening remarks by President Kelly.
10:00 - 11:00AM | Location: Sargent, 5th Floor Blue Sky Lounge
Audience: Faculty & Staff

CULTURAL CUISINE NIGHT
Join us at the Ram Inclusion Week kickoff dinner! Taste cultural cuisine and participate in conversations with Suffolk's student affinity organizations.
5:00-7:00PM | Sargent Hall, 5th Floor Blue Sky Lounge | Audience: Students, Faculty & Staff

TUES Feb. 4

RECRUITMENT FAIR FOR EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS
Affinity@Suffolk comprises the Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) who strengthen our community experience by supporting the development and retention of our diverse workforce, celebrating cultural awareness, and allowing for authentic engagement across campus. Meet ERG members and leaders, enjoy treats and enter a raffle to win Suffolk swag.
12:00 - 2:00PM | Location: Sawyer, Stoll Room 410 | Audience: Faculty & Staff

BLACK HISTORY MONTH KICK-OFF
A Seat at the Table: A Discussion about Black Radical Activism and Organizing of Yesterday and Today
12:15 - 1:30PM | Location: Sawyer 429 | Audience: Students, Faculty & Staff

TEACHING TUESDAY: INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENTS USING UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING
A flexible learning environment offers options for diverse learners while drawing on the science of learning. Rather than limiting our assignments to one-size-fits-all, we can offer multiple ways for students to represent their learning.
12:30 - 1:00PM | Location: Zoom | Audience: Faculty | REGISTRATION REQUIRED

WED Feb. 5

INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE: PANEL AND NETWORKING NIGHT
Students are invited to hear from professionals about inclusion and diversity in the workplace and how to network effectively. After the panel, students can build their networking skills while connecting with alumni.
5:00 - 7:00PM | Sargent Hall, 5th Floor Commons & Blue Sky Lounge | Audience: Students, Faculty & Staff
REGISTRATION REQUIRED

THURS Feb. 6

LEARNING INNOVATION WITH TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOP: MAKING ONLINE CONTENT MORE ACCESSIBLE WITH ALLY SOFTWARE
Improve your students' learning using Blackboard Ally to provide online course materials accessible for all.
12:15 - 1:30PM | Stahl Building (73 Tremont), TLC/1277 | Audience: Faculty | REGISTRATION REQUIRED

PERFORMANCE BY ZUZU ACROBATS, INC.
Zuzu African Acrobats are from Mombassa, Kenya. Come see acrobatics and traditional African dance set to live and taped African music.
6:30 - 8:00PM | Samia Academic Center, Smith Café | Audience: Students, Faculty & Staff


FRI Feb. 7

SOCIAL JUSTICE SUMMIT
This year's theme is "Rallies and Rights: The Political is Personal." Concurrent sessions focus on providing awareness and education for the campus community on issues of social justice and inequality.
9:00AM - 5:00PM | Sargent Hall, 3rd & 5th floors | Audience: Students, Faculty & Staff | REGISTRATION REQUIRED

TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY FRIDAY: USING INCLUSIVE CONTENT VIA ALLY SOFTWARE
Explore creating inclusive online course materials for everyone using Blackboard Ally.
12:30 - 1:00PM | Location: Zoom | Audience: Faculty | REGISTRATION REQUIRED

POETRY SLAM
Celebrate Black History Month with Suffolk Law's Black Law Students Association's annual poetry slam. This event will feature good food, music, positive vibes, and a lineup of awesome spoken word artists.
6:00 - 9:00PM | Sargent Hall, 1st Floor Function Room | Audience: Students, Faculty & Staff

For more information and to register for specific events, visit www.suffolk.edu/diversity



The Racial Equity & Justice Institute Committee Presentation: This event served as the kickoff for Ram Inclusion Week. The university president gave opening remarks, highlighting the importance of equity and diversity work at Suffolk University. This was followed by a presentation from the campus team members of the Racial Equity and Justice Institute/Leading for Change Consortium. The committee provided an overview of

the five actionable items designed to deepen institutional infrastructure around DEI. These five actionable items include (1) Ram Inclusion Week, (2) Data Collection and Focus Groups, (3) Professional Learning (Ambassador for Inclusion Badge Program), (4) Curriculum Enhancements, and (5) Outreach Programs (Inclusive Writing Dual Enrollment Program and the Progress to Success Extended Orientation Program).

Cultural Cuisine Night: The program description provided was written by Jessica Lorenzana, class of 2020, a Diversity Peer Educator & the co-chair of the Diversity & Inclusion Council, which is made up of various cultural and affinity student groups. “The vision I had in mind for this event was to revitalize the mission of Unity week, a previously held tradition at Suffolk that brought the culture of students to the forefront of our community. When I think of the culture of Suffolk University, what first comes to mind is the affinity groups our students run. These groups work throughout the year to bring together those of a similar background and educate others who are willing to listen and participate. Not only that, but these clubs help create connections and long-lasting friendships. Knowing this, I wanted to create an event that showcases the importance of these clubs while also showing gratitude for what they have done for Suffolk University. Cultural Cuisine was a group effort, in collaboration with the presidents and executive boards of the Black Student Union, Asian American Association, Caribbean Student Network, Latinx, and Queer Student Union. . . . Aside from the structure of the event, the goal of Cultural Cuisine Night was not to just have a room full of diverse students, it was to spark conversations among groups that normally do not have a chance to talk with one another. While Suffolk claims to be a diverse and inclusive school, there are still many divisions between students and even staff. Those who were a part of Cultural Cuisine Night wanted to work towards tearing down these barriers. This event held even more significance as we neared Ram Inclusion Week. Tensions on campus were rising due to racist posts and dialogue against the Asian American & Pacific Islanders (AAPI) community, specifically coming from one of the student organizations on campus. Therefore, it was important to show that when one group of students is being targeted, all of our community will stand up against this type of behavior.”

The importance of allyship was emphasized in Jessica's opening remarks at the beginning of the Cultural Cuisine event. “Tonight is a night to celebrate and build community. Our communities are in a time of crisis where bullies target the identities that we hold dear. Identities that some would label as marginalized and weak are actually the pillars of our campus. Moreover, those who should be protecting us are not always there for all of us. This is why we hold events like this so that we can come together and support

one another. Alone we may feel powerless and obligated to submit to the norms and systems set in place that hold us back. But together, we can build power and community, and raise our voices so loud so those in power have no choice but to listen. We cannot be silenced.”

Social Justice Summit: The Ram Inclusion Week culminated in the 13th annual Social Justice Summit (SJS) at Suffolk University. The SJS works through education and deliberate dialogue to empower attendees to disrupt oppression in our society and assist them in creating affirming environments on and off their college campuses. This year's SJS theme was Rallies and Rights: The Political is Personal, which addressed the connections between personal identity and political identity through discussions on student organizing, Marxism, Black resistance, immigration, freedom of religion, mental health and personal growth. To achieve this, SJS offered a variety of workshops and presentation sessions led by Suffolk community members as well as a keynote speaker that addressed the summit's theme. In addition intentional opportunities for social community building and networking for attendees were offered.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Ram Inclusion Week proved to be a successful collaboration among multiple campus partners. It was refreshing to see the campus community come together to organize events in order to celebrate our diversity and educate one another. Based on the reported attendance from event organizers, there were between 350–400 attendees over the course of the week. The three planning committee chairs sent out a post survey to all the event organizers to determine if promotional efforts were sufficient and if program goals were met. The responses were overwhelmingly positive indicating that the variety of cross-campus marketing (print materials – posters/flyers, digital ads, and social media) was effective is getting the word out and highlighting our efforts. Overall, organizers felt that goals for both individual events and overarching Ram Inclusion Week goals were met – creating awareness, fostering dialogue, educating and engaging the community, bringing groups together, and celebrating our diversity.

All guests filled out the postcards prepared for Ram Inclusion Week with words of encouragement and comfort for those struggling during such a divisive time in the Suffolk community. The cards had the question: What does Inclusion mean to YOU? The postcards were made available at every event during Ram Inclusion Week. Examples of community members' comments are below:

That I belong in this place, with these people -- they know ME & Welcome ME.

Inclusion is not just representing a diverse range of people but listening to their ideas and allowing them to participate actively.

Intentional efforts to provide and highlight utilization of resources and experiences for ALL to succeed.

We feel connected to our colleagues and feel free to share our whole selves with one another.

"Am I welcomed here?" is answered with an unwavering, "Heck YES!"

Teaching materials that provide examples of all races, genders, cultures, etc.!

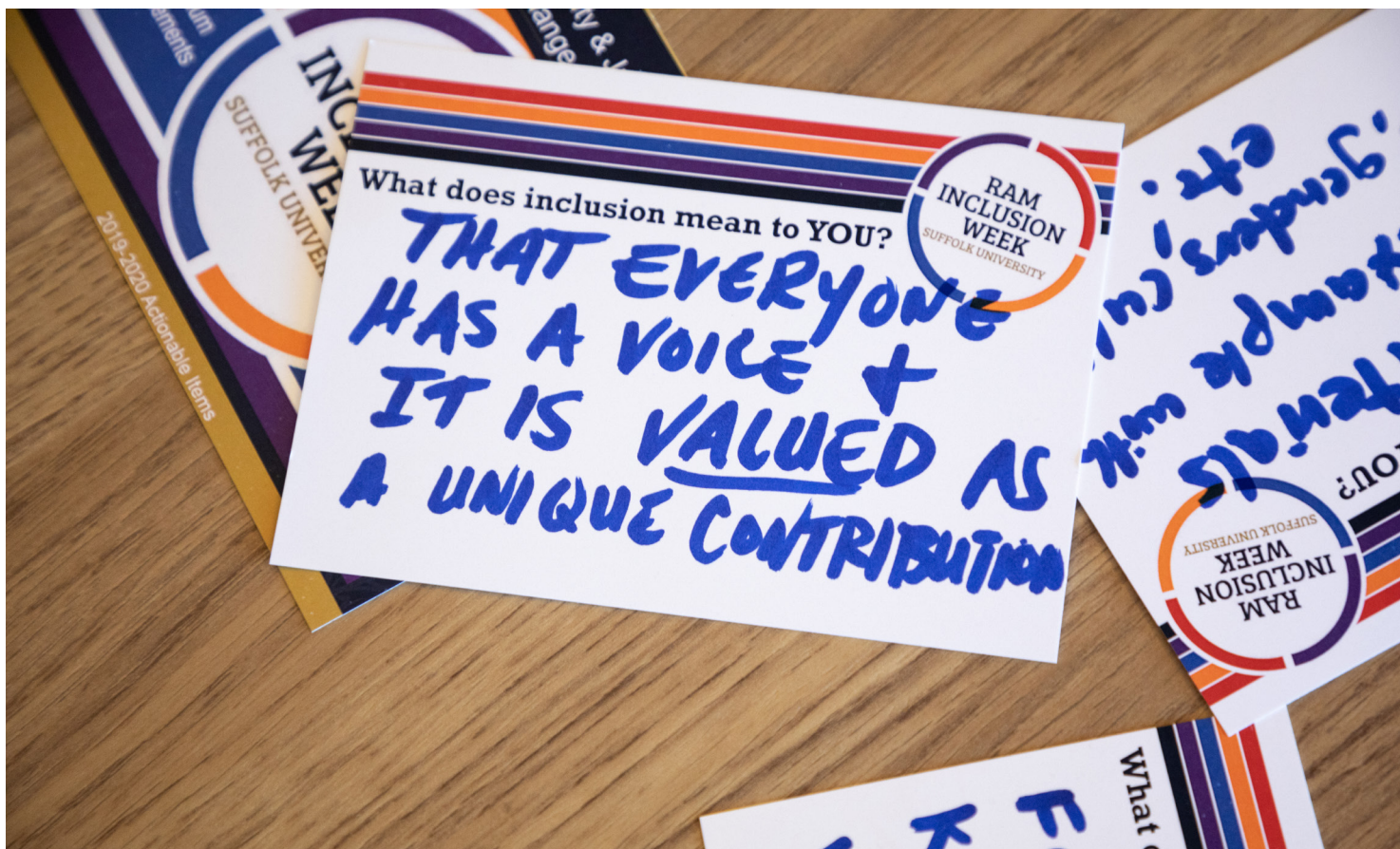
That everyone has a voice and it is valued as a unique contribution

POWER

Uplifting and empowering others through purposeful representation, advocacy and justice!!! And, distributing your power and privilege.

Friendship

No judgment



LESSONS LEARNED

Involve senior leadership: It was very helpful to have the president open the kick-off event of Ram Inclusion Week. Her endorsement set the stage for the week and brought credibility and a sense of importance to the work around DEI. It is recommended that campuses considering this type of programming enlist the support of senior leaders as well as faculty in both the planning and the programming.

Utilize program assessment to determine effectiveness: Only two of the individual events during Ram Inclusion Week conducted an assessment of their program. Moving forward, it would be important to have all organizers conduct a post-event survey and include a few common questions in each of the individual assessments. It will be helpful to include reflective questions, in which participants provide short narratives about their experience. Additionally, we might consider having a comprehensive post assessment for those participants that attend at least two events during the week.

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THE WHITE FRAGILITY BOOK GROUP

GREENFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE BY LINDA MCCARTHY & LEO HWANG

Keywords: Book Group, White Fragility, Professional Development

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Greenfield Community College's (GCC) faculty and staff are predominantly white (93%) and though most espouse progressive politics and have the best of intentions, conversations on campus focused on race or racism are still difficult. In an attempt to address this challenge, we created a book group based on Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. The sessions were scheduled over four weeks and were organized by general chapter topics: Talking About Racism, How Race Shapes our Lives, White Fragility in Action and Next Steps. While the program did not have funding to purchase enough books for the whole campus, the program was able to work with a small group as a pilot program.

All students on campus benefit from white faculty and staff becoming more aware of their white privilege and the impact of white fragility. Ideally, this awareness translates to improved relationships with students of color and to more directly addressing racial dynamics on campus. Faculty who are more aware of their white privilege can better monitor how this plays out in their classrooms and can incorporate this awareness into their own curricula.

The primary goal of the White Fragility book group was to increase cultural dexterity for faculty and staff in their interactions with students and peers of color. A secondary goal was to prompt participants to take initiative and responsibility for addressing racial equity educational gaps and to encourage them to think about their next steps.

PILOTING THE DIALOGUE SESSIONS

After a campus-wide invitation, 28 people self-identified as wishing to participate in some form. The program was able to purchase books for all participants. Because of scheduling conflicts, roughly 20 people participated in each session. The sessions were co-facilitated by a white woman and an Asian man. All the participants were white except for one Latinx participant. Prior to the group starting, the

Asian man had a conversation with the Latinx participant to discuss how to be helpful to one another with various needs that might arise and what kinds of support might be necessary. Additionally, he checked in with this participant on a regular basis.

The co-facilitators met for about four hours over a series of meetings to develop a general arc to the reading group and met for about an hour after each session to review feedback and revise plans for the next session. Please see the end of this emerging practice for an overview of the book discussion format and exercises.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Six months after the book group meetings, the co-facilitators held a one-hour focus group where book group participants shared their perspectives on the impact of the experience. Due to the timing of the focus group, many staff members were too busy with enrollment and admissions processes to attend, but they indicated their desire to attend a future focus group. The following questions were presented for discussion:

- 1) Describe the impact that participating in the group had on your thinking about race and racism?
 - a. Of the conversations and the activities, what had the most impact on you?
 - b. Did you notice anything different on campus after participating in this book group?
- 2) Did the experience of being in the group impact any future interactions you had with faculty, staff or students? Can you get specific?
- 3) Six months later, what still sticks with you about the experience of learning about race and white fragility with your colleagues?

4) If you were to recommend this book group to a colleague, how would you describe it? What might you say to get them to attend?

- a. What advice would you give to other campuses wanting to try out this emerging practice?

Although only six participants from the book group were able to attend the focus group, important feedback was garnered on the effectiveness and impact of the experience, both individually and professionally. Participants commented on their own growth and reflection, on the impact in their personal lives, and on how the experience shifted their feelings about their colleagues, their work and the campus. The data indicate that the book group was effective for both paradigm shifts and skill building, and for both short term and long term thinking about race and racism. And, while participants learned a lot, they also acknowledged how much more there is to learn.

In terms of the individual impact, some participants spoke to the shift in their own understanding of racism and white supremacy, and of the work they must continue to do. One said, “I own my own racism more wholly,” by which she meant that she became more aware of her responses to race, instead of reacting or acting unconsciously. Indeed, several spoke to their participation in the group helping to make “the unconscious conscious,” including “ingrained attitudes and unconscious fears,” “behaviors and words, and how we use language.” One person said, “I didn’t think I had a tad of racism in me, and I kind of prided myself on that, and this book group was life-changing for me.” To see such transformative change instigated by participation in a book group is very exciting.

Reading this book together really shifted people’s perspectives. For example, one person said, “I have a whole new set of lenses to look at how I was taught growing up . . . and through which to see the world.” People’s understanding of current events also shifted. One person said, “I had a different reaction to the Black Lives Matter news this summer than I would have before.”

One person said that the recognition that there’s “a critical mass [of people at GCC] that does want to work on this” and understands that race is a critical issue “gives me more courage to take next steps and take risks.” Rather than

knowing there are just a handful of colleagues we can talk to about these issues, the recognition of this critical mass is “energizing and empowering.” The simple recognition that “there are many people on campus who do care” was inspiring to many. It also made people feel “safer” that they could trust colleagues to approach them if there was an incident, without it being a negative experience. This disruption of white solidarity was notable, and it made the thought of approaching others (about their actions or statements) feel less risky and more productive and useful. Rather than being reactive, participants felt that members of the campus can now be proactive and talk about these issues outside of a specific incident. Additionally, the book group demonstrated that “we are all a community of learners” who can support one another. Even those who have been working on their own racism for many years (and who recognize that this work is lifelong) described being impacted by the group experience. One said, “When we’re starting from not reacting to an incident but having the kind of experience as in the book group, we are all able to see each other as learners, I hope.” Another said, “It [the book group] wasn’t a reaction to something. It feels good to know it’s grounded in who we are as an institution, but [that] these discussions have been going on for a long time.”

In terms of application, some made the connection between their own learning in this book group with colleagues, to what they do in the classroom. As someone who had already diversified their curriculum, one person now wondered about the kinds of conversations they could have about those diverse readings, and how those conversations could be facilitated differently. Another said it prompted her to look for additional specific readings for her curriculum, and to think more about how to facilitate these kinds of conversations in online environments.

Knowing that others on campus had also been through this experience increased a sense of cohesion and trust among members of the group, and that feeling continued well after the book group was over. Many said they felt better able to challenge others and be challenged themselves, when addressing racialized situations. There was evidence of growth and understanding that we are all works in progress, and that difficult conversations about race indicate deeper relationships, rather than conflict. One person said that

they feel they are better able to listen to others, and, in fact, better able to recognize the value of listening, because of our conversations. This same person said she has learned the significance of de-centering herself in conversations. One spoke specifically to being less defensive when confronted by others about her interaction with a person of color. This recognition of the difference between intention vs. impact indicates important growth.

In terms of the campus impact, participants named they felt more confident that they now had colleagues that would address race, rather than turn away from it, in interactions with students and colleagues. Simply knowing that 20 people were willing to come together to discuss this book provided hope for some. Overall, both the process of the book group, and the content of the book were impactful in small and more meaningful ways.

NEXT STEPS

From the feedback, evaluations and data collected, participants showed great enthusiasm for continuing their own learning and for continuing collaborative projects on campus. This enthusiasm was demonstrated in real time by the participants' request for an additional (fifth) optional meeting, where the focus centered on next steps on campus. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 virus prevented any further work after initial sessions ended.

Focus group participants uniformly named the team building and trust building activities as crucial to their ability to learn and grow. Through the interactions with others, some participants felt they became more aware of how much they need to learn. They found great value in being able to learn in an environment of unconditional acceptance, because "that's how I grow." A balance of content and process is fundamental in doing this work, as are intentional prompts and modeling by the facilitators. Effective facilitation and leadership were also named as crucial to the success of such a group, as was having the meetings spread out over a period of weeks, so people could really take in the information.

The enthusiasm for continuing this kind of work was evidenced in the participants' suggestions of other materials, including books, articles and podcasts for future book groups. They also felt it would be useful for other cohorts

of colleagues to read *White Fragility* in a book group. For the future, the program may consider having multiple "waves" or successive learning groups, each spending five (or more) weeks together. Some of the original participants expressed interest in facilitating future groups. Based on its positive impact, the program is considering choosing another book and continue with those who participated in the original group.

Participants suggested finding ways to channel these experiences into policies and practices at GCC. One person asked that GCC continue to think about "how we become an explicitly anti-racist institution," and how we "build in ways to deal with racism in an ongoing way, with the presupposition that racism is an ongoing thing and that we are all learners." As one person said, "Anything that we do to keep that toolbox open" is positive. We do need to figure out how to "draw more people in" and "get the message to more people."

Based on the positive outcomes of these initial dialogs, there are important conversations to be had among white people, among people of color, and among mixed groups. Had the group been more of a mixed group, the conversations may have gone differently. Campuses should consider the racial make-up of their book groups and tailor their activities and prompts accordingly.

Upon reflection, the co-facilitators recognized that they did not always get to each part of every session. They often chose to let the conversation continue, rather than rushing the group along. In the future, an eight-week design may be more realistic, though the co-facilitators know that a four-week design may be more appealing to people with very busy workweeks. Given one person's suggestions, co-facilitators can also send the prompts ahead of time, so that participants can reflect and come with more prepared thoughts.

One focus group participant summed up the impact of the book group like this:

"Outside of the whole consciousness building about this specific topic, I think having these kinds of personal and important conversations with colleagues, [whom] you don't normally interact with on these kinds of issues, deepens your attachment to your colleagues and the campus."

If for no other reason, fostering connection and “attachment” to colleagues and the college is reason enough to develop and facilitate reading and discussing books about racial equity and other societal issues resulting in educational equity gaps for the students we serve. GCC’s institutional data indicate that that the process is equal, if not of more importance, to the content of the book that is chosen.

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The following are the general designs for each 90-minute session.

SESSION 1: Talking about Racism (What does it feel like to talk about these issues?)

Welcome (three minutes)

Introductions

Acknowledge that people are pushing themselves outside their comfort zone to be here and taking time out of their busy days.

Recognize people in the room (15 minutes)

Ask people to introduce themselves: who are you and what do you do at the college? How does it feel to be here?

Goals for today’s session (five minutes)

Today’s topic is talking about racism. As preparation for our first session, participants were asked to watch a 12-minute video by Jay Smooth, where he suggests that white people avoid talking about racism “like the plague.” We posed the question to consider: Are these conversations you usually avoid having? What does it feel like to gather together and talk about white privilege and racism?

Goals for this session

- To begin the conversation about racism, white fragility and white supremacy
- To get people talking to one another
- To bring attention to these issues on campus – what is the climate at GCC? How can we contribute to its betterment?
- To increase people’s inclination to lean into these issues rather than shy away from them.
- To increase racial staminutesa (a term from DiAngelo’s book)

Agenda for the day (2 minutes)

- Review guidelines
- Small group discussion on personal awareness of racial identity
- Larger group discussion on definitions of racism and white supremacy
- Debrief time to discuss anything else from the chapters
- Wrap up – reminders for next time

Guidelines (15 minutes)

Guidelines were reviewed and participants were asked to make further suggestions if they had any.

Small Group Work: Pairs (5 minutes each = 10 minutes)

Prompt: Discuss the first time you became aware of race. When were you first aware that there were people from different races?

Large Group: Discussion (10 minutes)

Prompts:

- How many of you told stories that were about someone else rather than yourself?
- How many of you talked about what it means to be a white person (if you are a white person)?
What does whiteness mean for you?
- What does it mean to be white in our society in this particular historical moment?

Key Concepts:

- Racial transparency – White people don’t think of themselves as having a race (just “normal”).
DiAngelo talks about this in the white supremacy section – pg. 27: whiteness is a standpoint -- one aspect of whiteness is to see oneself as an individual, just “human, outside of race, representative of humanity is general.”
- Johnson’s “paradox” idea – whiteness is invisible, yet everywhere.
- Transition to discussion of racism and white supremacy – we all think we know about racism, but do we? And how does it connect with white supremacy?

Group Definitions (10 minutes)

- Have the group count off into two groups.
- Ask each small group to define their concept.
- Group 1: Define Racism
- Group 2: Define White Supremacy
- Then, regroup to compare/contrast.

Large Group Discussion (10 minutes)

- Share definitions.
- How do they contrast?
- How do they compare?
- How do they intersect?
- How does one support/depend on the other?
- Anything left out? To add?

Debrief and Wrap Up (10 minutes)

Is there anything in the first three chapters that we haven't covered that you would like to talk about?

Wrap Up: Things to think about:

- We are all participating in a system that is defined by racism.
- If we are all participating in a world shaped by racism, in some way we are all complicit in this construction.
- In order to work against the system, we need to first start by looking at our own role/responsibility in upholding that system.
- (If we need, pose reflection question: In today's session, did you see yourself distancing, intellectualizing or rationalizing?)
- For next time: Please send questions or concerns ahead to the co-facilitators.
- Fill out feedback sheet.

SESSION 2: How does race shape our lives?

The theme is the ways in which white people get themselves off the hook. Instead, how do we take responsibility?

Welcome (15 minutes)

- Review feedback from the first session
- Quick go around with names
- Q: Anything lingering from last time?

Chapter Four discussion (20 minutes)

Whole group talks about chapter four, guided through each section by facilitators.

Pairs talk about good/bad binary from Chapter Five (Five minutes each =10 minutes)

- Share answers/thoughts questions:
- How does the good bad binary make it difficult for me to understand and interrupt racism?
- How do these "color-blind" or "color celebrate" statements present obstacles to my discussions about racism and looking at myself?

Small group discussions (20 minutes)

- Split into two groups of 10
- Group 1: Chapter Six: Anti-Blackness
- Group 2: Chapter Seven: Racial Triggers for White People

Large group debrief (20 minutes)

- How does the good /bad binary make it difficult for me to understand and interrupt racism?
- How do these color-blind or color celebrate statements present obstacles to my discussions about racism and looking at myself?
- How do we bring this back to our understanding of what happens at GCC?

Feedback sheets (Five minutes)

SESSION 3: White Fragility in Action

Welcome (10 minutes)

- Quick name go-around
- Feedback from last session
- Prompt: Is there anyone who wants to share reactions to their experience from last week?

Free write (Five minutes)

Prompt: Think of a situation in your life when white fragility was playing a role

Pair-Share (15 minutes)

Get into pairs and share free write with partner.

Then look at pages 119 and 120. Consider: Have you ever had these feelings, behaviors, claims or assumptions? Talk about the circumstances and why.

Pair-Pair Share (20 minutes)

Find another pair to form groups of four.

Prompt:

- What does white fragility look like for each of us?
- How do all these assumptions, feelings, behaviors and claims connect with the functions of white fragility?

Large group discussion (35 minutes)

Let's talk about white fragility.

Prompt:

- If people know you are in this book group and ask you, "What is white fragility?" How do you explain what it is?

On newsprint/white board, put up all ideas and distill into summary.

Second prompt:

- What role does white fragility play in perpetuating racism? What are the functions of white fragility (see page 122)?

Feedback Sheets (Five minutes)

SESSION 4: Where do we go from here?

Welcome (Five minutes)

- Quick name reminder
- Share feedback from previous session
- Themes for today:
- What is Racial Stamina?
- What does it look like for you?
- Where do I go from here with my learning?

Rules of Engagement (20 minutes)

Read the “Rules of Engagement” out loud (pages 123-124)

Discussion prompts:

- Do we recognize ourselves or other people in these rules?
- How do these rules contribute to White Fragility, White Solidarity and White Privilege?
- Read out loud the alternatives (page 125)

Discussion prompts:

- What difficulties or challenges do you anticipate using this framework instead?
- How difficult might it be to use the transformed paradigm?

Scenario - Pairs Role Play (using the chart) (15 minutes)

- Person one reads scenario out loud, embellishing as needed.
- Person two responds using a White Fragility perspective (see the feelings, behaviors and claims from pages 119-120 or chart).
- Listen to them and learn to recognize white fragility statements

Large group share out (15 minutes)

- Discussion: How does it feel to say, hear and witness the responses from different perspectives?
- Prompt: What was the experience like trying to respond to white fragility?
- Make a list of the tactics to respond to white fragility.

Freewrite/Reflection (Five minutes)

- Prompt: Where do I go from here with my learning?

Pairs (10 minutes)

- Discuss freewrite with partner and brainstorm next steps.

Large Group (20 minutes)

- Prompt: What you are thinking about as next steps for yourself?
- Learn from each other about where we go from here.

Feedback form (Five minutes)

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS (ERGS)

SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY BY NIKKI PELONIA

Keywords: Employee Resource Groups, Community, Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Salem State University (SSU), in Salem, Massachusetts, works to provide high quality, student-centered education that prepares a diverse community of learners to contribute responsibly and creatively to a global society and serve as a resource to advance the region’s cultural, social and economic development (<https://www.salemstate.edu/strategic-plan>). In 2017, in support of this mission, Salem State University conducted a Campus Climate Study informed by a power and privilege framework and critical race theory. Central to this framework is the premise that patterns in unequal student outcomes is attributable to societal and institutional oppression, such as racism, not to deficits in minoritized students (Brookfield, 2005; Johnson, 2005; Rankin, 2003; Smith, Gerbick, Figueroa, Watkins, Leviatan, Moore, 1997).

One of the key findings from the Campus Climate Study was that members of several constituent groups indicated experiencing exclusionary, intimidating, offensive or hostile treatment on campus. Results showed that approximately a quarter of respondents believed they had experienced discrimination, with 19% of all participants attributing this mistreatment to racism. Participants were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences. As part of this process, 54% of those completing the survey indicated that they would value opportunities to network and build relationships among community members with similar interests and identities.

SUPPORTING REPRESENTATION ON CAMPUS

The Campus Climate Survey results, as well as the literature, indicate that campuses that support and prioritize racial diversity across the institution enjoy improved student learning outcomes (Hale, 2004; Perry, 2019). For example, when underrepresented faculty and staff feel a sense of belonging, minoritized students receive better support

and have greater engagement. This synergy helps increase retention (Carpenter, 2018). In response to this information, SSU developed the Employee Resource Group (ERGs) program to support employees and students. The goal of the initiative is to enhance the sense of belonging of its members who in turn are in a better personal and professional position to support students from similar identity groups. The ERGs are currently comprised of six groups: Asian ERG, Black ERG, Family Caregivers ERG, Latinx ERG, LGBTQ+ ERG, and Women’s ERG. Each ERG is supported with a budget to support professional development and to co-create resources that supplement emotional support. As ERGs build community and support within, mentorship and support to students with affinity identities are implemented as well, providing a direct connection between minoritized and diverse staff, faculty and students.

INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Each ERG co-creates a mission statement and objectives with and for their respective group. In collaboration with and support from the inclusive excellence office, ERGs provide programming, events, resources and advocacy with their members throughout the academic year. Each ERG has two-to-three co-leads that help organize and structure meeting their objectives for the academic year. Co-leads meet at minimum once per month, host at least two-to-four events per semester and take a leading role in university collaborative efforts in recognizing nationally celebrated cultural heritage and identity awareness months.

Additionally, each ERG has a designated liaison to the President’s Executive Council (PEC) and meets at minimum once per semester to ensure access to senior leadership and policymakers in addressing community needs from those underrepresented. More details are accessible at www.salemstate.edu/ERGs.

IMPROVING THE CAMPUS' WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Through the ERGs, staff and faculty have an effective and efficient means to connect and collaborate with students and student groups that share affinity identities, cultivating a diverse, caring campus community and culture of inclusivity and belonging. Partnerships between employee and students from similar backgrounds result in support for all participants and synergies that benefit the entire campus. For example, until recently, Salem State University's Latinx Heritage Month celebrations and programming mainly remained within student group organizations; however, with institutional support by the Latinx ERG, programming became even more intentional benefitting Latinx students, faculty and staff. Additionally, ERGs provide a means and connection to key stakeholders with power within the university, fostering equitable access to policy change and advocacy with key decision makers.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Unfortunately, in its first pilot year, there were inconsistent practices and limited staffing capacity, which limited collecting comprehensive assessment and evaluation data. SSU's ERGs are completing the second-year piloting practices and policies focused on building an effective and sustainable infrastructure. Plans are underway to distribute evaluations at the end of the academic year. The gathered information will inform future strategies. The current evaluation process tracks the number of participants engaged with ERG activities as well as the impact ERGs have on the morale of employees with the administration and connection to community members.

With an increase in staffing capacity this year through the collaboration with the vice provost in academic affairs, director of education and training in inclusive excellence, and director of human resources and equal opportunity, data can be collected and identified from the second-year pilot. Of the evaluations reviewed thus far, most noted a feeling of being safe and valued from their experiences in the ERG program. Participants also shared the following:

“ERGs play an important role in fostering an inclusive campus environment. They provide a sounding board for employee communities facing particular challenges, like employees caring for their aging parents or LGBTQIA+

employees and employees of color who are seeking mentoring that speaks to their particular identities and experiences. ERGs also advocate for both cultural and systemic changes that improve campus climate and access to university resources” (2019).

“You meet other co-workers from your ethnic background and culture that share the same kind of experiences. Meeting experienced mentors and leaders from different departments allows you to learn more about the campus. You develop friendships among your co-workers from other departments and feel happy about it” (2019).

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Besides providing financial resources, having a simplified and transparent infrastructure for ERG co-leads is invaluable in supporting the work of the co-leads. Having primary contacts from the inclusive excellence office and human resources through a collaborative process is essential to meeting ERG objectives. As the ERG program continues, we aim to implement a long-term assessment of its impact on classroom practices, the retention of minoritized students as well as employees, and the ways in which these practices may contribute to a more welcoming campus climate for colleagues and students of color.

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RACIALLY EQUITABLE DATA PRACTICES



RACIALLY EQUITABLE DATA PRACTICES

This section of the *Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute Practitioner Handbook* is comprised of seven emerging practices offering readers robust examples of how member campuses are deepening their use of racially equitable data practices. The authors and practitioners worked to actualize equity-mindedness, defined by Dr. Estela Bensimon and her colleagues at the Center for Urban Education. Equity-mindedness includes the gathering of disaggregated data; an ongoing inquiry process about racial inequities in student outcomes revealed by this data; and institutional action and change dedicated to decreasing and eliminating the inequities (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; McNair, Bensimon & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020).

Researchers, practitioners and educators (McNair, Bensimon & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020; Dowd, Witham, Hanson, Ching, Liera, Castro, 2018), as well as accreditors (Arnold, Voight, Morales, Dancy & Coleman, 2019), and legislators (Quality Higher Education Act of 2019. H.R. 479 – 116th Congress) are increasing their calls for equity-oriented data to guide higher education's efforts to eliminate racial equity gaps. These emerging practices are intended to support efforts in this area.

EMERGING PRACTICES

Listening to the voices of and informing our data with the lived experiences of Black, Asian, Latinx, Indigenous and other students of color is foundational to our efforts to centralize racial equity and justice in higher education (Andrews, Parekh & Peckoo, 2019; College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011; Fingerson & Troutman, 2020). The emerging practice from Greenfield Community College titled "Seeds of Success Participatory Action Research Project" involved minoritized students in research study design, research implementation and data analysis examining assets and strengths related to minoritized

students' success. By centralizing students' voices and lived experiences in the research process, Greenfield Community College demonstrated humbleness, respect and an equity-minded student-centered approach that should be emulated (Creger, 2020; Mertons, 2007).

The "Assets-based Assessment of Success Factors for High Achieving African American and Latinx Students" emerging practice at Salem State University also sought to examine institutional factors related to the success of racially minoritized students. Neville and Estrella-Luna, the authors of this emerging practice, summarize the transformative nature this type of research has in disrupting the deficit-oriented lens that typically characterizes the view of students of color in higher education: "Our aim wasn't just to identify what is working to replicate and scale; it was also to demonstrate the value in listening to and learning from the students as necessary sources of information about the institution itself." This approach not only provides information about student of color success that the institution can build upon, it conveys a message to students of color that their views, voices and experiences matter (Harper, 2012; Nunn, 2021). In this way, the research methodology itself is a racial justice strategy (Creger, 2020).

Deepening the culture of equity-minded inquiry in order to engage in ongoing institutional change is essential to this work (Jones & Nichols, 2020). Cape Cod Community College's "Not Too Small to Count: Developing a Student Equity Matrix and Culture Shift at a Predominately White Institution" is an emerging practice that shares how one campus overcame the narrative too common in higher education that posits that data disaggregation to examine racial educational equity gaps is not possible due to the small numbers of students of color attending the campus. Rather than adopting this approach, the authors engaged

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in equity-minded leadership skills to aid their campus in moving past this stance to a process of data analysis and interpretation that is anti-racist (Dowd & Elmore, 2020; Ivie, 2020).

The “Deep Dive Data Team” at Northern Essex Community College is an emerging practice that utilizes key equity-minded approaches of building trust and community across campus in the data collection and inquiry process (Dowd, 2005; Dowd & Elmore, 2020), and transforming institutional practices based on this engagement with equity-oriented data (Witham & Bensimon, 2012). The ways in which this type of process can “recruit” campus members into data-informed equity efforts is evident by viewing the word cloud shared in this emerging practice where the three most common words shared by campus members after a session of data presentation and discussion were “curious,” “intrigued” and “interested”; the fact that the work needs to be ongoing is evident in that the same word map that also shares that campus members were also “frustrated,” “overwhelmed” and “worried.”

The emerging practice titled “Roger Williams University Equity Scorecard and Dashboard” provides readers with an overview of how the campus employed the Equity Scorecard methodology created by Dr. Estela Bensimon and her colleagues at the Center for Urban Education. The Equity Scorecard provides a structure for data gathering, inquiry, problem-solving and institutional change (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Felix, Bensimon, Hanson, Gray & Klingsmith, 2015; Harris & Bensimon, 2007). This emerging practice shares how the university disaggregated their data and through equity-minded sense making deepened some campus members’ understanding regarding the work that must be done to address racial educational inequities.

Predictive analytics is a much-heralded data innovation in higher education. The final two emerging practices in this section focus on two REJI campuses that are using this tool in their equity efforts. Salem State University’s emerging practice titled “Power BI and EAB Navigate: An Analytical Deep Dive Into Student Success Initiatives” describes the use of predictive analytics to help support the success of minoritized students and to identify programs and interventions that are effectively closing opportunity gaps. According to Brossoit the institution has set a campus-wide goal of closing these gaps “within +/- 3 percentage points of each other.” In order to ensure that predictive analytics does not silence the voices of the students they intend to serve (Roberts, Howell, Seaman, & Gibson, 2016), Salem State University triangulates this information with qualitative data from racially minoritized students attending their institution (see the “Assets-based Assessment of Success Factors for High Achieving African American and Latinx Students” at Salem State University in this section of the handbook).

Bridgewater State University’s “Moving from Who to What: First to Second Semester Predictive Retention Model” shares how the institution created their predictive analytics model in an effort to move from a reliance on demographic categories in their data modeling efforts which can “mirror past discrimination” (Ekowo & Palmer, 2016, p. 13) to a model that allows the campus to gain a better understanding of the complex interplay of factors – often premised in systemic oppression – that the institution must address in order to serve students. McLaren-Poole stresses the necessity of engaging the campus in ongoing inquiry about the data. This ensures that information gained through student-level predictive analytics does not inadvertently project the message to students, faculty or staff that the students receiving support based on this data are incapable of success or found wanting. Instead, the data drives conversation and

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action focused on institutional change in support of racial equity (Roberts, Howell, Seaman & Gibson, 2016).

The emerging practices in this section of the handbook underscore the obligation that campuses have to obtain disaggregated data; to engage in honest inquiry and discussion about the ways the data identifies institutional and systemic whiteness and other forms of racism; and to identify and implement strategies for institutional change. What follows in the remaining sections of the handbook is an array of emerging practices that demonstrate how Racial Equity and Justice Institute campuses are working to centralize data-informed racial equity and justice efforts into their work on behalf of the students that are served.

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SEEDS OF SUCCESS PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

**GREENFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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Keywords: Participatory Action Research, Student Success

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Greenfield Community College (GCC) is located in the beautiful and historic Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts, between the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains and the fertile farmland of the Connecticut River watershed. GCC is known for the caring and supportive attitude of the faculty and staff, academic excellence, and for the broad support it enjoys from the surrounding community (<https://www.gcc.mass.edu/about/>). With an enrollment of more than 3,000 students, Greenfield Community College has been engaged in multiple grassroots initiatives focused on increasing the cultural dexterity of faculty and staff, however, the large scale adoption of data to inform decision making has been slow, in part due to the resources available to a small community college with one staff person assigned to assessment for the entire college, and in part due to a culture that has always embraced and emphasized the students' stories as paramount. However, the college is shifting to a more data informed approach in multiple fronts and finding ways to honor the culture means finding ways to collect and analyze qualitative as well as quantitative data. Utilizing participatory action research (PAR) as a methodology has proven to be a rich tool for generating data, learning more about the student experience at Greenfield Community College, and providing a transformative experience for all the participants in the study.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS RACIAL JUSTICE

PAR is a methodology that democratizes research by transforming the relationship of researcher and participants to where they are working together to actively learn about and create change in the world. In the context of student success for Black, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC) and other underserved students, the best place to learn about this is by recruiting students to become co-

researchers and engaging students to help analyze the data and collaborate in finding ways to improve student success.

PAR seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it. At its heart is collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture and local context, and embedded in social relationships. The process of PAR should be empowering and lead to people having increased control over their lives. (Baum, McDougall, & Smith, 2006). Reid and Frisby add that PAR focuses on “acknowledging lived experiences, and contributing to social justice agendas to counter prevailing ideologies and power relations” (Reid & Frisby, 2008).

The work of diversity, equity and inclusion is most often driven by a deficit-based approach. Various identities are categorized as ‘other,’ and certain measures are used to identify each identity’s relative attainment or deficit in comparison to a white control group. The greater the disparity, the greater the deficit, the greater the absence, the more powerful the data. This deficit-based approach prioritizes problems and emphasizes the inability of communities to address disparity and a lack of equity. It highlights the intractability of the situation due to the lack of available resources in the form of personnel, funding or time to change things. While the rationale is meant to highlight the existing problems, or sometimes to justify funding and the allocation of resources, the end result is a loss of agency and a general inability to enact change. Asset-based development does not eliminate all of the perceived and real needs; however, it does suggest that there are possibilities that can be utilized to improve and strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives that are already in action, but often unrecognized.

Greenfield Community College was keen to employ asset-based participatory action research as a means to promote, not diminish, agency among faculty, students and staff, and to help them have ownership and authority of the diversity, equity and inclusion endeavor. Community Economy Institute researchers utilized this approach in economic development in the Latrobe Valley in Australia (Cameron & Gibson, 2005) and found it was much easier to imagine what one could do with available and existing resources than to imagine how to overcome the absence of needed resources, policies, activities, etc.

Helping a community recognize that it is doing good things that strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion allows for ownership of the endeavor. It allows a community to overcome initial feelings of shame, blame or persecution. What at a regional or national level feels like an insurmountable crisis, at the local level, is revealed as, not only surmountable, but something always in flux and something where progress is being made in many valid and countable ways.

Professor Linda McCarthy, sociology faculty member, and Dean Leo Hwang, humanities, engineering, math and science, have developed two participatory action research initiatives at Greenfield Community College. The projects were approached with an epistemology drawn from asset-based community development, where it is much easier to strengthen and support assets that already exist, rather than to try to fill lacuna that need resources that do not exist.

The goals of the Seeds of Success Participatory Action Project were to focus on how BIPOC and other underserved students defined success in their lives, and where they found success at Greenfield Community College. Student researchers were recruited to interview their peers once they were trained in PAR techniques and asset-based community development. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed, and the data was then utilized to help inform the development of a program designed to support new BIPOC students at Greenfield Community College.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Asset-based community development emerges out of the work of John Kretzmann and John McKnight, who present an alternative model for development that forgoes

a fixation on needs and deficits, and instead focuses on a community's capacities. Focusing on assets and strengths allows for action and agency to emerge. A focus on assets allows for a sense of possibility instead of being faced with insurmountable obstacles (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Working from assets engages Community Economies Institute researchers, J.K. Gibson-Graham's theory of possibility. Ultimately, working with possibilities is infectious and makes it easier for more people to become engaged and participate in the work that furthers diversity, equity and inclusion, and when more people become engaged, more assets are brought to the table. By asking students how they are successful, we are building on an already solid foundation (Harper, 2012). By focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses, one can engender a grassroots approach to change that is customized to the culture and history of a particular institution.

As Julio Cammarota and Augustine Romero write, "Students develop an ontological understanding of how to use their 'funds of knowledge' to generate more equitable social relationships by ameliorating conditions and opportunities for themselves, families and communities" (Cammarota & Romero, 2011). There is a transformative experience engendered by allowing students to exercise the very skills that are hoped to be instilled in all students: critical thinking, research, analysis and application. Through PAR, Cammarota and Romero help transform their students into agents of change.

Dorothy Henderson helps conceptualize PAR as a methodology that emerges out of Paolo Freire's blending of scientific research with education and activism. Participatory action research utilizes a collaborative research process that includes participants in the design and execution of the study, gives value to experiential and popular knowledge, focuses on empowerment and power relations, participates in raising the consciousness of all participants, and generates political and social action to change unequal power distributions in society (Henderson, 1995).

PAR is the ideal methodology to utilize for strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion and racial

justice work. By redefining what is valid and important data on the terms defined by students, faculty and staff, and by allowing them to place value on their activities, a new kind of narrative and knowledge making is engendered. By approaching the diversity, equity and inclusion work from a community economies epistemology, the project is able to create a “space” where alternative perceptions, alternative practices, and alternative realities can exist, co-exist with, and sometimes supplant the dominant deficit based narrative. Utilizing a community economies perspective we can also build an ethic that “privileges care of the local community and its environment” (Gibson-Graham, 2006). For students, faculty and staff, this means privileging the community of learners and educators; privileging the community that is built within the college; privileging the physical environment of location that enables a sense of quality of life and balance; and privileging the continued work of students, faculty and staff to make the college more welcoming to a diverse range of students and employees.

Using Gibson-Graham’s postcapitalist framework allows people to choose to reconceptualize student success in a way that is more inclusive of marginalized populations. What this research project has found, in working with students, faculty and staff, is that the college is already engaged in producing a rich representation of practices that strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion. The college is rich with potential assets and successes, as well as challenges and complications, that are framed by the students, faculty and staff’s own conceptualizations of what diversity, equity and inclusion looks like.

As a political act, collaboration is an extension of an epistemological stance that embraces the possibility engendered when people are able to work together in ways that create strength that is not present in its separate parts. The act of collaboration allows for an intersectionality that is more dynamic than can be achieved by one’s self. David Demeritt writes, “the potential rationales for developing more collaborative and participatory social research practices range from the epistemological (more accurate, self-aware, or self-critical research) to the ethical (more just, inclusive, democratic or consensual research), and the instrumental (more empowering, effective, socially transformative or action-oriented research)” (Demeritt, 2005). By extending this collaboration into

the community through the adoption of a participatory action research methodology, community members were included in the process of relaying information about their own experiences at the college, and then, they worked together collectively to analyze their findings and develop narratives and insights, a reflexivity that was shared by and with the community. The conversation that emerges out of collaboration is part of the transformative potential where people begin to share and understand one another and thereby strengthen the bonds of community one interaction at a time.

Collaboration also added a measure of accountability, that the coordinators and researchers had to maintain expectations, both to each other, and to the communities of students, faculty and staff they worked with. This accountability was something that was strengthening and something that connected us fundamentally to each other, and to our communities. The accountability modeled how it was hoped people would be able to draw from and give to each other as the fundamental ethical core of relationships.

PUTTING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

In terms of high impact research projects, PAR is not a particularly resource-intensive methodology for funding (though it is fairly intensive for student and faculty/staff time). From the beginning, it is important to foster a sense of commitment from the college president or administration to support the endeavor. This comes in the form of time (release or reassigned time for faculty and staff) for the co-coordinators, funding for the student researchers, any digital recording equipment (if needed), transcription, and lunch or refreshments for each of the large meetings.

Both PAR projects primarily utilized cellphones as audio recording devices. Transcription was completed using online transcription services. Because transcription services charge by the minute, it is very helpful if someone on the team is handy with Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software. Something as simple as Apple’s GarageBand can import the audio from a phone or digital recorder and cut out long introductions or pauses while people fill out paperwork or get food.

There is an easily overlooked importance to providing food at each of the main meetings. Many of the people participating, except for the student co-researchers, were participating because they were prioritizing this endeavor above other endeavors, whether that is doing homework, prepping for class, or working through an ever-expanding task list. Trying to provide a meal is a small amount of compensation for participating in the project. So, depending on the time of day of the meetings the college tried to provide food (lunch or snacks) for the co-researcher trainings, student focus group, faculty/staff research groups, and each faculty/staff professional development workshop that emerged from the project.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) process can seem somewhat daunting, however it is an opportunity to look at your project closely and clarify what you are attempting to accomplish. Like teaching a class for the first time, the IRB application forces one to confront the myriad of details that may not immediately come to mind. The IRB may ask for sample lesson plans for the researcher trainings, templates for email solicitations to students and faculty, handouts for the student researchers, permission forms, and processes for coding and securing the data collected. Some IRB processes also include an online training component where the history of review boards are surveyed, and low stakes quizzes are given on ethics and protocol.

The process also asks researchers to identify the inherent dangers or potential pitfalls of any research that includes human subjects. Potential issues that would arise had to be thought through? How might the research benefit or endanger participants? Embedded in a participatory action research project is the transformative experience of agency and possibility that emerges for the co-researchers and the people participating in the focus groups, but there is also the danger of bringing up current and past conflicts and trauma around race, ethnicity and identity, so it was important to be available to students, staff and faculty, if needed, as well as provide everyone involved with the project a list of resources to turn to for counseling and support.

The two rounds of PAR were conducted two years apart from one another with different cohorts of students, but they shared the same epistemological underpinnings.

The first PAR project, Rethinking Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, began with student researchers asking the core question: Where is the college doing well with diversity, equity and inclusion?

The students were selected primarily for their diversity of identities, for their previous interest in sociology classes, and for an ability or willingness to look at issues from an asset-based perspective. Students co-facilitated focus groups with peers, who identified faculty, staff and offices that they felt supported diversity, equity and inclusion at the college. For the student co-researchers, it was estimated that each student would commit to attend a 2.5-hour training, recruit 4-5 other students to attend a focus group, attend one focus group for 1.5 hours, and attend a two-hour debriefing meeting. In addition, students were invited to participate in an analysis of the transcripts and participate in the facilitation of faculty and staff focus groups. A stipend of \$100.00 per student for participation in the project was decided. There were several students who were more intensely involved in the second half of the project analyzing the transcripts and co-facilitating the faculty and staff focus groups. In hindsight, these students' work would have justified an additional \$100 stipend. Those faculty and staff were invited to another focus group, again co-facilitated by students, to learn what they thought they did that made students feel like they supported diversity, equity and inclusion.

The second PAR project was called Seeds of Success and focused on how underrepresented minority students defined success, and where they were able to find success at the college. For this round of PAR, the student researchers completed at least three individual interviews with peers, each lasting approximately 45 minutes. Those interviews were transcribed and coded, and the results will be utilized to help inform the college's Mountain Scholars Program, a cohort program designed for Black, Indigenous, and often People of Color (BIPOC) entering Greenfield Community College.

For this project, faculty and staff identified a cohort of students that demonstrated success and leadership skills. These students, called "seeds," met three times for 2.5 hours each meeting during the first half of the spring semester. Students were compensated a total of \$200. Had students

been available to help analyze the data, they would have earned another \$100.

During the first two sessions, asking students to reflect on and share about their own identities and experiences at GCC fostered a sense of camaraderie and community. The most powerful activity in the first session was a diversity wheel, where students were asked to identify and reflect on their salient social identities and then share about them with the group. Many powerful emotions came up, and some students were surprised by what they revealed to the group. The sense of intimacy and honesty was palpable, as students openly supported one another in their self-disclosure. In addition to discussing social identities, students were asked to define success and to identify ways that they have been successful. This exercise pushed students to think positively about their achievements.

As a group, many facets that might indicate student success were identified. What makes a good interview question was also discussed. Based on these qualities, as a group, interview questions were created for the project. At the second session, students interviewed each other. These interviews were recorded and are part of the data.

In addition to creating community, students were trained in several key areas: assets-based community development, identity and diversity issues, interview skills, and data analysis. They were also informed about how to follow the important protocol that will ensure confidentiality for their recruited fellow students. Students were able to rehearse the interview protocol during their practice interviews with each other.

“Seed” students were asked to recruit students that they identified as successful at GCC. Like our own group, it was asked that they aim for a diverse pool of students who had been at GCC for at least two semesters, and to keep the interviews focused on assets. They interviewed their peers using the questions that we had created as a group. The students were required to complete their three interviews before the third session. As with the “seeds,” the students that were recruited felt a lift of esteem by being identified as successful by a peer. In the end, students conducted 31 interviews.

For the third session, students were directed to come with an initial list of themes that they identified in their data. A candy-sorting exercise was conducted to demonstrate the challenges of coding qualitative data. In small groups, students shared the themes that they had identified in their data and compared notes. Three themes were chosen (success, identity and relationships on campus) and students further analyzed the data. The third session was wrapped up by inviting the students to continue with the project, and by asking them to co-present at an upcoming conference. A half dozen students committed to the conference that day. We gave the students a final gift of sunflower seed packets as a symbolic gesture of carrying on their work.

INFUSING STUDENTS' ASSETS AND "BLOOMING" INTO GCC'S WORK

The transformative nature of PAR is clearly evident in the way students develop a sense of community as researchers. For many students, the research collaborative was the most diverse collection of students they have participated with at the college. It was striking to see how quickly students built a sense of trust and sharing within the group. They were united in a sense of purpose, and because of the asset-based perspective, a sense of agency.

For both cohorts of researchers, students were pleased to be chosen and once they were given the title of successful, intelligent or inquisitive, they seemed to embody those qualities, even if they did not recognize those qualities within themselves at the start. Similarly, the students interviewed were generally very honored to be seen as successful and were genuinely thankful to the student researchers for choosing them and giving them an opportunity to share their thoughts in a way that was valued and important. Faculty and staff were honored that students selected them for their support of diversity, equity and inclusion at the college, even if they did not initially understand why students picked them. This sense of honor allowed the faculty and staff to also take on the responsibility of sharing their practices with their peers.

For many students, particularly those who did not see themselves as academically gifted, “blooming” did not occur until several years into their academic career. And for some students, it did not occur until after they left the college and returned several years later.

Our research highlighted the importance of relationships with faculty and staff for student success. Unfortunately, those relationships often do not manifest themselves until later in a students' academic career. It is the power of these relationships that enable students to move beyond the limitations they have for their own sense of possibility, and the limitations that society or other people may have placed on them. We called this process "blooming."

"I'm also a college dropout. I'm back after a 13-year break after trying college for the first time."

"I'm a returning student after a few years off to explore the vast world of California."

When faculty or staff noticed students and either helped them through a challenging time, or gifted their work with a sense of value, it made a very strong impression, and sometimes became the turning point for a student's academic career.

"K. helped me figure out how to get food stamps, figure out how to get health insurance, all of that stuff, because I had literally nothing when I came here. . . . It gave me a little bit of hope. Now I feel like I could actually go to school and maybe succeed because neither one of my parents have gone to college or anything like that, so I'm first gen."

"When I had gone to school before I [started to fall behind] and once I started slipping on work, I just didn't know how to catch up from there. I didn't know how to ask for help and no one reached out to me. [But this time... Prof. J.] pulled me aside and offered me personal advice, as well as other resources to look into[....] That allowed me to breathe and relax a little...."

"He actually made a point to, not like all teachers have to do this, but he gave us his personal contact information, made sure we had rides to get there."

"I love the class.... Up until that point I hadn't had a professor who made an effort to connect with his students and to connect with them outside of the class and outside of the classroom discussion."

"I want to hear your voice there. I think you would be an asset to the discussion."

"Oh, this is of value. We should give you a platform with which to spread the knowledge you've gained. That was awesome."

"We interviewed folks about their experiences growing up and being socialized in terms of gender. We made this giant bulletin board, which is beautiful and still in the East Building, and I'm super proud of it. Then, after that was done, [a professor] saw it and [recommended that the project should be presented at the undergraduate research conference at UMass, Amherst]."

"It was just what I needed to kickstart [my education]. Oh my god, this is why I like being a student again. I do want to be here. When professors make an effort to connect with their students and to help their students think outside the classroom, think about the community, and that's how I think it produces incredible results."

"I think academically I had my most successful academic semester I've ever had here my fall semester. [...] I met friends here; I've established relationships here. I think I even have created good relationships with my teachers, which I don't think I was able to do very well in my previous two college experiences."

"[Success is about] actually understanding the material. I have made good bonds with teachers that help me reach that level, like with the repetition and the learning and all of that, help me reach and understand their curriculum[...]."

Students also talked about their own ethnic and racial identities, and how finding and interacting with peers and potentially faculty that represented a wide range of diversity was exciting and encouraging.

“This is definitely, I think, the first time in my history at GCC where I have been in a room with [more than two] other Hispanic people.”

“I love when I knew there are people from different countries in my class because I know I can learn from them, and it’s always an asset. It helps me think more globally.”

“It’s nice to have those classes where the teacher invites students to talk a little bit about themselves personally so you can identify with people on some level.”

There was also, a challenge with how and when a students’ identity could be recognized and celebrated on a campus that is still predominantly white with very few faculty and staff of color. While the college’s BIPOC student population is growing, there is still a sense by multiple students that their identity is something that is sometimes undervalued, unrecognized, or something that needs to be set aside in an community that may not value that identity.

“I struggle with my Latina identity because I was raised in Vermont by Caucasian parent. I’m just now learning Spanish. I’ve always been aware of the fact that I was Peruvian and that was something I was proud of, but I didn’t really know what that meant, and I didn’t really know about the culture.”

“I think there’s so many ways where a lot of us drop our identity. I think that’s just a part of life. In one way or another we experience that... you’re supposed to do this, but it just doesn’t feel right for some reason.”

“There is a Latino culture and [...] it’s really in me and a part of me, and another part of me feels like I’m lying when I say that.”

“It’s important to know that I didn’t list it as my identity, but I’m usually very careful about who and why I reveal, and when I reveal, I’m not white.”

“I’ve never had a professor of color here, and I can’t wait for that to happen.”

Students also highlighted the value of resources at the college, but many students felt they were not suffering enough to utilize those resources or didn’t qualify to use

them. However, for students who did access the resources, they often made the difference between staying in school and finding an obstacle that was insurmountable.

“It was really great to know that, all right, this is really overwhelming, but I have a support system that’s really helpful.”

“I came to GCC as someone out of high school who had done really well and just financially chose GCC. Then I had a hard moment in my life where I was dealing with mental health issues and had to relearn how to be a student and relearn about myself.”

“The Wellness Center had extra materials, like notebooks, binder, paper, pens, that they actually gave to people in the peer tutoring program to help other students who didn’t have the materials and didn’t know the organizational skills to help themselves succeed in their classes. That’s something we don’t really think about, that not everyone knows how to do that coming into college, and that’s something that is beneficial in many ways.”

It was wonderful to see students who found the relationships, community and resources they needed to be successful.

“I love this school and I want to see more and more students be able to succeed in the same way that I have. I’m going to leave GCC at the end of the summer, but I’m not gone forever. Do you know what I mean? I’ve already achieved a sense of community that I’ve never gotten before. A sense of belonging that I’ve never had before. I hope to, at some point in the future, get the satisfaction of helping other students succeed the way that I did, whether it be to come back as a tutor, or just to help with some of the extracurriculars, or even to teach.”

“For me, personal success is achieving happiness [...] whatever you’re doing in life, make sure that it brings you joy. This associate degree has taken me 10 years to complete. Along the way I’ve taken some really hard hits, but I’ve had some really great highs too. I am a mom now; I’m a wife; I’m back in school. I’ve had ups and downs with working, and career paths. I’ve changed majors, gosh, four times. But at the end of the day, I think I have some personal success because

I'm still happy. I'm still smiling; hell I'm still breathing. It's just taking stock of what you actually have in your life and making sure that you're happy that that's really where personal success lies."

"Success is setting a goal and accomplishing it. Success is doing something worthwhile. And so sometimes that means that you're really enjoying the time while you're doing it. And sometimes it means that you are stressing out and having a miserable time. But when you look back at it, you can say, Yeah, I accomplished that."

"I'm really proud of the way that I have in two years gone from being a high school dropout, to going to UMass, and sort of having a vague career plan and all of that, and so to me that's a success."

The hypothesis is that, if the formation of strong relationships is engendered early in a student's academic career, it would: ensure that BIPOC students' identity is highlighted as an asset and valued in their courses and community; enable access to student resources in a structured way that is integrated into the curriculum; foster the development of personal and academic goals (with mentoring and advising support provided to reach those goals). This, in turn, can help foster the transformative experience of defining and finding success earlier in one's academic career. Each of these structures have been integrated into the college's new Mountain Scholars Program, a cohort program for students of color. Greenfield Community College sees their greatest equity gaps for students of color emerging in the successful completion of college level English and math in the first year, and in retention from the first year to second year (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, 2020). The hope is by developing a program that connects students of color to a team of faculty and specialized advisors and creates special cohort classes with specific faculty on the Mountain Scholars team, that those relationships will mitigate the challenges our BIPOC students are facing during their first year at the college.

LESSONS LEARNED

The process of facilitating a participatory action research project is very time intensive, but it is equally rewarding and transformative for all the people involved. For the

students, it is an experiential learning experience that allows the student researchers to actively engage in their own learning and in the growth and development of an institution of higher education. For the co-facilitators, it is intense and intensely rewarding work, where the enthusiasm of the student researchers is infectious and inspiring. The research generates data that can inform new practices, but it also generates transformation in the students, and in the relationships of the facilitators and the students. Both groups are changed by the experience and that helps the institution grow and evolve in both large structural ways, but also smaller, but no less important, individual interpersonal ways.

Greenfield Community College is a workplace and an educational environment that aims to inspire lifelong learning for students and to model what lifelong learning looks like. The action research conducted and continue to conduct on diversity, equity and inclusion provides an opportunity to model what lifelong learning looks like. Subjects are able to reclaim their agency by generating and analyzing their own data. The researcher's role shifts from traditional data collection and analysis, to that of moderator and facilitator. Participatory action research facilitates learning, critical thinking, and the development of potential solutions so that communities can develop natively designed, developed and performed approaches to strengthening their own communities. The solutions organically emerge from the students, faculty and staff.

GCC is collaboratively creating living definitions, knowledge that evolves, changes, and transforms in different contexts, times and environments. If the notion of continual transformation is embraced, one can be more generous with forgiveness; with helping others understand; with creating an environment that allows people to ask questions and share their experiences and expertise; and with recognizing those experiences and expertise as things of value. Through the use of participatory action research, the workplace then becomes a location of opportunity to create social change in ways that can strengthen diversity and inclusion.

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ASSETS-BASED ASSESSMENT OF SUCCESS FACTORS FOR HIGH ACHIEVING AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINX STUDENTS AT SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY

SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY

BY KATHLEEN M. NEVILLE, EDD & NEENAH ESTRELLA-LUNA, MPH, PHD

Keywords: Students of Color, Academic Success, High Achieving, Assets-Based Research

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Salem State University (SSU), in Salem Massachusetts, is reflecting the growing student diversity in the Commonwealth. In fall 2018, SSU had a student enrollment of 8,338; of these 39.95% were students of color (www.salemstate.edu/salem-state-difference/facts-and-figures). Nationally, Latinx and Black students graduate from college at the rate of 45.8% and 38%, respectively. Meanwhile, white and Asian students are completing at 62% and 63.2%, respectively (Tate, 2017). Salem State University data showed that, contrary to national trends, African American students at the university achieved academic success at higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups.

From our institutional Power BI information (see this handbook for information on this emerging practice), among the 2012 entering first year students, 64.8% of African American students graduated in six years compared to 53.72% of Hispanic students and 58.43% of white students. SSU's institutional data also offers conflicting information about the academic success of Black, Brown and other students of color. Despite higher than average graduation rates, 37.7% of students of color received a D, F or W during the fall 2017 semester compared to 28.6% of their white peers. The results of the SSU Campus Climate Survey conducted in the spring 2017 has illuminated the differing experiences students of color report compared to their white peers. Additionally, members of SSU's Black, Brown and Proud student group also voiced their concerns to the community of differential treatment. The conflicting data about academic achievement, as well as information

about disparate experiences, required a deeper inquiry than is possible with statistical data alone.

LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF BLACK AND BROWN AND OTHER STUDENTS OF COLOR AT SSU

The goal of this initiative was to develop a process through which SSU could ascertain the institutional factors that contribute to the success of students of color. The aim wasn't just to identify what is working to replicate and scale; it was also to demonstrate the value in listening to and learning from the students as necessary sources of information about the institution itself. In this project, the aim was to figure out how to bring student voices into institutional assessment. The qualitative project focused specifically on understanding how high achieving Black, Brown and other students of color at SSU explain what contributed to their academic success. It was of particular interest to understanding what aspects of the campus community – including institutional agents and policies as well as academic and other campus experiences – the student participants perceived as having supported their ultimate success and achievements. The study was approved by the IRB at Salem State University. Descriptive phenomenology was selected as the main analytic methodology for this study as it focuses on “what [students of color] experience and how it is that they experience what they experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 107).

Selection of Participants: Using a purposeful sampling technique (Patton, 2002), the researchers generated a list of traditionally aged (19 to 23) students of color, with a 3.0 and above, who achieved junior or senior status. This

criteria mirrors that of Harper (2012) in his research on Black male student success. Initially we tried to reach students through campus email. However, only three students responded to the researchers using this recruitment approach. The researchers then decided to call students individually. Faculty and staff were asked to call students they knew and invite them to participate in this study. These personal phone calls resulted in a 40% response and participation rate.

Three focus groups with a total of 21 students participated in this study. Each of the focus groups were approximately 60 to 75 minutes long. Three men and 18 women participated. Using a semi-structured interview format, the researchers sought to understand how students experienced and perceived “who and how” the university has supported their success (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Focus groups were scheduled in the early evening and on Saturdays at noon. Meals were provided and participants received \$10 on their university student meal account in exchange for their participation.

Confidentiality or anonymity: At the beginning of each focus group, the researchers read a confidentiality statement and informed the students that their participation was voluntary and could end at any time. Students were also asked to sign a consent form. Participants were not required to provide their name and contact information. However, they were asked to complete a demographic sheet to assist with the analysis of data.

Semi-structure interview format: Seven questions were asked during the focus groups. Using an asset-based framework, these questions were developed with the intention of discovering how students talked about their success as students at the university.

1. Please take a minute to introduce yourself, tell us your major, and then briefly what are your goals as a student and where do you see yourself in five years?
2. What do you see as the characteristics of a successful college student? How do you see yourself in relation to this model student? During your time in college, when have you felt most successful as a college student?

3. Regarding your success as a student who are one or two of the most influential people in your college experience and name one specific thing they have done to help you? Who at SSU do you consider to be your mentor(s)?

4. Talk about times when you felt you belonged here at Salem State? Talk about times when you felt you didn't belong at Salem State.

5. What challenges have you faced on your path to success here at SSU?

6. What can SSU do to enhance your success as a student?

7. What advice would you give to a new student of color entering SSU on how to be successful?

Data Analysis: Audio recordings of the focus groups were transcribed by an outside vendor. These transcripts were the basis of the analysis. This phenomenological qualitative study was analyzed using a three-step process (Moustakas, 1994). A critical step in this approach requires that the researcher do what they can to ‘bracket’ out, or set aside, their thoughts and preconceived notions regarding what students say prior to engaging with the data collected (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). This process allowed for the students’ voices within the context presented to be explored and understood on their own terms. The researchers accomplished this by journaling prior to and during analysis. Then the researchers highlighted statements made by participants that describe their experiences and the meanings they give to those experiences in relation to the specific research questions and purpose of the study. This process allowed us to gather significant and “non-repetitive” comments from the participants. Finally, the students’ statements were grouped into themes or meaning units (Creswell, 2007) describing common and variant experiences and perceptions.

All focus groups were concluded by the end of February 2020. The students freely spoke of their achievements and success in spite of challenges they face. Students were frank about what those challenges were and were not afraid to name individuals, suggesting that the researchers created a safe enough environment to share sensitive information. The findings of this study were presented to the university’s executive committee and were well received.

To sustain and enhance the success of the Black, Brown and other students of color attending our institutions, it must be determined what contributes to their success. And in order to do that, it is important to actually listen to them and then act on what they say.

One important theme uncovered was the need to build connections. Students described a variety of connections that supported their success; they stressed the importance of developing a robust and affirming social network. The experiences and perspectives described highlight the importance of racial/ethnic affinity group spaces in providing a place of refuge and non-judgmental support (Mosley, et al., 2020). Given our goal, this theme reinforces the lessons learned from this experience.

LESSONS LEARNED

The main goal of this initiative was to develop processes in which student voices were included and valued in institutional assessments of its own structures and processes. There are four lessons we learned from this experience.

Qualitative data is essential to tell the full story that quantitative data cannot. It is widely acknowledged that, in general, quantitative data is critical in determining the distribution of a population across known categories, characteristics or conditions (or vice versa). However, a reliance on quantitative data is insufficient to fully uncover why or how these relationships are created or persist. Processes that collect qualitative information directly from students is critical to provide the meaning behind those numbers and also to help reconcile seemingly contradictory or inconsistent data. Qualitative data on student experiences should be incorporated into the institutional research agenda. Qualitative research allows higher education administrators to understand the meaning and perceptions students make of their experience on campus. This information adds significantly to the existing quantitative data because it helps explain what is found in that data and provides different information than what can be collected through a survey or other institutional

data. Qualitative data provides the nuances and context of the students lived experience. In our study, for example, the institutional data held by the university does not provide information regarding the importance of the social connections that support the success of our students.

Student voices need to be integrated into institutional assessment in more meaningful ways. This experience, as well as what we heard from the students in this study, reinforce the need for significant culture change in our institution. Specifically, institutions need to proactively seek out students, actively listen to them and take student experiences more seriously. Through this process, we identified three potential practices that SSU could support more effectively or scale to support the success of students of color. Two ideas that SSU is now actively implementing, the creation of credit/non-credit internship programs and hiring peer mentors of color, would not have been identified through Power BI or other institutional data collection processes alone. The third idea, creating or supporting racial affinity group spaces, requires the institution have a culture that prioritizes the social-psychological well-being of students of color – as students of color – and to see this as a critical factor in their academic success. We learned that we need to hear more stories to see the patterns in student experiences. Institutionalizing qualitative practices such as interviews and focus groups will also help us see when patterns begin to change.

Relationships are key to this process. The role of relationships was a clear theme from the study that was conducted. In relation to developing an assets-oriented process to identify institutional structures and processes that support the success of students of color, the personal touch was critical in simply recruiting students to participate. A 40% participation rate was achieved only after making personal phone calls to students. This suggests that future efforts like this should enlist faculty and staff, and reward their participation, in order to recruit widely and deeply.

These processes need time and institutional support. The study described here was led by one administrator with the assistance of two graduate students. It was started and completed within a three-month time frame. A more comprehensive study, and one that would contribute to

changes in culture and policy, would engage a larger team of faculty, staff and administrators in the research design, data collection, data analysis and report writing processes. The ideal study would incorporate both focus groups as well as individual interviews. A comprehensive analytic process would also allow for member-checking, which is the process of sharing preliminary findings and themes with research participants to verify that the themes identified and the presentations of the findings are consistent with their perspectives and experiences (Charmaz, 2006; Stringer, 2014). The ideal process would be undertaken over a period of six–nine months. In short, incorporating student voices in a meaningful way using qualitative data to identify the factors that support the success of students of color should be provided an equitable amount of resources as other institutional assessment processes.

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NOT TOO SMALL TO COUNT: DEVELOPING A STUDENT EQUITY MATRIX AND CULTURE SHIFT AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION

CAPE COD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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Keywords Racial Equity Matrix, Disaggregating Data, Predominately White Institution

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Cape Cod Community College (CCCC) is one of 15 public community colleges in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Serving the Cape, Martha’s Vineyard, Nantucket, Wareham and Plymouth, the college hosts programs in four locations: the main campus in West Barnstable, Hyannis, Plymouth, and on the campus of Bridgewater State University. The composition of the CCCC student body and faculty/staff is more racially and ethnically diverse than the majority of the college’s service area; however, the college remains a predominantly white institution with 74% of students identifying as white and 26% identifying as students of color (CCCC Office of Institutional Research, fall 2019).

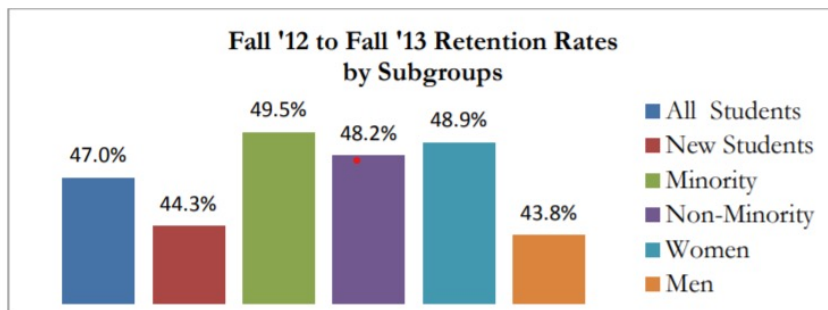
When CCCC ended its first year in the Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI) in 2018, the college welcomed new hires in key areas. With a new vice president of academic and student affairs (VPASA) and new deans came a renewed desire to leverage the work of the REJI to improve directly the experience of students of color and to promote across campus a growth mindset that would support all students.

At the start of the AY2019–2020, the leadership of CCCC’s Racial Equity and Justice Institute moved from the office of human resources to the division of academic and student affairs. Led by the newly appointed VPASA, the group composition changed to include the office of institutional research, admissions, enrollment management/advising, and the STEM division. The shift in committee make-up made the committee’s work more focused on students, especially students of color.

Simultaneously, the college was preparing to launch the process for drafting its new strategic plan. In order to align the work of both initiatives, REJI campus team members reviewed the current strategic plan, with an eye towards building upon REJI’s team’s equity work with the strategic planning process. The team soon realized that while diversity was mentioned in the strategic plan, it was not a central part of it. The primary area where diversity was addressed was under the section on student retention.

The chart below identifies fall-to-fall retention rates for 2012–2013, the year prior to the institutional strategic plan’s approval. The data in the chart are supported by the following text:

CCCC disaggregates student outcome data by diversity groups in order to track achievement gaps. For some groups, small numbers result in unstable rates, especially when tracking cohorts of students over time. In the retention rates below, there were no differences in rates by ethnicity, so minority students were collapsed as one group to allow a comparison of rates with other subgroups. The only diversity subgroup with lower fall-to-fall retention rate trends than the average rate is male students. New students also have lower retention rates than average (emphasis added).



Cape Cod Community College Strategic Plan 2014-2019

[CCCC Fall '12 to Fall '13 Retention Rates by Subgroups in table format.](#)

Aggregated into one group, the CCCC’s “minority students” appeared to have no equity gaps; if anything, retention among these students was strong, outpacing other student groups. This perspective informed student initiatives and even the college’s mission statement that did not include the word “diversity.” With the appearance of no gap, there was the belief that no diversity or equity priorities or initiatives were necessary.

CCCC’s REJI campus team set out to change the mindset around data and its disaggregation and bring the barriers faced by of our students of color to the forefront. It was proposed that CCCC create and use an equity matrix listing the success indicators for African American, Latinx/Hispanic, and Pell students to identify and close gaps among all students in the next five years.

As Hawley and Nieto noted, “being more conscientious of race and ethnicity is not discriminatory; it’s realistic” (2010). Caution must always be used when interpreting data; yet refusing to acknowledge all groups at CCCC marginalizes already underrepresented students. No student at CCCC is insignificant.

MAKING THE CASE FOR DATA DISAGGREGATION

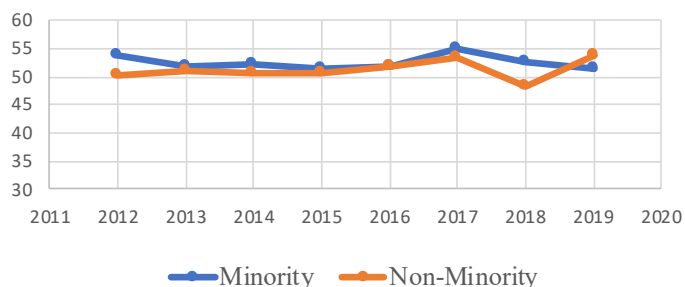
Data disaggregation is often defined as the divvying of the whole into its smaller components. Data that focuses on student populations are often disaggregated by identity markers collected by the institutions (such as gender, race, ethnicity, Pell status and zip code).

The design and assessment of academic programming, support services, culturally responsive programming, and retention initiatives must rely on disaggregated data. As noted by the National Forum on Education Statistics, “The more accurately education data reflect the diversity of the student population, the better prepared education practitioners will be to customize instructional and support services to meet those student needs” (2010).

Cape Cod Community College disaggregated race and ethnicity student data by “minority” and “non-minority.” The college is a predominantly white institution, with 77% of students identifying as non-minority, or white, and 23% as minority, a group that could include those of African descent, Latinx/Hispanic, Native, Asian, or identity that is non-white.

From 2012–2019, fall-to-fall retention rate of degree seeking students was represented as minority–non-minority. The result is that the data showed very little difference in the retention rate of both groups:

Fall to Fall Retention for Degree-Seeking Students



[Fall to Fall Retention for Degree-Seeking Students in table format.](#)

Similarly, with fall-to-spring persistence, from 2015–2019, the gap between the two groups seemed marginal.

Fall to Spring Persistence for Degree-Seeking Students					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Minority	64.5	70.9	74	70.1	68.7
Non-minority	69.7	72.4	73.4	69.9	71.6

Often times, the argument used not to disaggregate data is that the number of certain populations in that group are too small, thereby making decision-making based on that number irresponsible or unethical. Yet, any time data are used to inform decision-making, care must be exercised when analyzing them. As seen in the above examples, with aggregated data one makes assumptions that the “minority degree seeking students” persist and succeed. Differences in persistence, completion and overall success are not evident with aggregated data.

At institutions with predominately part-time students, retention and persistence rates can be misleading measures for student success. Part-time students do not follow traditional paths within a conventional two-year time frame. For example, half of CCCC students will take longer than six semesters to earn 60 credits. In this way, a student who comes back semester after semester still may be a long way from completion. Other metrics associated with completion must be combined with retention and persistent rates to create a more meaningful metric.

As with any change in practices, there were challenges. At its heart, the most challenging point was ideological: how can data be presented that is both ethical, honest and useful? All requests for disaggregated data led back to that question. Progress came with several events: the Board of Higher Education (BHE) and the DHE's Equity Agenda and Common Assessment Plan. Released in 2018-2019, the Equity Agenda clearly stated that public institutions will enhance economic and social mobility for all citizens, but particularly for those that have historically been underserved and underrepresented, especially students of color, throughout all levels of education (MA Department of Higher Education <https://www.mass.edu/strategic/equity.asp>).

In addition, with the BHE's Common Assessment plan, each public institution is required to align its placement into English and math courses to achieve student completion goals, specifically, that 50% of all students, especially those underserved, will complete college-level math and English within their first 24 credits. Perhaps most significantly, CCCC's senior administration made equity, diversity and inclusion priorities for the college.

Finally, in 2020, data about students of color was disaggregated, a result, in part, of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's Equity Agenda and the college's revision of its strategic plan. What the college learned about students and their success rates across multiple success indicators with the disaggregated data changed the course of how its data is analyzed and applied.

WHAT WAS LEARNED WHEN DATA WAS DISAGGREGATED

Massachusetts has the expectation that CCCC will enhance economic and social mobility for all citizens, but particularly for those who have historically been underserved and underrepresented, especially students of color. Disaggregation of data across multiple success indicators, even of numbers previously considered statistically insignificant, gave the college a clear and honest picture of how our students of color progress, or in some cases, how they do not progress.

The table below shows the first lesson we learned: African-American and Latinx students at CCCC are more likely to be part-time students than white students.

Degree-Seeking Students				
	African-American	Latinx	White	All students
% Part-time	78%	75%	69%	70%

As the college continued its data collection for the new strategic plan, significant gaps were seen between students of color and white students in key success indicators, as noted in the color-coded student equity matrix on key success indicators on the next page.

<i>Student Equity Matrix 2017-2019</i>												
Success Indicator	All			Latinx			African-American			Pell-Recipient		
Access (change from 2017-2019)	-10%			+14%			+ 11%			-10%		
	2700	2544	2440	205	228	234	171	194	190	1552	1456	1395
Course success rate	77%			+1%			-3%			+7%		
Complete college-level math within first 24 credits	21.6%			-1.0%			-12.1%			-4.4%		
% enrolled in college level math	34%			+1.7%			-15%			-5.4%		
College-level math success rate	63.5%			-8.5%			-13.5%			-7%		
Complete college-level English within first 24 credits	52.3%			-2.3%			-2.3%			+2.9%		
% enrolled in College-level English	72.6%			-3%			-3.6%			+2.5		
College-level English success rate	72.1%			-0.3%			+0.3%			+1.4%		
Fall-to-Fall Retention (3-year average)	52%			+ 0.3%			+ 5.0%			+ 3.4%		
4-year Completion Rate	19%			-7%			-13%			+2%		
6-year Transfer Rate	27%			+0%			-5%			+0%		
6-year Success Rate	42%			+2%			-8%			-1%		

■ = No Equity Gap: Sustain and Improve

■ = Equity Gap: Action Needed

Equity Matrix Chart originally published in Cape Cod Community College's Strategic Plan 2021-2025

The disaggregated data across multiple success indicators tells a very different story than fall-to-fall retention rate comparing white students to the aggregated group of “minority” students. The Student Equity Matrix shows multiple inequities presently exist at CCCC.

For example, African American students are retained at a 5% rate higher than all students combined; however, their success rate in college-level math is lowest among all student groups. Likewise, African American students have the lowest six-year success rate among all students at CCCC. Slightly more Latinx student may have been placed in college-level math, but they are less likely to pass than Pell recipients.

Pell-recipients are being successful at CCCC likely due to the institution’s long-running Advantage Program funded by the federal TRiO program. Quite clearly, Latinx and African American students are not experiencing satisfactory achievement outcomes. For all underrepresented groups, completing a college-level math course appears to be a considerable barrier.

The table clearly shows the challenge of concentrating solely on increasing retention; African-American students face barriers in nearly all indicators of academic success except retention, where these students have a higher retention than the overall average. In the end, student retention, long held as a goal for the college, becomes meaningless in light of disaggregated data of completion metrics.

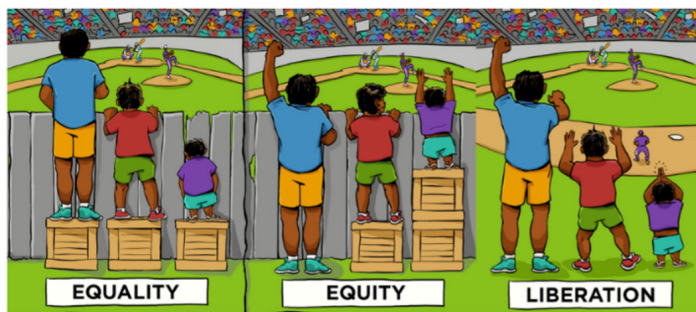
INFORMING OUR EFFORTS WITH EQUITY-ORIENTED DATA

As a result of seeing the data, CCCC shifted its goals for the new strategic plan. The previous goals of retention, graduation and employment have been refined to support overall improvements for students, in general, and to promote the closing of opportunity gaps for underserved students. The college’s new strategic plan sets as the primary goal to increase completion with an emphasis on equity to fulfill the promise of economic and social mobility that many students, especially students of color, seek when entering into postsecondary education.

In the academic and students affairs sections of the new strategic plan, activities will focus on best practices for

equity, such as the removal of standardized placement exams, programming to promote diversity, inclusion, and belonging, and revision of policies and practices towards the use of culturally-sensitive language and processes. With this matrix, the college upholds the view that underserved students are learners requiring cultivation rather than problems in need of fixing.

Perhaps the more critical lesson learned -- one that is not easy to admit -- is how the past practice of not disaggregating data and using a narrow definition of student success perpetuated a false narrative of student success among the increasing diversity of CCCC students. In an environment of tight budgets, such false narratives were used to argue against implementing practices grounded in equity, diversity and inclusion. Moving forward, the collection, analysis and monitoring of disaggregated data will be critical to rectifying structurally racist practices at CCCC.



Source: Interaction Institute for Social Change
Artist: Angus Maguire

As depicted in the above image, this new strategic plan informed by disaggregated data, is a concerted and intentional effort to remove barriers and obstacles that hinder the success of underserved students. More importantly, CCCC is committed to data practices that reveal the true story of our students and are founded on equity.

NEXT STEPS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Student Equity Matrix created with disaggregated data is one of the special areas of focus in the Cape Cod Community College Strategic Plan, 2020–2025. An institutional effectiveness committee will be formed to review annually quantitative and qualitative data around the key points of the plans, specifically, the Student Equity

Matrix. In addition, the Student Equity Matrix has been shared with all areas of the college, including the office of student engagement, the college's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Committee -- comprised of faculty and staff, and faculty in English and math, the two disciplines included. While sharing is meant to inform each area of the campus about the matrix, each committee will be tasked with reflecting on the data, aligning its annual goal with the matrix, and identifying committee-appropriate activities and metrics. Each month, at the college's shared governance meeting (called "College Meeting"), committee leaders are expected to report back on their group's activities; with the matrix as the focus, each group will include in their reports how they are addressing the improvement of the identified success indicators.

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DEEP DIVE DATA TEAM

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE BY KELLY SARETSKY, KIRSTEN KORTZ & KIM BURNS

Keywords: Course Completion, Faculty-Level Course Data, Equity, Hispanic Serving Institution

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Northern Essex Community College (NECC) in Haverhill, Massachusetts, is guided by the institutional vision statement: to create “a supportive learning environment of cultural inclusion that embraces all identities and inspires initiative and excellence” (<https://www.necc.mass.edu/discover/mission-statement-core-values/>). This vision and values helped catalyze NECC’s work on the Deep Dive Data Team.

Northern Essex Community College has three identities that were a significant part of setting the stage for the Deep Dive Data Team over the past two years. First, NECC is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). As an HSI, NECC is constantly evaluating our ability to serve Hispanic students, not just enroll them. Second, NECC is an Achieving the Dream (ATD) Member College. ATD emphasizes data-driven decision making whenever possible, and a culture of data-collection on campus. Finally, NECC has an active Equity Imperative as a guiding initiative directing all work to increase equity and outcomes for traditionally underserved students. The Deep Dive Data Team (DDDT) has been able to accomplish the work described in this Emerging Practice because the campus culture that values data and equity work, but also due to the knowledge that there is still a significant amount of work to be done.

DEVELOPING THE DEEP DIVE DATA TEAM

In the fall 2018, a small group of faculty, staff and administrators came together to look at data showing an undeniable gap in graduation and degree attainment rates between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students. This data had come to us unexpectedly, and it told a story that many on campus had been avoiding talking about -- as an institution, NECC was not in fact serving our Hispanic students in ways that ensured equitable outcomes. The group chose to define themselves as the Deep Dive Data Team (DDDT) to emphasize their practice of intentionally exploring, parsing

and questioning of data to find patterns. They spent a full semester exploring historical data to find patterns that might indicate a root cause for the disparities.

This initiative is intended to support male and female Hispanic students enrolled at any level at NECC as the campus works to identify and eliminate educational equity gaps. However, it is important to note that in this case the initiative supports students indirectly by providing an opportunity for instructors to assess and make changes to their teaching practices, rather than being a program or intervention that is delivered directly to students.

The DDDT also supports faculty, administrators and staff who are interested in accessing, understanding and acting upon institutional data. The group can provide answers to specific questions; help areas explore their own equity and outcomes data; and can help individuals learn how to use institutional technology to continuously monitor data.

The Deep Dive Data Team has a number of functions, but the most important are to a) explore data in direct service to essential questions; b) to inform decisions and actions with data; and c) to provide access to institutional data through Tableau and Zogotech, two specific software platforms designed for data sharing.

The first goal of the DDDT is to monitor: successful course completions, as well as overall GPA; unsuccessful course outcomes (failures, withdrawals, and incompletes); time to degree; and degree/transfer success for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students. The data is then made available to all members of the college community, but especially faculty and administration. The second goal of the group is to provide data that identifies success gaps in a way that can be easily understood and used by members of the college with the knowledge and resources to prompt concrete actions to address those gaps. The third goal is to measure the impact

of those actions in closing gaps, and to provide the college with updated data on a regular basis showing what change has been affected.

Additionally, the DDDT supports the following campus-initiatives aimed at closing the educational equity gap between our Hispanic and non-Hispanic students. These initiatives include but are not limited to our Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute group, work organized through our Center for Professional Development and Center for Instructional Technology, and our Equity Imperative.

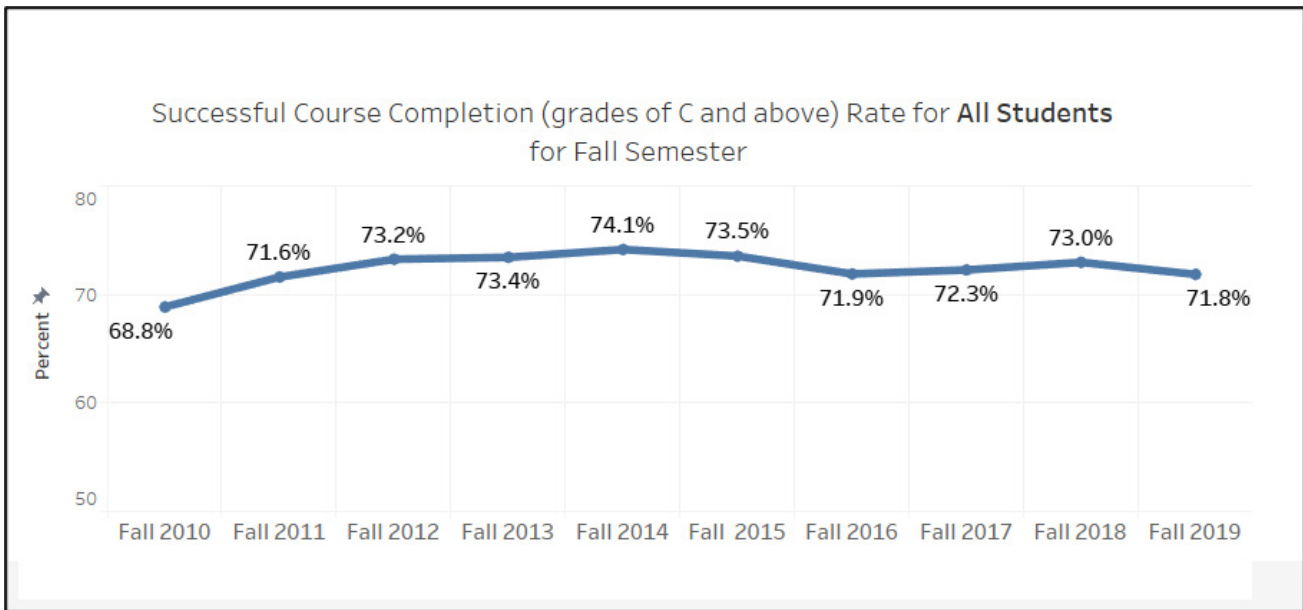
- 1) Quantify differences in the achievement and outcomes of Hispanic and non-Hispanic male and female students, including successful course completion, overall GPA, and degree attainment.
- 2) Identify large and small gaps in successful completion at the program, course, section, and instructor level for use by faculty, program coordinators, and deans in each of our academic divisions.
- 3) Develop methods to inventory the knowledge and practices of faculty to understand how they achieve equitable outcomes in their sections.

4) Empower faculty to access their own class-level data related to course completion and achievement so they are able to question the experiences students are having in their classes and how those influence the outcomes of different groups of students in their classes.

5) Further NECC’s equity work by helping faculty understand why the Equity Imperative is an essential component of continued success of the institution, at all levels.

DIVING INTO THE DATA

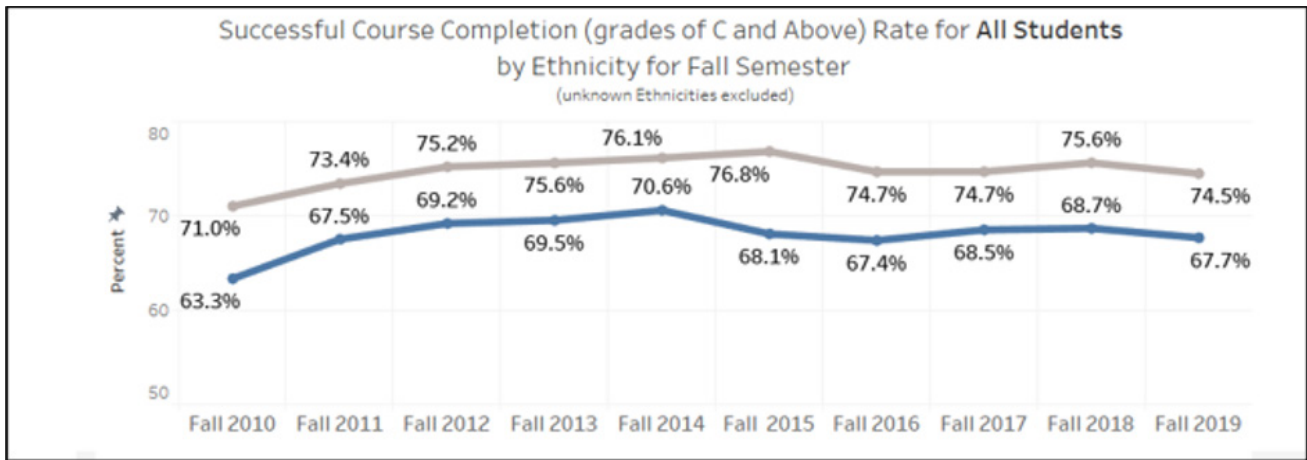
The DDDT chose to start their exploration by looking at course completion rates. At NECC “successful” course completion is measured by a student earning a grade between an A to C. Anything below a C is not considered as a successful completion. This is because the A-C range matches the GPA range for Academic Good Standing; a grade below a C would result in a student being on academic probation or suspension. The DDDT chose to start with a long view of the last decade of fall semesters, which would hopefully capture shifts and reveal patterns.



[Successful Course Completion \(grades of C and above\) Rate for All Students for Fall Semester in table format.](#)

On the surface, the variation in course completion rates across the last decade did not look bad. Although there were times when they rose and fell, in the end, very little variation over time and little true progress had been made. Yet, anecdotally faculty knew that Hispanic students were not completing their courses at the same rate. It was time to dive a little deeper into our data to see what could be learned. The DDDT chose to parse data by ethnicity, pulling apart the successful course completion rates for the two largest student groups: Hispanic and non-Hispanic.

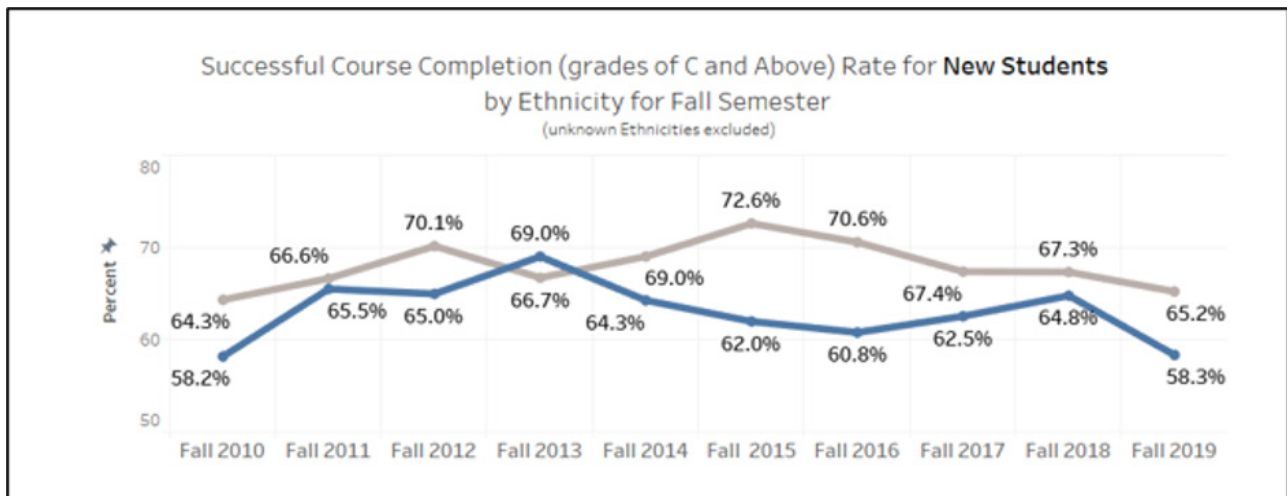
The DDDT's analysis of course and section level data revealed clear differences in successful course completion for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students. The data visualizations below show the percentage of successful course completions across the fall semesters of the last decade at NECC for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students.



■ = Hispanic or Latino ■ = Not Hispanic or Latino

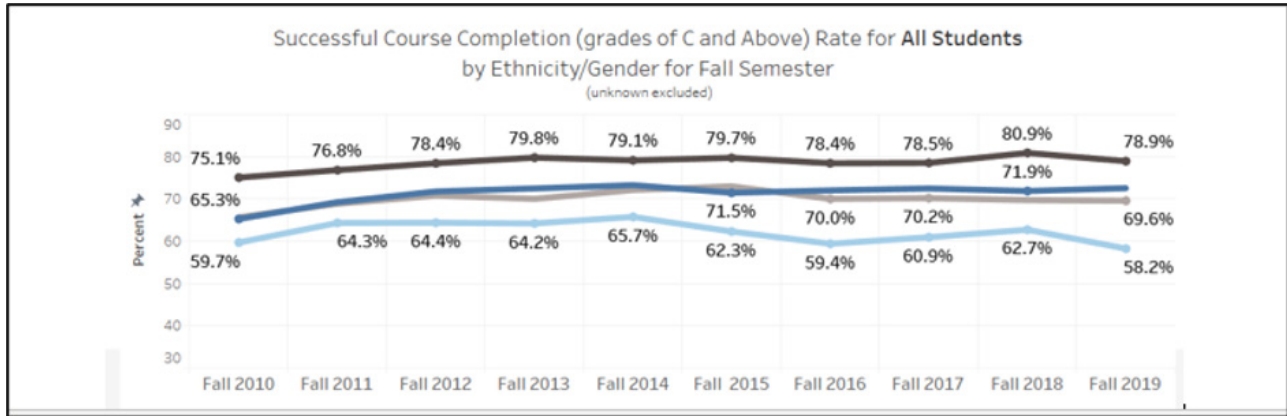
[Successful Course Completion \(grades of C and above\) Rate for All Students by Ethnicity for Fall Semester in table format.](#)

Already, the DDDT was able to see that Hispanic students were not experiencing the same level of success in their courses as their non-Hispanic peers. However, the overall trend lines seemed to be relatively similar: ups and downs, but in the end it was still better than in 2010. There had to be an even more disaggregated view if the group was ever going to surface telling patterns. They chose to isolate first semester students, a group that has always been vulnerable. It was at this point that variation over time started to emerge.



[Successful Course Completion \(grades of C and above\) Rate for NEW Students by Ethnicity for Fall Semester in table format.](#)

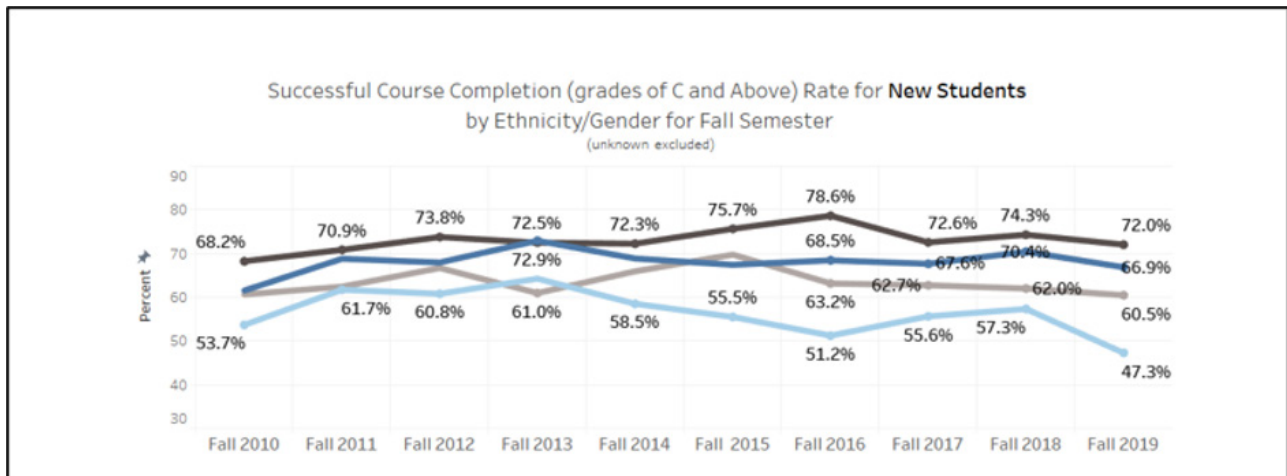
Already it was clear that Hispanic and non-Hispanic students were having disparate educational experiences, especially in their first semester at NECC. Several data sources, including anecdotal evidence from NECC instructors, suggested that Hispanic males were the most vulnerable population in higher education, and the least likely to experience success in their first semester. To better understand how that might look at NECC, the DDDT further disaggregated the successful outcome data by gender, which revealed a gap between Hispanic males and females that was hidden by looking only at one variable. This confirmed experiential knowledge and aligned with larger national data: Hispanic males were in fact experiencing the least success.



■ = Hispanic Female ■ = Hispanic Male ■ = Not Hispanic Female ■ = Not Hispanic Male

[Successful Course Completion \(grades of C and above\) Rate for All Students by Ethnicity/Gender for Fall Semester in table format.](#)

Again, the DDDT chose just to look at new students, and an even more variation emerged, confirming that our first semester students were having widely varied experiences with success. With the notable exception of 2013, first semester



■ = Hispanic Female ■ = Hispanic Male ■ = Not Hispanic Female ■ = Not Hispanic Male

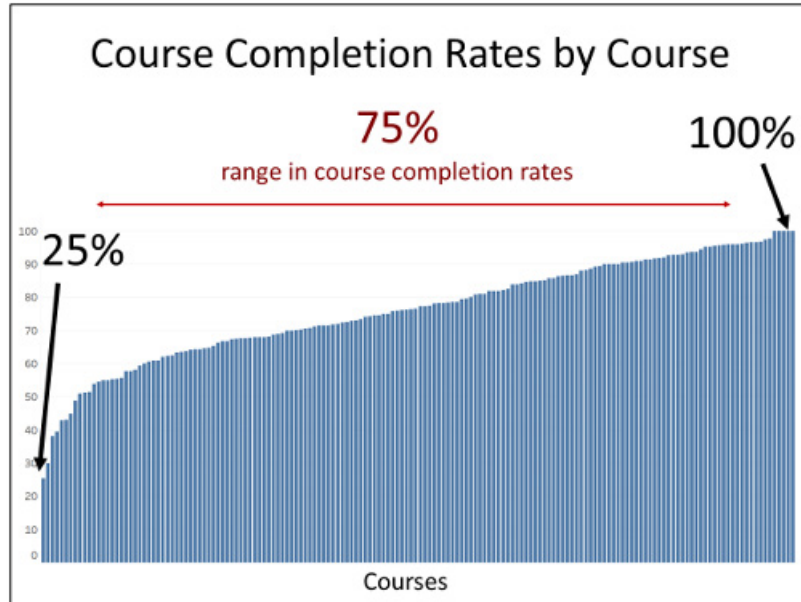
[Successful Course Completion \(grades of C and above\) Rate for New Students by Ethnicity/Gender for Fall Semester in table format.](#)

Hispanic students were consistently experiencing less success than their non-Hispanic classmates, despite localized supports. This finding immediately alerted the DDDT that concrete actions should be taken to address this gap at the institutional level.

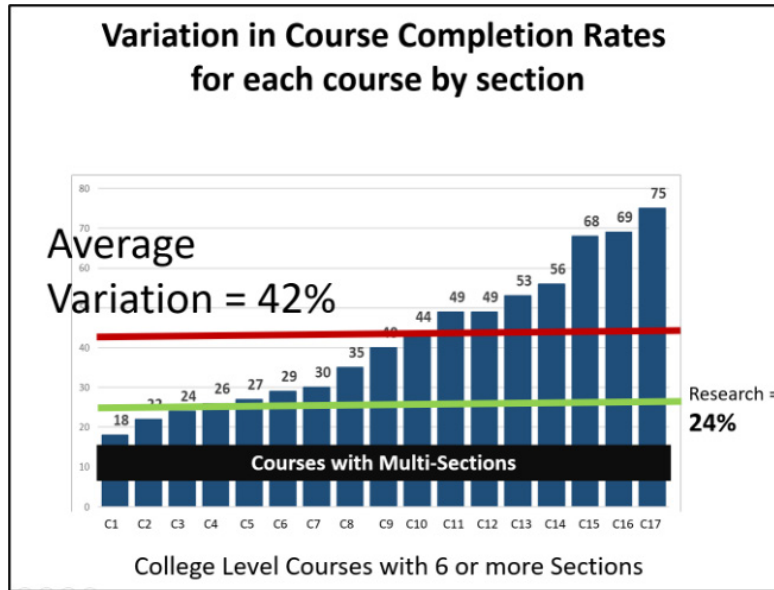
MAKING THE DATA ACTIONABLE

The group had determined that there was a need for action, but how to go about starting that action? To take this information to the larger college community, the DDDT established a relationship with the Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute campus team at NECC. This created a symbiotic relationship in which the DDDT could grapple with data to help the Leading for Change team affect institutional change. Initially, this meant a lot of conversations about what the DDDT had found in the data so far and what else needed to be surfaced. Clearly seeing that students were not all having the same experience at the college, the two groups knew they needed to understand where the disparity was stemming from. However, a lot had changed in the world and at the college since 2010. The DDDT made the choice to move away from semester to semester averages over a decade of time, and instead to look at course- and section-level educational equity gap data in the most recent semesters as a way to tie outcomes to the place where students are spending most of their time: the classroom.

First, the DDDT explored overall course completion rates at the college, and while the average did not seem so bad – 75% on average across all classes – when this number was disaggregated by individual courses, a large variation emerged. What was hidden by the average was a vast range of successful course completion rates depending on the individual class section. Some sections had rates as high as 100% while others were at only 25% -- and that was before the rates were parsed by variables such as ethnicity.

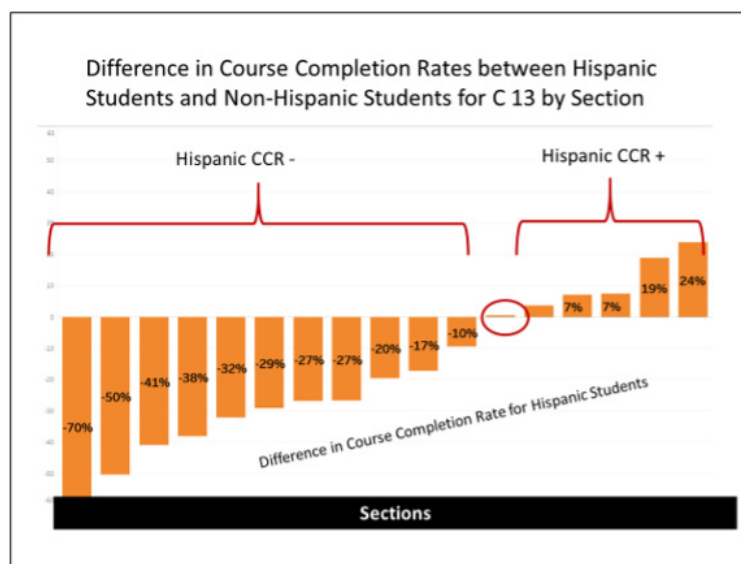


A finer course-level analysis further revealed that successful completion varied widely between individual courses at the college. Some courses had very good outcomes, while others were clearly a struggle for any student to successfully complete. For example, in the 17 courses at NECC that consistently have at least six sections running each semester, there is a 42% variation between the highest and lowest course completion rate; this is a far cry from the 24% variation rate that is recommended as “ideal” by researchers.



[Variation in Course Completion Rates for Each Course by Section in table format.](#)

Seeing this wide variation among courses and sections raised the question: where do our Hispanic students stand in all this variation? To answer that question, the DDDT determined the difference in successful course completion rates for Hispanic students. Using the same 17-section course as above, the DDDT was able to show how much higher or lower the course completion rates were for Hispanic students.



[Difference in Course Completion Rates between Hispanic Students and Non-Hispanic Students for C 13 by Section in table format.](#)

In the majority of sections of this course, Hispanic students had much lower successful completion rates than their peers, and only a handful of sections had Hispanic students doing better. This trend held across sections of nearly all of the courses the DDDT selected for analysis, so they knew it was not an anomaly in this one course.

DEEPENING THE CAMPUS CONVERSATION ABOUT EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Working closely with the Leading for Change group, the Deep Dive Data Team made the difficult decision to go “public” with this data. This decision was not made lightly. Everyone on the group was aware that it could spark significant distrust, which would make change even more difficult. However, it was not an option to continue to avoid this very real problem; these difficult conversations had to start happening and they had to start immediately. The two groups collaborated to develop a strategic approach to sharing the data campus-wide at the January 2020 convocation meeting. They chose to present the data at January convocation because most full-time faculty would be attending, and many adjuncts, support staff, and administrators as well. This provided a chance to tell everyone at the same time so that no one felt they were kept in the dark or singled out to have their data shared. The group selected a large first semester survey course that has 20+ sections (there are several of these on campus, so it reduced the chances that people would guess the program). The data was stripped of all identifiers and presented in visualizations to make it accessible even to the most number-apprehensive of the crowd.

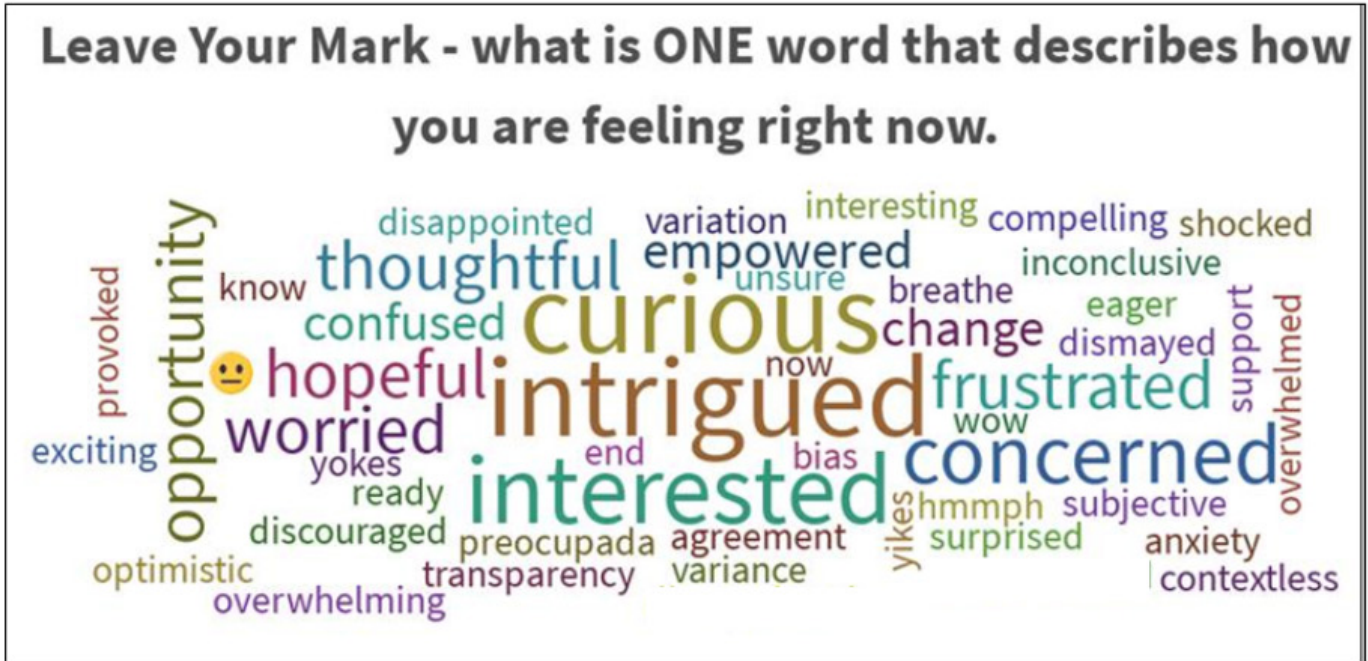
After some discussion, the DDDT agreed that the dean of institutional research would facilitate the presentation alone. This had two strategic benefits: first, it allowed other members of the group to sit at tables and hear reactions; and second, it provided an “objective” face for the conversation, as the dean is not housed within either academic or student affairs at NECC.

During the presentation, analysis focused on the range of success rates between individual sections of the course, without saying what a typical pass/fail rate should be -- they did not want to tell faculty how many students should pass their class and instead chose to focus on the fact that among sections there was enormous variation in successful

completion in general. A series of visualizations broke those numbers down by students’ ethnicity to highlight the fact that Hispanic and non-Hispanic students were not doing equally well or poorly across this course or within a single section of the course. Finally, the presentation highlighted the fact that there were a few courses in which Hispanic students did better than their non-Hispanic peers, although those courses were few and far between.

As the presentation unfolded, the facilitator strategically used a game-show format to keep the crowd engaged but also to not really give people a chance to start unpacking what they were seeing at their tables. Of course, each table had side conversations, but the pace of the presentation helped keep those focused on the questions and data that were being presented, rather than allowing people to draw their own conclusions or lose focus. The DDDT had specifically chosen this presentation method over table-based discussion groups because of a concern that the tables would have wildly different conversations based on their level of comfort with data. Using a texting-based system, questions regarding the data were presented with a multiple choice answer; then the audience had about 30 seconds to text their answer (A-D) and it would populate on the screen using a bar chart showing the total number of responses to each possible answer. The dean would then reveal the correct answer, speak briefly about what that meant in broad terms, and move on.

At the end of the presentation, the final text-poll asked each member of the audience to submit a single word to represent their reactions. The results generated a real-time word cloud that everyone could watch as it grew. It captured the anxiety and tension of publicly exploring class-level data, but also the hopefulness and curiosity that comes from seeing a problem and being offered a chance to solve it.



Following convocation, an offer was made to sit with program coordinators, deans and faculty to dive into their individual data. The dean of institutional research met with individual departments and divisions to answer questions about the data, and to ask what they wanted for next steps in terms of seeing their own data. Some departments were very willing to look at their data and were eager to discuss the variation that they found across their courses and sections. Other departments were more hesitant to look at their data because they were unsure of their ability to do something effective with the knowledge.

The academic divisions were given the latitude to decide for themselves how they would use this data, and how they would measure the effectiveness of any specific actions taken because of it. In the weeks immediately following the presentation, representatives from the various divisions, departments and programs within academic affairs opened conversations among themselves and with institutional research to gain access to their own, unmasked data. The dean of institutional research created a Tableau dashboard that provided access to this data, in a visual format. This proved far more effective than an Excel spreadsheet or other numerical representation in providing easy accessibility and relieving anxiety.

INTEGRATING DATA INTO INSTITUTIONAL COVID-19 TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The COVID-19 crisis interfered with many of the conversations that were planned for the spring semester but on May 6, 2020, the team was able to meet with all of the academic deans, the vice president of academic and student affairs, and the dean of academic innovations and professional development (who also leads NECC’s Leading for Change team) to discuss how NECC can use this data. The following questions were raised:

What is an acceptable level of variation between sections of the same course?

What support do departments and faculty need from the institution to begin to understand their course completion data? To do something about it if they find the variation is more than they are comfortable with?

How do we identify tangible work that can be done with this data in the fall, especially as the effects of COVID-19 on different ethnic/racial groups become more evident?

At this point, forward progress on this initiative has slowed considerably due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the work of the Deep Dive Data Team was at a pivot-point, waiting for faculty and administration to tell them how to proceed with their work, the initiative was particularly

vulnerable to being tabled when the college's efforts needed to focus on the emergency transition to remote teaching and learning.

As of the end of academic year (May 2020) the Deep Dive Data Team resumed its regular meetings and is actively reaching out to those in the academic areas that had previously expressed interest in building the next steps of this initiative. The hope is to dovetail the work of this team with the college's efforts to create an equitable remote/online learning experience for all students -- work which is still unfolding as the COVID-19 pandemic runs its course.

As NECC prepares for a nearly 100% online fall semester, there have been opportunities to weave this conversation into the professional development and support for online course conversion work that is taking place over the summer. Within the training modules for faculty, there are several resources for equitable teaching to ensure the faculty is designing courses to close outcome gaps right from the first day. Several members of the Leading for Change and Deep Dive Data Team will be offering workshops over the summer as well that will resurface this data and provide faculty with concrete teaching practices for closing equity gaps.

SHARING LESSONS LEARNED

Through this process, the Deep Dive Data Team learned several valuable lessons about how to engage small groups and the larger campus in discussions about data, equity and diversity, and student outcomes.

Be mindful about how and when you choose to share data with faculty and staff to facilitate conversations and inquiry rather than hostility or refusal to participate.

The initial data that the team worked with came from an article in a local newspaper that ranked Massachusetts community colleges based on the graduation and degree completion rates of Hispanic students. The way in which the data in the article was used created a sense of tension and defensiveness. While this did lead to the creation of the Deep Dive Data Team, it also meant that the group initially went into the data without the appropriate sense of inquiry and willingness to see patterns. It was not until they pivoted from that data (which was based on outcomes from nearly a decade ago) to look at our more recent data that they were

able to ask our own questions and start to see important trends. As they moved forward sharing data with the larger campus, they were very careful to present it in a way that would allow new participants to approach it with inquiry, rather than apprehension so they could avoid the pitfalls they faced early on.

Trust that the faculty is interested in seeing data about their students, even if it is not always positive information.

Following January's convocation presentation, a large number of faculty approached the dean of institutional research and strategic planning to request data for their courses, programs, and/or departments. This included our English and math departments, who house our more critical gateways courses for first semester students. Conversations about the data were had in all of the division meetings in January, and those discussions extended through department and program meetings up until the move to remote teaching eclipsed all other priorities.

Relying solely on averages to determine student outcomes hides a great deal of information, patterns and variation that may be essential to understanding how to better support student success.

Institutionally, NECC has tended to look at averages from semester to semester, or to look at cohorts as homogeneous groups with one pattern of behaviors. It was not until the DDDT started separating our yearly cohorts into smaller groups that they were able to see the underlying patterns that were driving the larger trends, and – as it turned out – hiding crucial information in some places. For example, what looked like a steady enrollment of female students was actually two completely separate patterns between Hispanic and non-Hispanic females. Without disaggregated data into multiple layers, they would have missed important trends such as this one. Therefore, as they were presenting data to the campus, they did so with the ability to refine, group and compare at every point so that nothing was obscured.

Although data is essential to understanding that a pattern exists, do not discount the importance of qualitative experience to put the data into a meaningful context.

When this data was first shared with the NECC community, the DDDT was not sure what would happen.

They hoped that faculty would have conversations at the department, program and individual level and that those conversations would lead to an increased interest in professional development around equity-based teaching practices. And that was, in fact, what was starting to happen before the COVID-19 crisis forced an emergency pivot to remote teaching and learning strategies.

Ironically, that has also created a new context in which to consider gaps in student achievement even as it has derailed many conversations about data. Across the country, colleges are coming face to face with an enormous technological divide that had been largely hidden from view. This gap in access has provided NECC a context in which to talk about the very real differences in the lived experiences of our Hispanic and non-Hispanic students, including how their off-campus lives directly impact their academic achievement. Faculty, staff and administrators are hearing -- some for the first time -- about students' daily lives and the myriad challenges they face to their academic success. Suddenly our data about course completion has a story grounded in lived experience, and that has allowed us a clear path toward actions that can help to close the success gaps for our students.

CONCLUSION

In the summer of 2020, the DDDT hopes to add qualitative data points via faculty interviews. Faculty members who have shown a pattern of having successful students and a small gap in success between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students will be asked about their classroom practices, pedagogical philosophies and commitment to equity-based teaching to see if patterns emerge. Once those interviews conclude, this mixed-methods data will be used to form a new set of questions for the DDDT.

Finally, the Deep Dive Data Team will continue to explore NECC's institutional data to look for additional information about the source of these gaps. Although there are many things that an institution of higher education cannot control – such as students' lived experiences before they matriculate – there is an enormous amount of influence that can be leveraged to make change, if you know where to apply pressure. The DDDT will continue to search the data for patterns that reveal those pressure points.

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ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY EQUITY SCORECARD AND DASHBOARD

ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
BY JEN DUNSEATH

Keywords: Scorecard, Measures, Progress, Equity, Equity Action Plan

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Roger Williams University (RWU) is a private higher education institution in Bristol, Rhode Island. Equity and inclusion are core institutional values that were further actualized in 2017 with the establishment of the division of diversity, equity and inclusion (<https://www.rwu.edu/who-we-are>). Before the arrival of the first chief diversity officer, Dr. Ame Lambert, the efforts on campus to address racial diversity and inequity were within the purview of the diversity committee of the faculty senate, co-chaired by the then president’s chief of staff. In 2016, this committee requested the development and administration of a faculty and staff diversity-related survey. The survey was developed, administered and results were generated by the IR office. This was one of the first places that proof was discovered, beyond anecdotal evidence, that there were plenty of inequities being experienced on the RWU campus. This was a hard pill to swallow for those that were white and/or privileged and not much was done with the results.

The chief diversity officer arrived at RWU in June 2017. Dr. Lambert brought with her an enthusiasm for racial equity and justice and began to teach all of us about the work that lay ahead. She also brought with her past successful practices that she used at previous institutions. One of those successful practices was the equity scorecard. The equity scorecard is based on the work of Dr. Estela Bensimon and colleagues at the USC Center for Urban Education (<https://cue.usc.edu/directory/estela-mara-bensimon/>). The central part of the equity scorecard is the equity index, which focuses on representational equity at every point of the pipeline (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015).

The scorecard is developed by disaggregating data along a variety of indicators such as student outcomes and

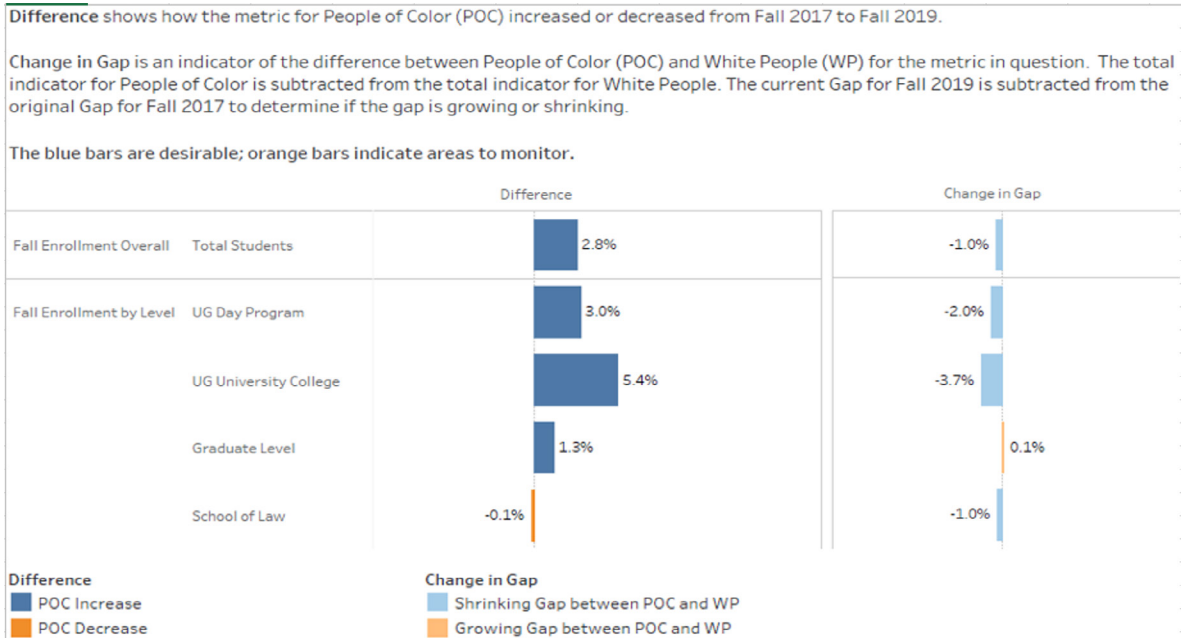
satisfaction. The disaggregation allows for the discovery of differential outcomes for different racial backgrounds and identities. The equity index was developed by Bensimon, Hao and Bustillos (2003) and allows for a more accurate comparison of groups of people. The index is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Target Group's Equity Index for the educational outcome of interest} = \frac{\text{Target group with the educational outcome} \div \text{Total students with the educational outcome}}{\text{Target group in the reference population} \div \text{Total students in the reference population}}$$

SUPPORTING OUR INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY PLAN WITH EQUITY-ORIENTED DATA

The scorecard supports the institutional equity action plan that was launched in 2020 and includes both standard outcome data such as retention, graduation rate and gateway course pass rates as well as less commonly reviewed data such as grade distribution, leadership engagement and employment statistics. The scorecard is a partnership between the office of institutional research and the DEI division and the partnership has led to the creation of a graduate assistantship position embedded in IR focused on DEI data disaggregation and analysis.

Pieces of the scorecard were built and refined along the way. The obvious starting point was how many students of color (SOC) do we have? How many faculty and staff of color are on campus? What’s the trend look like – are the number of people of color on campus increasing or decreasing? This gave some baseline measures and trends in terms of representation (see example on the next page).



[How the metric for People of Color \(POC\) increased or decreased from Fall 2017 to Fall 2019 in table format.](#)

Moving forward, students included were first generation and students who received Pell Grants (as a proxy for lower income students). This data was drilled down through an intersectional lens. How many students of color are also first generation, and/or Pell recipients?

BUILDING ON IPEDS DATA TO ADVANCE EQUITY

Building continued on what would end up as part of the scorecard based on ease of data availability. What was already done that looked at students of color based on particular metrics? The Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) provided a starting point for additional metrics. Using what was already had on hand, retention for students of color versus white students were viewed (we typically eliminated students with unknown race/ethnicity and non-resident aliens from our analyses). Graduation rates were also examined. Some differences were noted, particularly when we looked at gender and race/ethnicity. Though overall trends were showing some promise, the gains were small and not all groups of students were equally impacted (i.e., black males).

RACIALLY EQUITABLE DATA PRACTICES

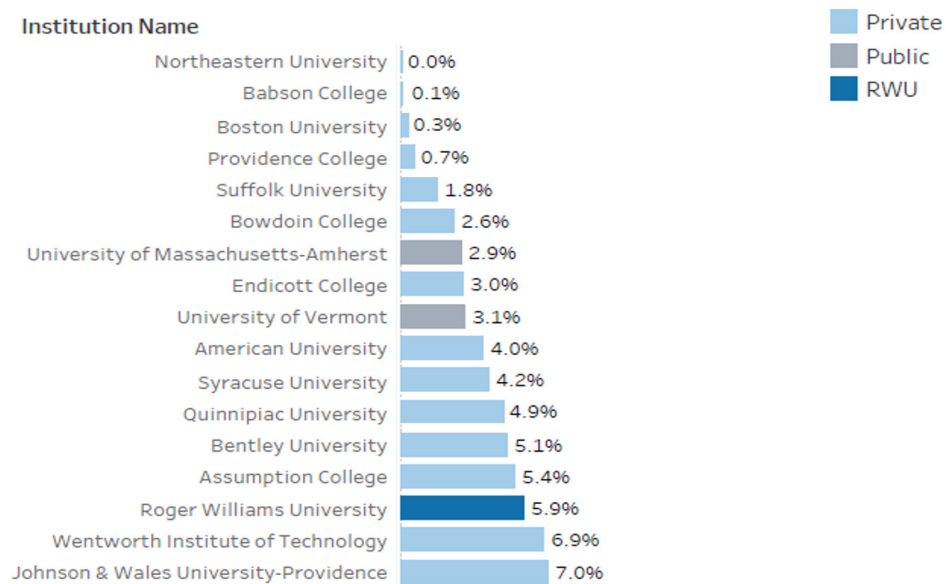
Taking the IPEDS data set, we asked ourselves what additional data could we add that might provide even further clarity? First generation and Pell recipient status were added and first year retention was examined using an intersectionality lens with regard to first year retention:

		Students of Color		White Students		Overall
		Pell Recipient	Not a Pell Recipient	Pell Recipient	Not a Pell Recipient	
Female	First Generation	95% 18 / 19	75% 9 / 12	79% 27 / 34	82% 70 / 85	83% 128 / 154
	Not First Generation	100% 9 / 9	83% 24 / 29	93% 39 / 42	87% 220 / 254	87% 308 / 353
Male	First Generation	82% 23 / 28	100% 11 / 11	75% 15 / 20	85% 46 / 54	83% 97 / 117
	Not First Generation	75% 6 / 8	78% 32 / 41	95% 35 / 37	84% 262 / 313	84% 351 / 416
Overall		88% 56 / 64	82% 76 / 93	87% 116 / 133	85% 598 / 706	85% 884 / 1,040

[First Year Retention examined using an intersectionality lens in table format.](#)

Although this only represented one incoming first-year cohort of students, which meant interpreting the data with caution, it was observed that male students of color who were not first generation but were Pell recipients had one of the lowest first year retention rates of all other students. Also, drilling down resulted in small cell sizes or small numbers of students (for example, see chart on previous page), which meant the results had to be interpreted cautiously.

Another important component of the scorecard, benchmarking, was focused on so we could determine how Roger Williams University compared with some of their peers or competitors on measures of success for students of color. Going back to IPEDS data again, some comparisons could be done between the graduation rates at RWU for students of color versus white students, and those same “gaps” (difference between white student and SOC graduation rates) for other institutions.



[Measures of success for students of color in table format.](#)

The scorecard grew from these separate areas of discovery and became aligned with the Equity Action Plan organically as the plan began to take shape.

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR EQUITY AGENDA THROUGH USE OF EQUITY SCORECARD

The scorecard and its data have caused a range of reactions from, “I thought so,” to surprise as well as negative or resistant reactions from stakeholders. The positives come from being able to actually see the data on key indicators for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) work; this was something that has been largely missing in RWU’s past work. The scorecard also was able to provide a complex and robust narrative because of data disaggregation and intersectional data. The “I thought so” reactions came from people who had anecdotal evidence that there was

inequity but didn’t have the data to “prove” it. The reactions of surprise came from individuals that truly didn’t believe there was any inequity happening on campus. Work is still needed with some individuals who are still struggling to believe the data and the ways in which it highlights needed work at the institution.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

The scorecard is here to stay. The office of IR will continue to update and maintain the scorecard, and it will grow and change as needed to track progress in RWU’s racial educational equity work. So far, the work disaggregating and intersecting data has led to the creation of climate initiatives for women of color; support programs for first generation, Pell eligible students; and affirmed the efficacy

of support interventions and tutoring center visits. Going forward, RWU will look at how data that is lacking may be obtained and where data cannot be obtained, we will determine what kinds of indirect measures could be used to infer progress. Use of visual representations of the data will continue in the scorecard where it makes sense and we will consider creating interactive dashboards so viewers can do their own research.

RWU recommends that campuses explore the possibility of using the equity scorecard. It's free and it's flexible – campuses can customize it according to their wants and needs. It is recommended that campuses start with racial representation data -- then move into IPEDS data that may already be available; layer additional data onto IPEDS data; and think about benchmarking against peers, competitors or aspirant institutions. While it is important to have a plan in place to incorporate the data to be included in the scorecard, it is important to be flexible. New sources of data may emerge that may prompt inclusion, and some sources of data may be found unreliable and need to be removed

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POWER BI AND EAB NAVIGATE: AN ANALYTICAL DEEP DIVE INTO STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY
BY LEE BROSSOIT

Keywords: Power BI, EAB Navigate, Student Success Analytics

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Salem State University (SSU) is a four-year public institution in Salem, Massachusetts, with an overall enrollment in fall 2019 of 7,706 students (<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=salem+state&s=MA&id=167729>).

In 2017, Salem State University was recognized by the Education Trust as one of the top ten institutions for Latino student success as indicated by the lack of a gap in graduation rates (https://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/edtrustmain/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/02135855/Latino_Success_Report_Final_HR.pdf). Additionally, at this time the institution's strategic plan (2018–2021–<https://www.salemstate.edu/strategic-plan>) was developed to focus on four strategic goals including student success through the lens of inclusive excellence. In alignment with the DHE goals of the time, one area of emphasis was on building on the success of closing opportunity gaps by focusing resources on the programmatic areas with the highest impact. In a time of limited resources and with the goal to maintain and improve on any opportunity gaps, SSU needed to understand which programs were impactful in order to make data-informed decisions about resources. Under the joint leadership of the chief financial officer and the chief technology officer, SSU created a Business Intelligence Steering Committee that included staff from institutional research, institutional advancement, and academic affairs (two deans and faculty representation). The mission of the Salem State University Business Intelligence Steering Committee is to provide the university community with accurate, interactive, accessible and robust information that can be used to inform decision-making and planning.

UTILIZING PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS TOOLS FOR EQUITY-ORIENTED STUDENT SUCCESS

Detailed data analytics are essential to determine key areas of focus for student success initiatives and the subsequent analysis of student success interventions. SSU uses a combination of Power BI (a data visualization tool included in Microsoft 365) and Navigate (a student success analytics package from EAB). Navigate tools help staff to identify students in need of interventions, provide an understanding of the historical context of likely outcomes for groups of students without interventions, determine how faculty and staff are progressing in initiatives and interventions (process metrics), and evaluate the impact of interventions (outcome metrics). The combination of these tools allows for a deep analysis of student data on recruitment, retention, academic success, progress toward degree and time to graduation. The strategy is to use current and historical data to drive predictive analytics and enhance student success using programs and institutional actions shown to have a positive impact in these areas.

Literature suggests that best practices for success should include a “clear identification and definition of the problem based on data (quantitative and qualitative)” (McNair et al., 2016 p.95). Additionally, the failure to use institutional data to assess programs designed to increase student success, retention and graduation has resulted in the failure to bring about institutional change (Tinto, 2012, p.117).

Data analyzed included a breakdown of students by race, gender, PELL eligibility, participation in specific programming (e.g. STEP, Summer Bridge Academy and TRIO), major, retention from first to second year, retention from second to third year, cumulative GPA, DFW rates within key gateway courses, and graduation rate). In all cases it is possible in the Power BI system to disaggregate by a variety of characteristics listed above. Navigate provides an opportunity to create and track cohorts of students that experience a specific intervention versus a matched control group to begin to determine effectiveness of the intervention on student success.

Although these initiatives will ultimately help all students, the target is on all first-generation, low-income students of color with a focus on African American/Black students

and Latinx students. This group of students was selected to directly address the equity agenda of the Department of Higher Education and get a better understanding of the level of success for these students and potential opportunity gaps that needed to be addressed.

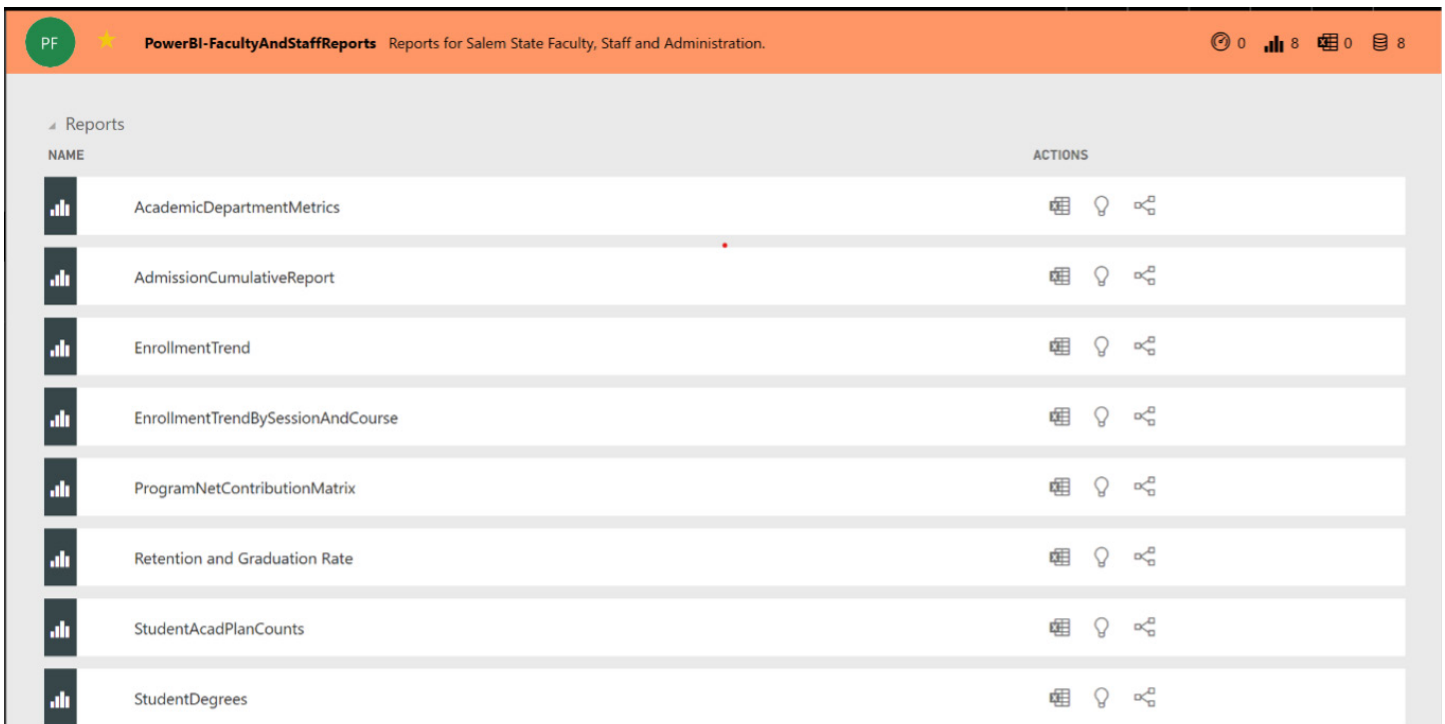
The first goal of the Power BI and EAB Navigate emerging practice is to clearly identify which groups of students are experiencing opportunity gaps at SSU. The second goal is to identify student success initiatives (interventions) that decrease the opportunity gaps at SSU. The third goal is to bring the retention and graduation rates for all demographic groups to within +/- 3 percentage points of each other.

STUDENT CARE MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Power BI is Microsoft's Business Intelligence reporting platform that is part of Office 365. The tool pulls data from the data warehouse that stores both student and financial data. It then can provide graphical representations of data to find trends, patterns and/or to compare groups. At SSU, this data is stored in Peoplesoft and a dedicated staff

member within the information technology department is responsible for pulling the data queries, maintaining the Power BI site, and being responsive for requests to specific data for use by faculty and staff. Oversight is provided by the SSU Business Intelligence Steering Committee that is made up of faculty and staff from information technology; administration and finance; institutional advancement; enrollment management; and academic affairs. The mission of the committee is to provide the SSU community with accurate, interactive, accessible, and robust information that can be used to inform decision-making and planning. The screen shot below provides a list of reports available to all faculty and staff including recruitment and enrollment data, student retention and graduation data, and information specific to academic departments (including DFW rates).

At the end of the spring 2019 semester, SSU embarked on the process of implementing the student success platform



Navigate. Navigate is a comprehensive, university-wide student success platform that links faculty and staff to students in a coordinated care network designed to help proactively manage student success. Additionally, Navigate provides a full suite of reports and dashboards that provide full visibility into SSU's student success operations (Predictive Model, Historical Trend Analytics and Population Health Analytics).

Project work, primarily technical data specifications and development of SSU structures, began in April 2019. Throughout the summer months the project progressed quite rapidly. Due to the expedited and aggressive implementation timeline, SSU's Navigate Leadership Committee along with the Navigate Engagement Teams prioritized its focus on standing the core success platform up to ensure that the university community would have the basic platform available by the first week of September 2019. The membership of the Committee and Engagement Teams included administrators (including all associate deans), faculty and staff. An important ally for the project was the former MSCA union president who participated in 30 department training sessions to encourage faculty.

Every university employee (with the exception of contract employees) has access to Navigate and is expected to use the system for raising student academic and day-to-day alerts, progress reports, and recording advising notes and contacts in a centralized location. The level of access that each faculty or staff member has is based on their job responsibilities and their role at the university.

As the data discussions moved forward, it was essential that the SSU Navigate Leadership Committee get user input and see the site as dynamic and able to change to accommodate requests and needs. It was also important to ensure that faculty understood this is not used in their evaluation process.

Based on analyzing the number of cases in the prior Mapwork system, to the number of cases in the new Navigate system, there was a significant increase of 195% from 970 (Mapwork cases in fall 2018) to 2,866 (Navigate cases in fall 2019). This provides strong evidence that the adoption to the Navigate system was well received and has provided an enhanced case management process for our

In order to realize the full potential of our new success platform, the university has recognized that we are all part of the network of care that supports our students' success and progression.

students. The number of unique students that were reported on went from 741 to 1358 which was an 83% increase and the number of people issuing an alert went from 135 to 290 which was a 115% increase.

Beginning on October 1, 2019, students had access to Navigate and can also download Navigate Student, a free mobile app in either the App Store or Google Play. The app has a wide range of abilities including helping students choose the right major, connecting students with university supports, helping students stay on top of important dates and deadlines, and allowing students to participate in quick surveys/polls. The capabilities of Navigate continues to evolve and in the future will allow student-initiated appointments, predictive modeling and the creation of the Academic Planner which will allow students to eventually register for courses using their cell phones.

UNDERSTANDING AND BUILDING ON EDUCATIONAL EQUITY PROGRESS

Prior to the creation of the Power-BI it was very difficult to understand the progression and retention rates of our students from a longitudinal lens. This tool allows us to easily examine 10 years' worth of data and control for variables including student demographics. As an example, to compare retention and graduation rates for African American women and white women we would go to the retention and graduation rate report page and select gender and ethnicity (you can see several other options that can be selected for comparison along the top bar). The top screenshot is for African American women and the bottom for white women.

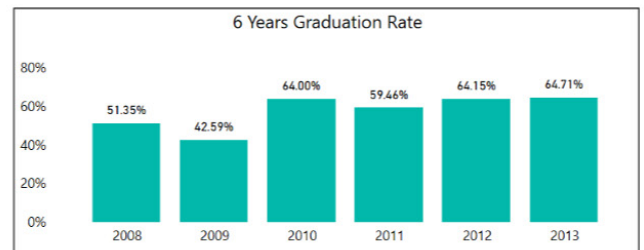
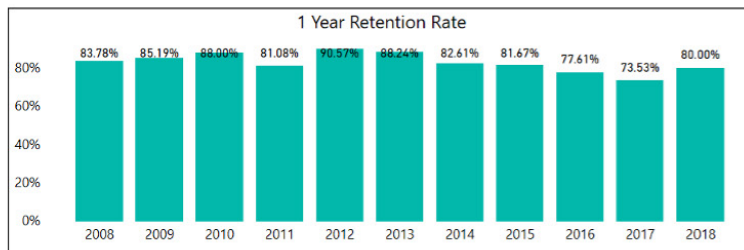
Retention and Graduation Rate - Freshman

Note : All filter categories are from entering year of students at Salem State University. Students may not have retained or graduated in the same categories of entering year. TRIO program started in Fall 2008 and STEP program started in Fall 2012.

Gender	Ethnicity	SBA	On_Campus	Pell Eligible	HS_GPA Range	FT/PT
Female	African American	All	All	All	All	FT

Fall_Cohort_Year	Cohort	1 Year Retention & Graduation Rate	2 Years Retention & Graduation Rate	3 Years Retention & Graduation Rate	4 Years Graduation Rate	5 Years Graduation Rate	6 Years Graduation Rate
2008	74	83.78%	71.62%	63.51%	18.92%	43.24%	51.35%
2009	54	85.19%	66.67%	55.56%	12.96%	37.04%	42.59%
2010	25	88.00%	64.00%	64.00%	16.00%	48.00%	64.00%
2011	37	81.08%	72.97%	67.57%	32.43%	56.76%	59.46%
2012	53	90.57%	77.36%	64.15%	41.51%	58.49%	64.15%
2013	34	88.24%	70.59%	70.59%	44.12%	55.88%	64.71%
2014	46	82.61%	71.74%	60.87%	39.13%	50.00%	
2015	60	81.67%	63.33%	60.00%	48.33%		
2016	67	77.61%	67.16%	64.18%			
2017	68	73.53%	51.47%				
2018	85	80.00%					
2019	50						

TRIO	STEP
All	All
Entering Major	Entering SSU College
All	All



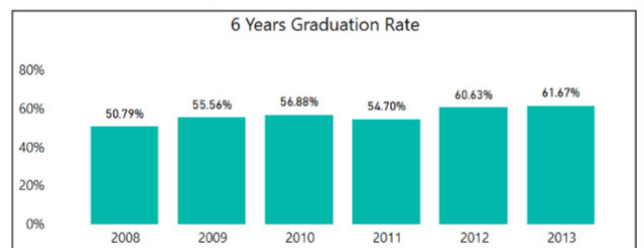
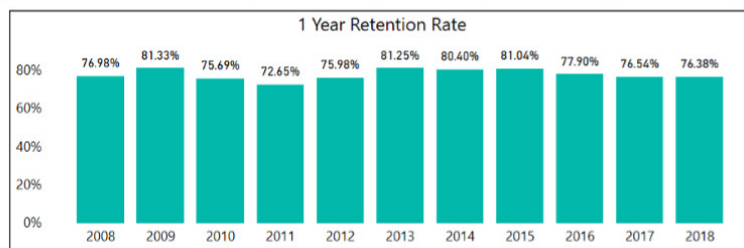
Retention and Graduation Rate Part 1 - Freshman in table format.

Note : All filter categories are from entering year of students at Salem State University. Students may not have retained or graduated in the same categories of entering year. TRIO program started in Fall 2008 and STEP program started in Fall 2012.

Gender	Ethnicity	SBA	On_Campus	Pell Eligible	HS_GPA Range	FT/PT
Female	White	All	All	All	All	FT

Fall_Cohort_Year	Cohort	1 Year Retention & Graduation Rate	2 Years Retention & Graduation Rate	3 Years Retention & Graduation Rate	4 Years Graduation Rate	5 Years Graduation Rate	6 Years Graduation Rate
2008	504	76.98%	64.29%	57.14%	28.37%	45.63%	50.79%
2009	450	81.33%	68.67%	62.00%	32.22%	52.00%	55.56%
2010	436	75.69%	63.53%	60.55%	32.80%	49.54%	56.88%
2011	479	72.65%	63.88%	59.29%	31.94%	50.94%	54.70%
2012	508	75.98%	67.52%	64.76%	42.72%	58.86%	60.63%
2013	480	81.25%	70.21%	66.46%	47.29%	59.58%	61.67%
2014	495	80.40%	71.31%	68.48%	50.10%	62.83%	
2015	480	81.04%	71.88%	68.33%	47.92%		
2016	457	77.90%	68.27%	64.33%			
2017	439	76.54%	69.93%				
2018	381	76.38%					
2019	366						

TRIO	STEP
All	All
Entering Major	Entering SSU College
All	All



Retention and Graduation Rate Part 2 - Freshman in table format.

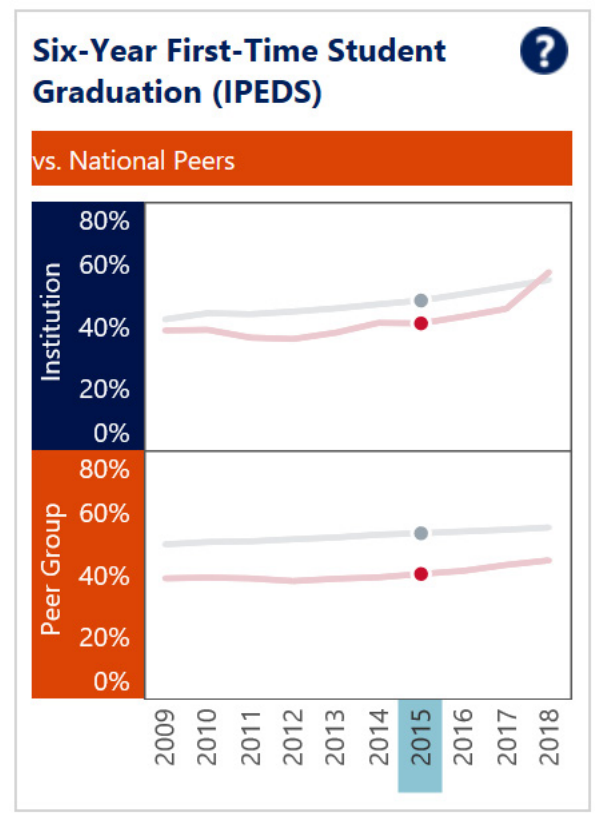
This comparison showed us that African American women had a higher six-year graduation rate than white women. As a result, this led to development of focus groups for women of color with a GPA or 3.0 or higher that obtained qualitative data about their success.

African American students are excelling at SSU based on the data from Power-BI of six-year graduation rates. SSU has seen considerable gains in our six-year graduation rate by 13% from 45% to 58%. There are many reasons for this significant increase including the creation of intentional program development to intervene and provide support to increase student success. Perhaps more impressive than the increase in the six-year graduation rate for the entire student body is the dramatic increase in the graduation rates of African American students at the university during the past five years from 43% to 62%. As a group, SSU African American students have surpassed the general population in their six-year graduation rates, which contradicts what occurs on a national level (Brown, 2019). A national study conducted by NPR using data from the National Student Clearinghouse, found that African American students who entered college in 2012 had a six-year completion rates of 41% (Nadworny, 2019). Based on this finding, African American students at SSU have a six-year graduation rate that is 21% above the national average for African American students.

According to the Department of Higher Education website, *“The gap between the college participation rates of African American and white young adults has narrowed from 18 to 6 percentage points in five years. At some public colleges and universities, achievement gaps between white and Latino/a students are starting to close, but those between white and African American students remain largely entrenched.”* This isn’t the case at SSU because for the 2013 cohort, the six-year graduation rate for African American students (64%) surpassed the graduation rate of white students (58%).

The DHE Performance Measurement Reporting System provides comparative data that allows institutions to examine how their six-year graduation rates compare with the MA State Universities and National Peers. <https://www.mass.edu/datacenter/PMRS/home.asp>

The figure below combines years (2016–2018) and doesn’t include the last two years that represents the most significant increase among African American students at SSU (more than 70% six-year graduation rate). It does demonstrate that the SSU African American students six-year graduation rate (2016–2018) was 57% compared with the African American national peer group which was 44%.



But why are these students excelling? The quantitative data is only part of the story; you often must dig deeper to find out the reasons for what is observed. SSU conducted a qualitative study, which is also included in this section of the handbook “to understand, from an asset-based perspective, how students of color at Salem State describe and perceive the university’s resources in relation to their academic achievement” (see Neville & Estrella-Luna in this section of the handbook). In these focus groups students spoke of their achievements and success in spite of challenges they face. Four overall themes emerged from the study in which students the need to: 1) Believe in yourself (all participants had very detailed career goals that required a college degree and they were highly motivated to be successful and reach

their goals); 2) Build connections (they mentioned that their success was a direct result of making connections with faculty, staff and peers to build a support network); 3) Leave your comfort zone (students discussed the benefits of joining clubs and getting involved in campus life as important); and, 4) Write their own ticket (all understood the importance of real-world experiences and participated in internships and/or graduate school preparation programs to be ready to move to the next level after graduation).

ADDITIONAL DATA-INFORMED INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Based on the data-informed conversations described above, SSU has moved to ensure graduation is possible in four years through the use of Degree Maps so students can see what they need to do to graduate and all departments publish a two-four year rotation of electives so students know when electives are to be offered. In addition, two living/learning communities have been initiated for business and Latinx students as a result of seeing that retention in these two groups was lower than the university numbers as a whole. Finally more effort has been focused on the transformation of our undeclared students by creating the Explorers program that provides programming and curriculum (First Year Seminars) focused on the success of these students. A policy change to enforce a declaration of major by 45 credits was a direct result of finding that the time to graduation for these students was higher than the university numbers as a whole.

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MOVING FROM WHO TO WHAT: FIRST TO SECOND SEMESTER PREDICTIVE RETENTION MODEL

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY BY KATE MCLAREN-POOLE

*Keywords: Educational Equity, Retention,
Predictive Analytics, Student Success*

INTRODUCTION

Bridgewater State University (BSU) was established in 1840 as one of the first normal schools in the United States of America. BSU is the 10th largest public or private higher education institutions in Massachusetts. Despite a historic commitment to equity, BSU's students of color, among others, experience educational equity gaps. To inform student success efforts and narrow these educational disparities, BSU sought advanced data-informed strategies that can more accurately pinpoint factors that can facilitate student retention.

Over the past decade, BSU has become increasingly focused on developing data systems and structures that help campus practitioners identify students or groups of students who could benefit from additional intervention and outreach. In particular, BSU has approached the challenge of student success by identifying and acknowledging the many intersectional identities and experiences of students that are associated with successful outcomes as well as those that are associated with higher risk of dropout due to systemic oppression. In sharing the work of the predictive retention model, it is hoped that other institutions who may not have the resources to develop a predictive regression model of their own will still be able to use the information presented here and take a data-informed and intersectional approach to collecting, analyzing and disaggregating student data in order to identify protective and risk factors for student persistence at their own institutions.

Predictive modeling using binary logistic regression is one method that can identify significant predictors of retention and can be used to develop a student-by-student predictive retention model that provides each student's predicted probability of retaining (Herzog, 2017). Researchers can include socio-demographic, academic preparation, financial

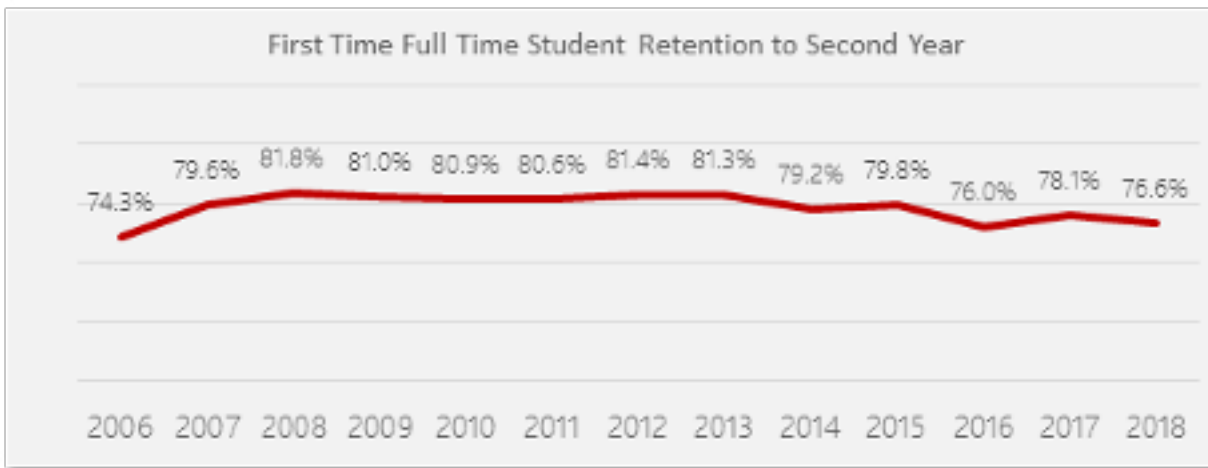
and other variables in the analyses to determine what factors significantly impact retention. Using these methods, researchers are now able to predict with considerable accuracy whether a student will persist. This knowledge can be leveraged into positive action through targeted intervention programs, leading to improvements in student success rates and narrowing educational equity gaps (Miller & Bell, 2016).

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

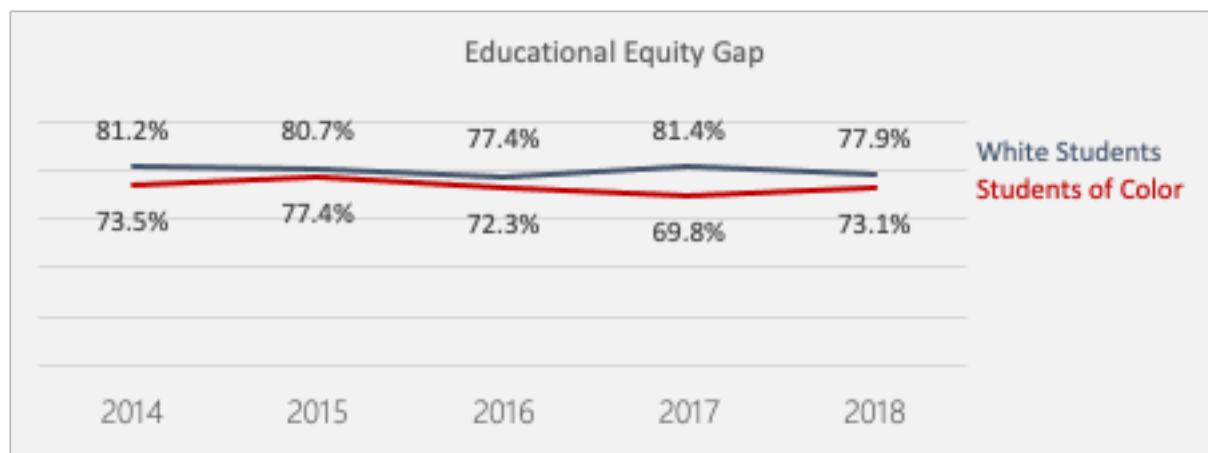
From 2007 to 2013, Bridgewater State University's first-time, full-time retention rate was approximately 80-81% from the first to second year. From 2014-2018, the retention rate for these students dropped to approximately 77% (Figure A). In addition, along with most predominately white institutions nationwide, BSU has a gap in retention between racially minoritized students as compared to white students. Over the past five years this gap has been as narrow as 3% and as wide as 12% (Figure B). Due to the drop in BSU's overall retention rate and the persisting gap between white students and Black, Brown and other students of color, BSU developed a predictive retention model to inform intervention and outreach efforts with the goal of increasing retention rates and eliminating this gap.

MOVING PAST WHO TO WHAT

This intervention is targeted to all first-time, full-time students. Because approximately 12% of BSU students do not retain from their first to second semester, intervention efforts are targeted toward the lowest 15% of students based on their predicted probability of retaining (12% plus a buffer of an additional 3%). A higher proportion of students of color are in the lowest 15%, therefore, they should benefit from intervention efforts at a higher rate.



[First Time Full Time Student Retention to Second Year in table format](#)



[Educational Equity Gap in table format](#)

In recent years, BSU implemented specific interventions for targeted groups of students with lower retention rates compared to their peers, including male students, commuter students and students with low high school GPAs. This new model will help identify the students who are most at-risk for dropout using a robust mix of socio-demographics, academic preparation, financial information, student academic behaviors, social integration and academic experience variables rather than relying on demographic group membership alone. In short, this retention model allows BSU to move from who (demographic factors) to what (sociocultural factors that can be identified and remediated).

The purpose of the first to second semester predictive retention model is to 1) identify the factors that significantly influence retention to the second semester for

This predictive analytics model underscores Bridgewater State University's understanding that persistent educational equity gaps should be addressed through the lens of what we as an institution need to do to change versus placing blame on students suffering from the impacts of systemic racism and other forms of oppression (McNair, Bensimon & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020).

first-time, full-time students 2) create a forecasting model that accurately predicts which entering students are most at-risk for dropout to inform early intervention efforts, and 3) inform interventions intended to decrease educational attainment gaps. A fall to spring model (rather than fall to fall model) is utilized based on higher accuracy rates of the semester model versus the full year model.

In spring and summer 2018, the Office of Institutional Research compiled datasets that included first-time, full-time student data from the incoming 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 cohorts. The variables included in the datasets had to meet several specific criteria in order to be included. First, the data had to be readily available to IR staff; and second, only data available by the student's first day of class at BSU could be included. The variables compiled were based on available data as well as model variables identified in scholarly literature and those used in similar analyses by other institutions. The initial dataset consisted of 21 variables, listed in Table A.

Model development began by including all variables in a logistic regression analysis using the 2014, 2015 and 2016 cohort data. Five variables were excluded from further testing for various reasons listed in Table A. Missing data for continuous variables were entered using means replacement methods. In addition, outliers were excluded to increase the accuracy of the test models. More than 25 different models were tested on the 2014, 2015, and 2016 cohorts. The final model included 16 variables and was chosen based on overall model accuracy and balanced accuracy in predicting those retained and those not retained. The final model was then tested for accuracy on the 2017 cohort. When tested on all four cohorts, the final model had an overall accuracy rate of 75%, including 75% accuracy in predicting students who retain and 80% accuracy in predicting students who do not retain. A list of variables and statistical significance in predicting retention to the second semester is below.

TABLE A:	Variable	Included in Final Model	Significant Positive Predictor of Retention for 2014-2017 Cohorts (p<.01)
1	High school GPA	Yes	Yes, higher HSGPA (p=.000)
2	Attempted credits in first semester	Yes	Yes, higher credits (p=.000)
3	Student sex	Yes	Yes, being female (p=.001)
4	Student Race (student of color)	Yes	Yes, being white (p=.000)
5	Low Income Status	Yes	Yes, not being low income (higher income; p=.000)
6	Living on campus in first semester	Yes	Yes, living on campus (p=.000)
7	Register before August	Yes	Yes, registering before August (p=.000)
8	Accuplacer Elementary Algebra Score	Yes	Yes, higher score (p=.000)
9	Declared a major in first semester	Yes	Yes, being undeclared in first semester (p=.006)
10	Enrolled in remedial math in first semester	Yes	Yes, being enrolled in remedial math (p=.000)
11	Took CIRP freshman survey	Yes	Yes, taking CIRP (p=.005)
12	Accuplacer Reading Score	Yes	No
13	Age (Age 19 or older)	Yes	No
14	Enrolled in targeted English in first semester	Yes	No
15	In Honors program first semester	Yes	No
16	Completed FAFSA	Yes	No
17	SAT Math	No, too many missing cases (SAT optional) and not significant predictor of retention	

	Variable	Included in Final Model	Significant Positive Predictor of Retention for 2014-2017 Cohorts (p<.01)
18	SAT Verbal	No, too many missing cases (SAT optional) and not significant predictor of retention	
19	SAT Total	No, too many missing cases (SAT optional) and not significant predictor of retention	
20	First Generation Status	No, too many missing cases	
21	Accuplacer College Level Math Score	No, too many missing cases	

APPLYING THE MODEL TO SERVE STUDENTS

On the first day of classes in the fall 2018 semester, this model was applied to the 2018 first-time full-time student cohort, resulting in a student-by-student listing of predicted probability of retaining. Students were also grouped into equal deciles based on predicted probability of retaining with 10 representing those with the highest dropout risk and one representing those with the lowest risk for attrition. A student-by-student listing of the first-time full-time students, their predicted probability of retaining, dropout risk decile, and specific data from each variable in the model was shared with select staff members in the Division of Student Success and Diversity who leads initiatives with students experiencing equity gaps. An updated model was sent four weeks from the first day of class to account for any early changes to the cohort (new students, withdrawn students, changes in credits, etc.). A sample view of the student by student listing can be found in Table B.

Table B.

Student Name & Contact Information	PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF RETAINING	DROPOUT RISK DECILE (10=high, 1=low)	STUDENT														
			SEX	HSWGPA	HONORS	COLOR	GEN	LOW INCOME	SUBMIT FAFSA	AGE 19+	REMED. MATH	TARGET. ENG.	DECLARED MAJ.	LIVE ON CAMPUS	CREDITS REG.	TOOK CIRP	
	60%	10	F	2.48	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	12.00	N
	75%	10	M	3.04	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	12.00	Y
	84%	9	F	3.19	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	16.00	Y	
	84%	9	M	2.85	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	15.00	Y	
	86%	8	F	2.58	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	15.00	Y	
	87%	8	M	2.77	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	13.00	Y	
	88%	7	M	2.66	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	14.00	N	
	89%	7	F	2.89	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	15.00	Y	
	89%	6	F	2.91	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	13.00	Y	
	90%	6	F	2.76	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	15.00	Y	
	90%	5	M	3.32	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	15.00	Y	
	92%	5	M	3.21	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	15.00	Y	
	92%	4	F	3.06	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	16.00	Y	
	93%	4	F	4.11	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	15.00	Y	
	93%	3	M	2.43	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	17.00	N	
	93%	3	M	3.67	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	15.00	Y	
	94%	2	F	3.01	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	16.00	Y	
	95%	2	F	3.35	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	16.00	Y	
	96%	1	M	3.44	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	16.00	Y	
	98%	1	F	4.54	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	16.00	Y	

Table B (Student by Student Listing) in table format

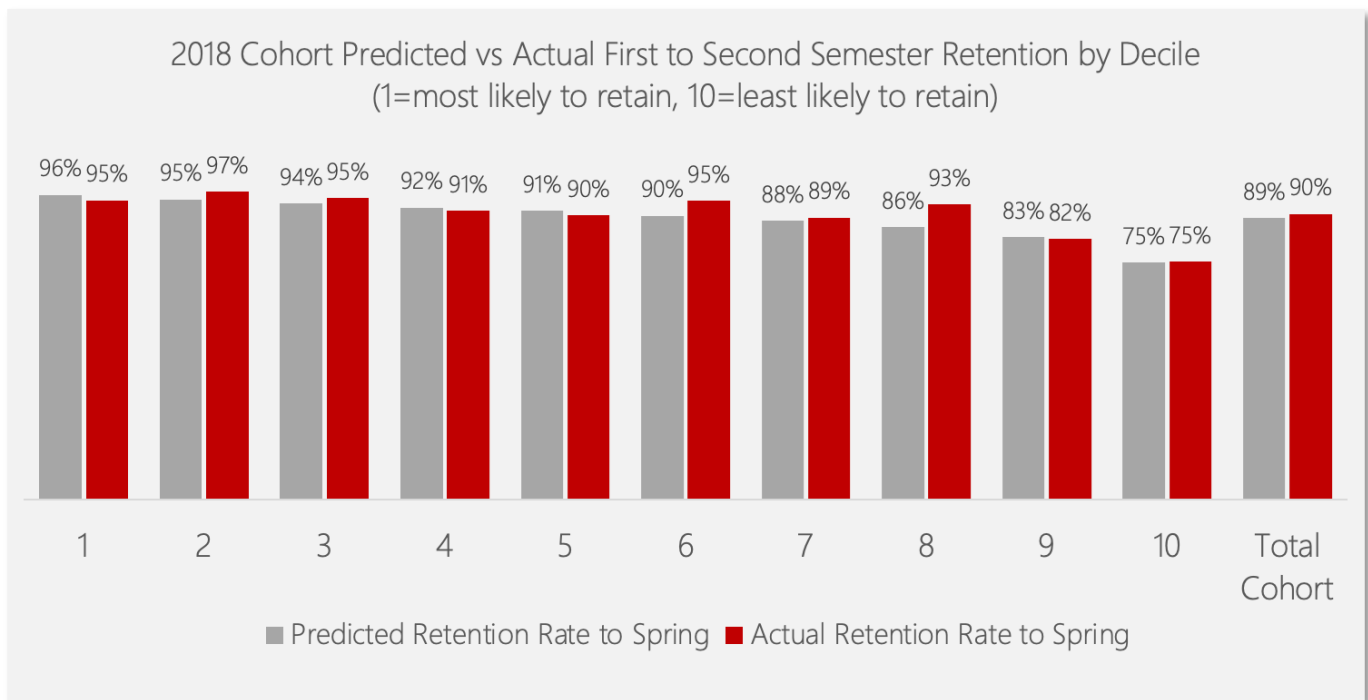
This data was used to inform several interventions in the fall 2018 semester, including proactive outreach to students who were identified in the model as those who would benefit from additional support. These interventions included letters offering support and resources, phone calls to build community and offer support and retention-oriented text messages offering just-in-time student success nudges. Each of these interventions was crafted centralizing the assets and lived experiences of Black, Brown and other students of color; for example, letters sent to students were signed by the director of the Lewis and Gaines Center for inclusion and equity, a student success center at BSU well known by students as emphasizing the support of students of color – thereby increasing the likelihood students of color would open and read the letters.

In summer 2019, the model was updated with new data and recalibrated to ensure model accuracy. Several adjustments were made to the model during this process, including retesting the model on the 2016 through 2018 cohorts (2014 and 2015 cohorts were dropped so that the model is calibrated on the most recent three years of data). In addition, Accuplacer scores were dropped from the model because BSU switched to the Accuplacer Next Generation test, and scores are not compatible to previous years. Further, the 2019 model included first generation data, as missing data for this variable is no longer an issue. The 2019 final model had an accuracy rate of 73%. Like the 2018 model, the 2019 model was used to generate the student-by-student listing and results were sent to the Division of Student Success and Diversity on the first day of class and four weeks into the fall 2019 semester to help guide and work with students.

ACCURACY OF THE MODEL TO DATE

Overall, the 2018 model was able to predict the first to second semester retention rate within 1.3 percentage points. The predicted retention rate for the 2018 cohort based on the model was 89% and the actual retention rate was 90.3%. When applied to the 2018 cohort, the model had an overall accuracy rate of 77%, including 76% accuracy in predicting students who retained and 84% accuracy in predicting students who did not retain. Significant positive predictors of retention for the 2018 cohort were being female, having a higher high school GPA, having a higher Accuplacer algebra score, taking remedial math in the first semester, being white, not being low income, living on campus first semester, higher credits attempted in the first semester, taking the CIRP freshman survey, and registering early/on time (prior to August).

When assessing the accuracy by predicted retention decile, the difference between actual and predicted retention ranged from 0.4% to 7.2% (Figure C). Five of the deciles retained at higher rates than predicted and five retained at lower rates than predicted. Students in decile eight retained at a rate 7.2% higher than predicted. This group also had the highest percent (8.1%, n=12) of students participating in the Bears Summer Scholars program (An overview of this summer bridge program is included in this practitioner handbook.), which likely helped to boost the retention rate for the decile. Similarly, those in decile six retained at a rate 4.9% higher than was predicted. Decile six had the second highest percent (7.5%, n=11) of Bears Summer Scholars. Overall, Bears Summer Scholars had a predicted retention rate of 87.6% and an actual retention rate of 94.7% (7.1% higher than predicted).



[2018 Cohort Predicted vs Actual First Second Semester Retention by Decile in table format](#)

In addition, other groups that received various interventions in fall 2018 retained at higher rates than predicted. As a group, Black, Brown and other students of color were predicted to have a retention rate of 85% and had an actual retention rate of 86.8% (1.8% higher than predicted). Lastly, low income students were predicted to retain at a rate of 86.1% and had an actual retention rate of 88.1% (2.0% higher than predicted). Lastly, after the first semester, first-time, full-time students with GPAs above zero who would have (in previous years) been academically dismissed were invited to participate in the Conditional Freshman Grade Point Recovery (CFGPR) Program in an effort to support students academic success. An additional 40 students (2.7%) who would have been academically dismissed after the fall 2018 semester were still enrolled in spring 2019 through this program. Half of the students in the CFGPR program are Black, Brown and other students of color, which also helped to increase the retention rate for that group.

Data on the effectiveness of the 2019 model will be available in the spring 2020 semester. It should be noted that future iterations of the model will include attention to disaggregating data regarding student of color data to include Black/African American, Cape Verdean, and Latinx students (McNair, Bensimon, Malcom-Piqueux, 2020).

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

It takes time to develop the model, especially collecting and cleaning all the data (this model took approximately six weeks of full-time work to complete). The model development process is never done. The model work continues year-round and has significantly increased the workload on the office of institutional research. In addition, there will always be additional data that campus leaders will want to include but start with what is available. As new data becomes available, it may take several years of testing before it can be included in the applied model. In addition, campus members will undoubtedly be surprised at seemingly irrelevant data – several data points were significant predictors that we were not expecting based on previous research.

Institutional research staff and student success interventionists are encouraged to develop a strong partnership. A strong working relationship helps to ensure that data collection efforts are informed by real-time student interactions; in turn, this type of working relationship helps to enhance the thought partnering around how data can inform student success interventions.

It is also essential that ongoing conversations occur about the ways in which the factors identified in the model can not only inform interventions with students, but can begin to identify institutional factors that need to be modified in order to support students – particularly those experiencing educational equity gaps. Predictive analytic models can be a potent tool to help institutions not only serve their students but identify areas where we too can improve as we endeavor to lead for change.

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ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE THROUGH RACIAL EQUITY

The Fundamental Theorem of Calculus (FTC)

Part I Suppose $y=f(x)$

is continuous on $[a,b]$ and $F(x)$ is the antiderivative of $f(x)$

$$\int_a^b f(x) dx = F(x) \Big|_a^b = F(b) - F(a)$$

Part II

$$\frac{d}{dx} \int_a^x f(t) dt = f(x)$$

$$\frac{d}{dx} [F(x) - F(a)] = f(x)$$

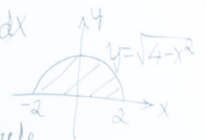
$$\frac{d}{dx} \int_a^{g(x)} f(t) dt = f(g(x)) \cdot g'(x)$$

$$\frac{d}{dx} \left[\int_0^b f(x) dx \right] = \frac{d}{dx} \left[\int_3^{\sqrt{x}} \sin^2 x dx \right]$$

$$= \frac{d}{dx} [F(x)] = f(x) = \sin^2(\sqrt{x}) \cdot \frac{1}{2\sqrt{x}}$$

= O by the FTC

$$\int_{-2}^2 \sqrt{4-x^2} dx$$



$$= \frac{1}{2} \text{Area of the circle} = \frac{1}{2} \pi (2)^2 = 2\pi$$



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE THROUGH RACIAL EQUITY

Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx and other students of color in America are told they do not have the knowledge, skills, family or community support, internal resources, or sensibilities to succeed academically in college (Harper, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Love, 2019; Yosso, 2005). Too often rather than identifying whiteness and other manifestations of racism as what needs to change in our practices, we situate our analyses of the problem on “fixing” racially minoritized students, families and communities (Love, 2019; Smith, 2020) and tell students of color that they need to change to be “college ready” (McNair, Albertine, Cooper, McDonald, Major, 2016). Doing so obscures the complex and intersectional ways that systemic racism has made college access and success out of reach for many students of color and excruciatingly difficult for others (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2017; Espinosa, Turk, Taylor & Chessman, 2019).

Imagine instead that higher education’s academic policies, practices and pedagogies were premised in the cultural wealth, assets, intelligence, actualities and potentialities of the racially minoritized students that we serve. Imagine if the focus of our work was becoming student-ready – and that the students we have in mind as we design our work are students of color knowing that doing so would not only support their success but that of their white peers (Love, 2019; McNair, Bensimon & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020; Zhao, 2016). If we were to make these changes most predominately white campuses would be unrecognizable from the institutions students attend today – and transformed.

Key to these efforts is reimagining our academic practices from those that too often screen students of color out to those that are premised in the assets, lived realities and needs of racially minoritized students. Campuses characterized by academic excellence through racial equity convey to students of color that they matter, that they

can – and are expected – to succeed, and that risk taking on behalf of expanding their academic knowledge and skills is safe, celebrated and supported (Bowman & Culver, 2018; Smith, 2020; Wise & Montalvo, 2018). Campuses engaged in culturally responsive and equitable classroom and other academic practices also understand and affirm that academic excellence and accomplishments need not and should not conform to norms that have too often been based in the lived realities of majoritized students (Smith, 2020). The emerging practices in this section of the handbook offer students’ academic opportunities within a racial equity framework.

EMERGING PRACTICES

“Programa Internacional de Educación Superior (PIÉS) Latinos” at Northern Essex Community College offers readers an example of how one campus built on the community cultural wealth of Latinx immigrants by honoring the fund of knowledge, expertise, and skills individuals gained in their home countries (Daddow, 2016; Yosso, 2005). Through this emerging practice racial equity is centralized as program participants are supported in seeking validation for credentials and degrees gained in their home countries. According to Garcia and Burns, the authors of this emerging practice, the program also helps program participants “address the barriers that immigrants face when trying to achieve higher levels of education and higher-paying jobs” (see this section of the handbook).

“The Boston Pipeline Initiative” at Wentworth Institute of Technology offers participating students academic course work, community-based problem solving, and deep and meaningful experiences with campus resources and STEM professionals. One feature of culturally inclusive pedagogies is grounding student learning in real-life issues germane to their lived experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Students participating in the program during the summer of 2020 had an opportunity “to address how COVID-19

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE THROUGH RACIAL EQUITY

impacted access to basic human needs, like food, shelter, and healthcare” (see Miller and Drossman, in this section of the handbook). Being asked to help address these critically important issues in their course work undoubtedly conveyed to students that they mattered, that they belong in the academy and that their aspirations and dreams are not only valued but have value in addressing very real social issues (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Love, 2019; Yosso, 2005).

Roger Williams University’s “Racial Affinity-Based Initiatives” emerging practice offers three different strategies for supporting minoritized students in finding community and true belonging at a predominately white institution. In each of these programs, students are mentored by faculty members (both as part of a course experience and/or as part of campus-based experiences). Faculty members are key to aiding racially minoritized students in using their existing resources and skills to meet the new challenges of a college environment while providing access to the resources and opportunities of the campus (Dee & Daly, 2012; Nunn, 2021; Smith, 2020).

Offering programs infused with the expectation of student success is key to equity-minded work (AAC&U, 2015; Smith, 2020). Bridgewater State University’s emerging practice titled “Supporting Racial Educational Equity Through A Summer Bridge Program” describes recruiting practices that inform prospective participants that past program members have gone on to “retain at some of the highest rates of the university” (DeOliveira, Gentlewarrior & Marrow, this section of the handbook). This conveys to participating students that they can not only succeed but also excel academically. The importance of offering retention programs at institutions committed to campus-wide racial justice work is also underscored by the authors

as they describe addressing the questions of families of color in the wake of George Floyd’s murder by contextualizing the summer bridge program within the campus’ overall racial equity and justice efforts.

North Shore Community College’s “M.A.L.E.S. (Men Achieving Leadership, Excellence and Success) Program” demonstrates how one campus is offering participants a culture of care that blends high academic standards with wrap around mentoring, community building and support. The program provides a first year experience course that emphasizes content specific to the success of male students of color. This course is taught by a faculty member of color which further fosters students’ sense of belonging and communicates to students that they matter, that they are not alone, and that their lives and voices will be honored in the academic space of that classroom (Benitez, James, Joshua, Perfetti, Vick, 2017; Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain, 2007; Nunn, 2021).

Ensuring that our curriculums are inclusive of racial and ethnic diversity supports the success of all students and conveys the message that Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx and other peoples of color “are worthy studying and knowing” (Smith, 2020, p. 248). Suffolk University’s emerging practice titled “Curriculum Enhancements: Building a Diversity and Inclusion Curriculum Toolkit of Supplemental Materials Available to Faculty” shares the process one campus is using to audit their existing racial equity and social justice curricular materials and create an action plan for enhancing their materials in the future.

Equipping students with the values, knowledge and skills necessary to interrogate their discipline and replace existing practices with those premised in equity is a signature goal of critical education (Friere, 2000; hooks, 1994; Love, 2019). “The Impact of Social Consciousness on Design Decision Making Program” at Wentworth Institute of Technology

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE THROUGH RACIAL EQUITY

provides an example of how to offer engineering and design students strategies for identifying and addressing conscious and unconscious bias in design decisions. Students will become equity-minded practitioners within their professions if they are taught to question who their future designs will help and who they will hinder. The authors also underscore that this type of practice aids campuses in addressing equity in accreditation processes – which is anticipated to be a growing emphasis in the future (Arnold, Voight, Morales, Dancy & Coleman, 2019).

Bridgewater State University’s “Inclusive Honors Program Admissions” answers the equity-oriented question “in what ways could this practice . . . disadvantage minoritized students?” (McNair, Bensimon, & Malcom-Piqueux, 2020, p. 45). Rather than relying on standardized test scores that disadvantage students from less privileged backgrounds (Love, 2019; Smith, 2020), this program is recruiting students using high school GPA or their SAT/ACT scores. Applicants also write a brief asset-based essay allowing them to describe why they want to join the university’s honors community. Finally, faculty and staff interrogated the program’s recruitment methods and changed the materials and approach in order to encourage racially minoritized students to participate.

CONCLUSION

Students come to our campuses drawn by the promise of what will be learned and how they will grow in our classrooms. We are rightfully reminded by bell hooks (1994) that “the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (p. 21). This introduction asked readers to imagine our campuses when they are characterized by racial equity and justice. The emerging practices in this section of the handbook offer readers exemplars of radical possibilities in the academy (hooks, 1994) that help to move us from imagination to next steps towards transformation.

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PROGRAMA INTERNACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR (PIÉS) LATINOS DE NECC

*NECC's Latino Program for
International Higher Education (PIÉS)*

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE BY ANALUZ GARCIA

*Keywords: Degree Attainment, Latino Immigrants, Foreign
Credential Evaluation*

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The mission of Northern Essex Community College (NECC) is to educate and inspire students to succeed. The institution provides a welcoming environment focused on teaching and learning and is strongly committed to unlocking the potential within each student and empowering its diverse community of learners to meet their individual goals. It is a community college dedicated to creating vibrant and innovative opportunities that encourage excellence and enhance the cultural and economic life of our region.

In 2001, Northern Essex Community College, with campuses in Haverhill and Lawrence, became the first federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in all of New England. The NECC student population is currently 43% Latino, most of whom are from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Since 2001, Latino student enrollment at NECC has nearly doubled; the equity gap between Latino students and non-Latino students has closed considerably. The proportion of Latino graduates at the college tripled from 10% of the graduating class in 2001 to more than 30% in 2016.

Despite this increase in Latino degree attainment, the city of Lawrence continues to have the lowest percentage of citizens with a bachelor's degree or higher at 10.5%. The average for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is 43%. NECC is deeply committed to increasing bachelor's degree attainment in the City of Lawrence and considers it a strategic priority for the institution.

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has estimated that the Commonwealth will be short up to 60,000 college-educated adults to meet the state's

workforce needs. PIÉS Latinos de NECC is an effort to close the gap by tapping into the education and talents of our immigrant workforce.

PROGRAM GOAL

PIÉS Latinos de NECC assists immigrants who were educated outside of the United States and who have obtained a degree and are looking for better career opportunities. Immigrant professionals have different needs, career goals and aspirations than traditional-aged college students who have yet to earn a degree. This program taps into the education and talents of the professional immigrant workforce. NECC developed this program to increase access to higher education, primarily for Latino immigrants.

The focus of PIÉS Latinos de NECC is to help immigrants who are highly skilled, and have college credits and/or a high school diploma with additional certifications/training from other countries, to reach their professional potential. Far too often, these immigrants are underemployed and working in low-wage, low-skill jobs. The service focuses on evaluating foreign credentials, providing access for English language attainment, and establishing a network of building social capital. PIÉS Latinos de NECC is a comprehensive program in that it is not just about the validation of foreign credentials but about strategies that address the barriers that immigrants face when trying to achieve higher levels of education and higher-paying jobs. The next phase of PIÉS is to obtain space for a center that will include resources for civic engagement, employment, internships, mentorship and networking.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

During its conception, NECC administrators agreed with the credential evaluation agency to become a satellite

office. Professional staff individually helped and supported clients through the process. This allowed for an improved experience where questions could be asked and then answered by a NECC Spanish-speaking staff member trained in the evaluation process. Becoming a satellite office also made it easier for matriculating first-year students with foreign high school diplomas to have their documents evaluated on campus promptly.

Initially, PIÉS focused solely on the process of credential evaluations. Still, in the process of offering this service, it was learned that the needs of the professionals extended far beyond validating credits. PIÉS began providing advising services for professionals who needed to learn how to navigate the U.S. education and workforce system culture, such as finding information on licensing requirements for specific fields (e.g., accountants); how to transfer to four-year institutions; how to network with employers and how to access workforce training. As a result, partnerships with MassHire Merrimack Valley Career Center, Lawrence Public Schools, and HeadStart helped expand the support services. Currently, the program offers networking opportunities, including alumni and friends of the college affiliated with local hospitals, churches and community-based organizations.

As the institution and the program began working closer with the Lawrence community, it was learned that many Latino immigrants, mostly from the Dominican Republic, underreported their academic level because of the perception that their degrees “were not valid in this country.” For example, a housekeeper would casually mention she was a lawyer in the Dominican Republic, and a taxi driver would divulge he was a medical doctor. A typical statement was “I earned my degree in the Dominican Republic and it has no value in the U.S.”. Program participants also needed assistance with degree evaluation and navigating the U.S. higher education system.

PIÉS Latinos de NECC’s initial approach partnered with the Center for Education Documentation (CED) of Boston. Through PIÉS Latinos, information sessions were held in various languages (Spanish, French, Arabic, Portuguese and English). The first event took place in June 2016. More than 100 people attended, and 55 people

applied to validate their credentials that evening. In less than three years, the program has served more than 600 immigrants. Approximately 90% served since the inception of the program are Latinos.

EXEMPLAR OF EQUITY-IN-ACTION

The program quickly became very popular. News of its existence reached beyond the Massachusetts Merrimack Valley, including in the Dominican Republic. Immigrants contacted PIÉS from places across the state as well as New York. As a result of the success of the program, Dr. Noemí Custodia-Lora, vice president of the NECC Lawrence Campus and Community Relations and founder of PIÉS Latinos de NECC, was named to the City of Boston’s Task Force on Foreign-Trained Professionals. She was invited to participate in the National Credential and Skills Institute, which was part of President Obama’s White House New Americans initiative. This led to the evolution of PIÉS Latinos de NECC as it is today -- a comprehensive program that it is not just about the validation of foreign credentials, but about strategies that address the barriers that immigrants face when trying to achieve higher levels of education and living-wage jobs.

PIÉS Latinos de NECC is innovative because it is the only program specifically working with the Latino population in the Commonwealth addressing barriers to upskilling the local workforce with foreign credential evaluation intentionally offered in Spanish. The two Spanish-speaking NECC staff members who provide the credential evaluation are Dominican and live in Lawrence. The staff understands the language, culture, customs and norms, allowing participants to feel at ease. Even though PIÉS offer services in Spanish, the program is not only for Latino immigrants. The program has served immigrants from Jamaica, India, Cuba, Brazil, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Azerbaijan, China and Morocco. PIÉS offers services in multiple languages and works closely with other community service providers to ensure it is a sustainable program. The services have also helped more than 50 children of PIÉS Latinos participants access higher education. With the help of PIÉS Latinos, parents learned how to navigate the North American higher education system and how to encourage their children to attend NECC.

RESOURCE EFFECTIVENESS

The program has served 600 immigrants, 90% of whom are Latino. 100% of the evaluations that were submitted through NECC were validated with their U.S. equivalents. Most assessments are equivalent to bachelor's degrees. The two most common degree equivalents evaluated are in early childhood education and civil engineering.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

The social construct and stereotypical portrayal of the immigrant has changed dramatically in the last 30 years. Immigrants in Massachusetts tend to be college-educated. Forty percent of adult immigrants in Massachusetts have a college degree. The process of degree evaluation is not necessarily complicated but the process of obtaining professional licenses often is. For professions requiring licensure (e.g., CPAs, nurses, physicians, engineers), the method may seem almost impossible due to individual circumstances such as family obligations, employment and finances. Many professional boards require professional immigrants to complete additional steps because their education was earned outside of the country.

The program needs to continue addressing how English language skills affects professional immigrants. For example, English language skills of immigrant professionals are different from immigrants who have not earned an academic credential. In Lawrence, where there are many options to learn English, some professional immigrants find adult education English courses focused on literacy, and mostly struggle to find opportunities to gain professional English language instruction or training.

There is a general lack of knowledge and expertise in higher education institutions regarding the needs of immigrants with college degrees and how to help them navigate the American education and workforce system. Research is also lacking focused on this population. Given the success of PIÉS Latinos, its representatives are consulting with other higher education institutions on advising methods to support professional immigrants.

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BOSTON PIPELINE INITIATIVE

WENTWORTH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BY REBECCA DROSSMAN & ERIK MILLER

Keywords: Dual Enrollment, Summer Bridge, College Readiness, STEM

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Wentworth Institute of Technology (Wentworth) in Boston, Massachusetts, was founded in 1904 to provide technical education to Boston youth and continues this early commitment by working with Boston youth from local high schools, primarily those affiliated with the Boston Public Schools (BPS). BPS students are among the most diverse in the country, representing 85.1% students of color, with 42.4% of BPS students identifying as Hispanic and 30% as African American. More than three-quarters (76.7%) of these students are designated as those that would benefit from additional support which includes students who are economically disadvantaged, current or former English Language Learners (ELL), and those who live with a range of disabilities (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020).

Due to stresses related to poverty, racism and a range of other systemic issues leading to access issues, BPS students do not always have help navigating college and career opportunities. This opportunity gap is negatively impacting educational and career attainment outcomes for urban, low-income, ethnically diverse young people. These inequities can have lifelong implications for these individuals, their families and their communities. Among affected youth, lack of access to consistent and high-quality education can result in summer learning loss, an increased high school dropout rate, and lower rates of college enrollment, college retention and graduation.

Fortunately, jobs in STEM fields provide a way to economic upward mobility; STEM salaries are two-thirds higher than those in non-STEM fields. Unfortunately, the potential for financial success is not shared among all Americans as racially minoritized communities and females are not proportionately reaping these benefits. Although STEM employment has grown 79% since 1990, African Americans and Latinx make up a small percentage of the STEM workforce, 9% and 7%, respectively (*Pew Research*

Center, 2018). Given the growing need across the nation for STEM workers, the region and the country would significantly benefit if more racially minoritized individuals could enter these fields. Wentworth is working to achieve these goals by increasing local youths' access to a STEM-focused college degree and lucrative STEM careers.

In 2005, Wentworth established the Center for Community and Learning Partnerships (the "Center") in an effort to partner with and serve minoritized communities in Boston by offering college access and success and community revitalization projects for Boston residents. Within its educational focus, the Center prepares Boston Public School students by helping them access early college opportunities, succeed in college and graduate with a degree in hand.

Wentworth's Boston Pipeline Initiative intends to address the epidemic outlined in a 2008 report from The Boston Foundation, which stated that only 35% of all Boston Public School students attain a college degree within seven years of graduating. The gap is significant between white students and their Black and Hispanic peers.

Boston public high school graduates who do attempt to earn a postsecondary degree often struggle academically when faced with the many challenges of college, which often leads to dropping out from college after the first or second year. The goal of the Pipeline is to bridge the gaps in college preparation; access and degree attainment for Boston public high school students, (focusing on low-income, racially minoritized students as well as females, both who are underserved in STEM programs); and to ensure the retention and success of Boston public high school students who choose to attend Wentworth. Through the Boston Pipeline Initiative (the "Pipeline"), the Center offers two specially designed, proven and complementary programs for nearly 700 Boston youth over the last 10 years – Dual Enrollment and RAMP, our pre-college summer bridge program.

DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM

Wentworth's Dual Enrollment program provides an authentic dual credit model for qualified Boston resident juniors and seniors to take college-level courses free of charge, simultaneously earning credit toward high school completion and credit towards future college degrees. Course work includes but is not limited to mathematics, business management, engineering and computer science. Wentworth provides all materials necessary for the course, including textbooks, lab materials and necessary technology. Students are required to attend an orientation session before beginning their chosen course. By enabling high school students to experience college course work (paired with targeted support through individualized case management provided by the Center's staff), they are prepared for college success by being allowed the opportunity to complete a degree faster, reduce the cost for a college education and acclimate to a college environment.

We are not necessarily looking for the highest-achieving student to participate in Dual Enrollment at Wentworth. We encourage our high school partners to make sure all their juniors and seniors are aware of the opportunity, so they all have the option to apply. Many of our high school partners select the students, but we are encouraging them to provide equitable access to the application for all students.

RAMP

The goal of RAMP is to help participating students who have been accepted to Wentworth transition from high school to college by providing one-on-one mentoring, front-line academic instruction, and project-based learning by solving real-world problems with external collaborators. By enabling Boston public high school students to familiarize themselves with a college learning environment, form a cohort of peers and immerse themselves in campus life earlier, this pre-college summer bridge program provides a foundation of support before matriculation.

Typically, beginning the Monday after July 4 and running for six weeks, RAMP is held on campus Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 4 PM. The program offers participants: an opportunity to work together in teams to solve challenges that impact community organizations, to receive frontline academic exposure, to be introduced to critical campus resources, and to learn from STEM professionals in the

workplace. Faculty and staff from the Center and other departments provide students with guidance during the program. Additionally, past RAMP students are selected to serve as peer mentors and program coordinators with a nearly 3:1 ratio. As an effort to ensure student retention and graduation, the program provides academic and social supports throughout participants' tenure at the university. RAMP offers participating students \$1/hour above current Massachusetts minimum wage, helping them to prioritize academics while still balancing their family's financial need.

The program includes four complementary components.

Community-Based Problem Solving

Through project-based learning activities, students work in teams to address critical needs in the community. Each team is presented with a challenge faced by a community-based organization and given guidelines and tools to collaboratively solve the challenge. Teams meet daily to develop design solutions; create and build prototypes; practice public speaking and communication skills; develop a final project display and presentation; and present their ideas to an audience of community members, faculty, staff and students during a final showcase. Throughout the process, teams receive guidance from peer advisors, faculty and staff, and their community-based clients. A group of invited industry experts awards team members with the most successful project with free textbooks for the fall semester. The challenges presented for summer 2020 directly reflected a local approach to a global problem. RAMP participants and their teams were asked to address how COVID-19 impacted access to basic human needs, like food, shelter and healthcare.

Academic Course Work

Students participate in weekly communications workshops. The goal of the workshops is to bolster students' writing, public speaking, leadership and teamwork skills in support of their participation in community-based projects. Students also participate in a twice weekly cross-departmental course titled *How to Make Almost Anything (HTMAA)*. The course provides hands-on, STEM-based workshops like 3D modeling and printing, developing sensors and actuators, building communication devices, and an engine clinic. Although

the pandemic suspended the students' explorations through HTMAA, it is intended that the workshops will be reinstated in 2021.

Industry Partner Engagement

RAMP engages industry partners in sharing information with students about careers in STEM and strategies for achieving success. These industry champions share experiences with the students; host students at their offices; and engage them in learning about real-world workplaces, STEM fields and careers. In past summers, industry partners have included Turner Construction, Gilbane Construction, Amazon Robotics and Feldman Surveyors. RAMP participants consistently rate industry site visits among program highlights. The Center also collaborates with community-based, youth-serving organizations like Bottom Line and Hyde Square Task Force, whose college coaches help students get a glimpse of these organizations' social-emotional support services targeted for Boston residents.

Campus Resources and Immersion

Students in the RAMP program are introduced to a range of campus-wide support designed to ensure college success. The Center's staff (assistant director for college access, college access coordinator, and a newly funded college success coordinator) offers ongoing case management; the financial aid team is committed to providing students with information and resources to access scholarship support; and Wentworth's Center for Academic Excellence, offers free academic supports to students. Other campus resources introduced to RAMP students include the Office of Students Affairs, the Center for Wellness & Disability Services, and the Library & Learning Commons.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

As a program focused on better preparing minoritized students for opportunities beyond high school, RAMP has proven to be effective in addressing three primary outcomes: participation, retention and graduation. For the most recent RAMP cohort (2020), 60 incoming first-year students participated in the program representing 47% of the incoming Boston class. Of the 55 students who completed surveys, they represented a range of ethnicities with 83% of them being students of color. Looking at

the numbers a little closer, students identified as Black/Hispanic (65.4%), white (16.4%) or Asian (12.7%), and included 20% female and 80% male. Nearly half of the participants came from families that have not completed a degree beyond high school. RAMP participants experience a slightly higher first-to-second year retention rates (85%) in comparison to Wentworth undergraduates overall (84%). The fifth cohort of RAMP students graduated this past summer, and each cohort continues to experience a six-year graduation rate at or above the six-year graduation rate for Wentworth undergraduates overall and far above the six-year graduation rate for Boston Public School graduates.

LESSONS LEARNED

Dual Enrollment

Despite the program's effectiveness providing STEM course work to female students (58% of participants) and number of participating students receiving a C+ or better on their course work (nearly two-thirds), it has been challenging for participating students to take their college course on top of their high school workload, as anticipated. Students often feel overwhelmed and are more likely to withdraw from their Wentworth course. We make sure our high school partners are aware of the benefits of a dual credit model, our preferred model moving forward. However, it has been difficult to establish this policy due to challenges with the high schools' schedules, especially the variation across the largest district in New England. Due to our strong partnership with Boston Public Schools, we have authored and agreed to an MOU for the district and our high school partners that further outlines these expectations.

Offering dual credit and other early college opportunities to high schools is more effective when it is developed in partnership with the high school. Rather than provide a cookie-cutter opportunity to each high school, we strive to meet the needs of each school and see how we can fit and expand the opportunities for their students.

RAMP

Early engagement: During the spring, Wentworth provides aggressive outreach to prospective incoming students from Boston. During visits to their high schools, Wentworth is able to provide more information on RAMP and answer

any questions or concerns they may have. Being able to meet with the students early on and develop relationships with them helps them feel further connected to campus and excited to participate in RAMP during the upcoming summer.

With much of the 2020 RAMP cohort remote due to the global pandemic, Wentworth was able to create a robust management and support system that focused not just on the participants but also the peer mentors. The system, which is intended to grow for future cohorts, aims to develop the leadership and mentoring skills of past RAMP participants allowing the program to build capacity while maintaining lean, full-time staffing.

The institute recently contracted a third-party researcher to conduct a comprehensive study of RAMP and its effectiveness in comparison to similar national programs. The result was “Bridging the Gap: How Wentworth provides a personalized and local approach to college and career readiness” by The Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, referenced at the end of the document.

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RACIAL AFFINITY-BASED INITIATIVES: BLACK LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY (LLC) INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP AMBASSADOR PROGRAM AND SCHOLARSHIP (ILA) STRIVE, OVERCOME, ACHIEVE, RISE (SOAR)

ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY BY ZOILA QUEZADA

Keywords: Racial Affinity, Living-learning Community, Retention, Mentoring, Belonging

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Roger Williams University (RWU) is inextricably connected to Roger Williams, the 17th-century leader devoted to freedom of conscience and social justice who founded a community in Rhode Island based on those tenets. Roger Williams' philosophy, and what has been called his 'lively experiment,' nurtured the growth of vibrant and open societies. RWU's pursuit of excellence in education, academic accomplishment and community service is rooted in his focus on intellectual exchange, critical thinking, inclusiveness and innovation as a means of improving a free society. It is this legacy that inspires RWU's core purpose.

The university has been working to diversify the student community. With this effort has come the need to put into place programs that support the success of students of color in a predominantly white campus. According to Roger William University's 2017 Student Withdrawal Survey, students of color are more likely to leave due to a lack of diversity (Dunseath, Lambert, Lynch, McDowell, Dubuc, 2020). As a result of efforts that helped in the recruitment of more students of color to Roger Williams University, there was an increase of 2.4% students of color between fall 2017 and fall 2019, as well as a rise of 7.2% first-generation students of color in those same two academic years. There was also an increase of 9.3% in those two academic years of students of color receiving Pell grants (Dunseath et al., 2020).

There are three racial affinity-based programs that have assisted the university in supporting student success. One of them is more than 10 years old and the other two are less than three years old to the institution. The goals for these three racial affinity-based initiatives are to engage and support students of color, first-generation, and low-income students at a small, private, predominately white institution. In the 2017 university NSSE High Impact Practices data it was found that only 15% of students were part of a Living Learning Community and that only 24 students were part of high impact practices. These programs also work to ensure that a range of students participate in high-impact practices.

Students tend to perform better academically when they feel that they are part of the community and make lasting connections to their peer group and the broader campus community (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; McClain & Perry, 2017). All three programs discussed in this emerging practice have these components in common: mentoring by both staff and faculty, academic advising, requirements for tutoring hours per week, weekly and monthly meetings in groups, ongoing meetings with a mentor or program coordinators.

LEARNING FROM THE LITERATURE

The three affinity programs provide resources and structured initiatives for students of color. The desired outcomes are retention from the first semester to second semester and first academic year to second academic year along with the other results of academic success, social awareness and adjustment, and development of a connection to groups and the broader community. In addition to

retention and academic success, all three programs have the overarching goal of creating a safe and inclusive community in which students can thrive while advocating for the engagement in high impact practices.

Sense of identifying with peers and belonging to a group has shown to help with satisfaction and retention (Spanierman et al., 2013). In a national study done of 2,967 first-year students measuring sense of belonging, researchers found that students who identified as African American, Hispanic/Latino and Asian Pacific American reported having a lower sense of belonging compared to white students. Students reported that the social aspect of the transition to college such as residence halls climate and campus racial climate were strong factors that impacts their sense of belonging (Johnson et al., 2007).

Part of the transition to college is also enhanced with a curricular approach. It has been shown that courses for first year students developed for student retention and academic achievement can impact a student sense of belonging. In a class of 1,557 at Texas A&M, first-time college students covered the topics of life skills and study skills, including: familiarity with college regulations, communication and study skills, goal setting, priority management, reading for comprehension, note-taking, test-taking, creativity, establishing relationships and the power of a positive attitude. After this class there was statistically significant data that showed that students who took this developmental course had higher retention rates as well as grade point averages at a C or better. In the study, it was noted that these impacted Hispanic and African American students, as social experiences are more statistically significant in predicting retention than family background and personal characteristics. The study also noted that this kind of class is crucial for Hispanic students, as studies have shown that they often come to college with less college preparedness. They tend to be first generation college students with limited access to information about the college experience (Garza & Bowden, 2014). RWU's Black Learning Living Community (LLC) and the SOAR (Strive, Overcome, Achieve, Rise) program both have a curricular component to them.

STRENGTHENING BELONGING AND COMMUNITY
The Black Diasporic Living Learning Community (Black LLC) is a group of people from a diversity of

backgrounds, experiences and ethnicities who connect around the common experience of being racially Black. The Black Diasporic Community aims to make meaningful connections with peers, Black faculty and administrators. The structure also supports networking with alumni of color, networking in the Rhode Island community and participation in community collaborations through service projects that empower Black youth and engage with the campus community for institutional change. The majority of the students identify as Black or Black Hispanic. The LLC was created after hearing from students that they desired a space where they can express their identities and be affirmed in a space that would be different from the rest of the campus.

The administration in collaboration with housing and admissions began to move the process along. The LLC was promoted through the admissions channels and events. Students were invited to live in the LLC through targeted mailings. During the 2018-2019 first-year student housing selection process, students self-selected to become members of the Black Living-Learning community. In its first year it hosted 10 first-year students in a first-year hall. Living in the LLC required co-curricular meetings that featured check-ins and evaluation of the week as well as discussing the students' experiences on campus (academic, social or emotional).

In its second year, the Black LLC was a multi-year LLC, and it created opportunities for peer mentor relationships. This community included a shared first-year seminar course with a Black-identified faculty member. The common course for the students in the Black LLC in the fall of 2018 was "Human Behavior in Perspective," taught by an adjunct professor. The common course for the fall 2019 Black LLC was "Challenges of Democracy," led by a full-time faculty member from the Department of Culture Studies. All students, in both cohorts, received a B or above for the end of the semester grade. Both academic years, the students engaged with the campus either through direct involvement with the LLC or in other capacities across campus, such as a resident assistant, orientation advisor, peer mentor, tutor or as an admissions ambassador.

SOAR (Strive, Overcome, Achieve, Rise) is a support program for first year students who are the first in their families to go to college. SOAR helps students navigate

their first year at Roger Williams University and empowers students with the knowledge and tools they will need to succeed. Research indicates that first year students are twice as likely to drop out compared to second year students (O’Keefe, 2013). SOAR students have the opportunity to be mentored by faculty mentors who serve as partners in assisting students navigate their first academic year at RWU. The ultimate goal of SOAR is to help students understand the resources and opportunities available and to begin to take the initiative to make their RWU experience their own.

This practice began in the fall 2018. The admissions office identified eligible students based on race, academic standing (high school GPA below a 3.0), financial need and first-generation status. The students were invited by a member of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion team to participate in the program, and it was the same process used for the class that entered fall 2019. In its first year, students committed to monthly community meetings that focused on student success and retention-oriented skill building. Each student had a faculty mentor assigned with whom they met every week for the first eight weeks of the semester; after that they had the option of moving into a biweekly schedule. In the 2019–2020 academic year, a bi-weekly pass/fail class was instituted and added to the students’ academic schedules.

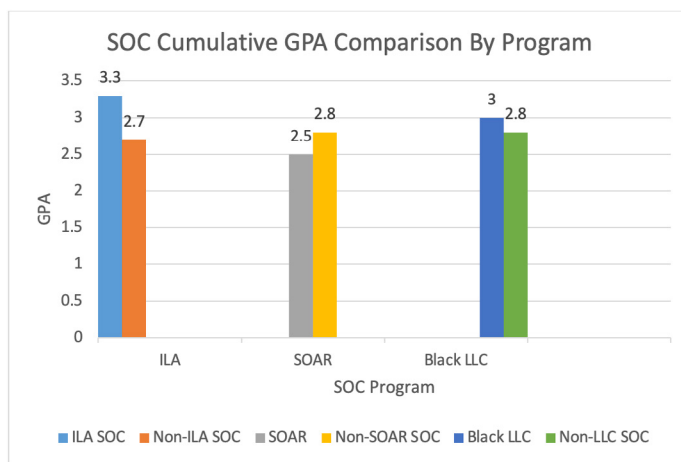
In order to assess the program, surveys were distributed at the end of the first year, and a focus group was led in the second year at the end of the fall semester. The faculty participated in individual meetings with the coordinators and participated in surveys both first and second year. The fall 2020 syllabus focused on social emotional learning skills; the programmatic overview is available from the author by request.

The Intercultural Leadership Ambassador Program and Scholarship (ILA) is one of the longest running programs at RWU that supports low-income students of color. This program began in 2007 to recruit students from diverse racial, ethnic and socio-economic status to RWU. The program includes a scholarship of over \$30,000 for four consecutive years of undergraduate study in addition to a co-curricular program that seeks to provide mentorship and academic support while furthering the holistic and leadership growth of recipients

throughout their time at RWU. The admissions application has additional questions for students interested in applying to ILA. A committee selects the finalists for the award. The program begins before orientation with cohort activities and engagement with staff and faculty. Throughout the year, the program includes weekly meetings with faculty and staff mentors, field trips, a series of programs and a scholarship offer of 95% tuition for four years. The program also includes a session for professional development for sophomores, juniors and seniors.

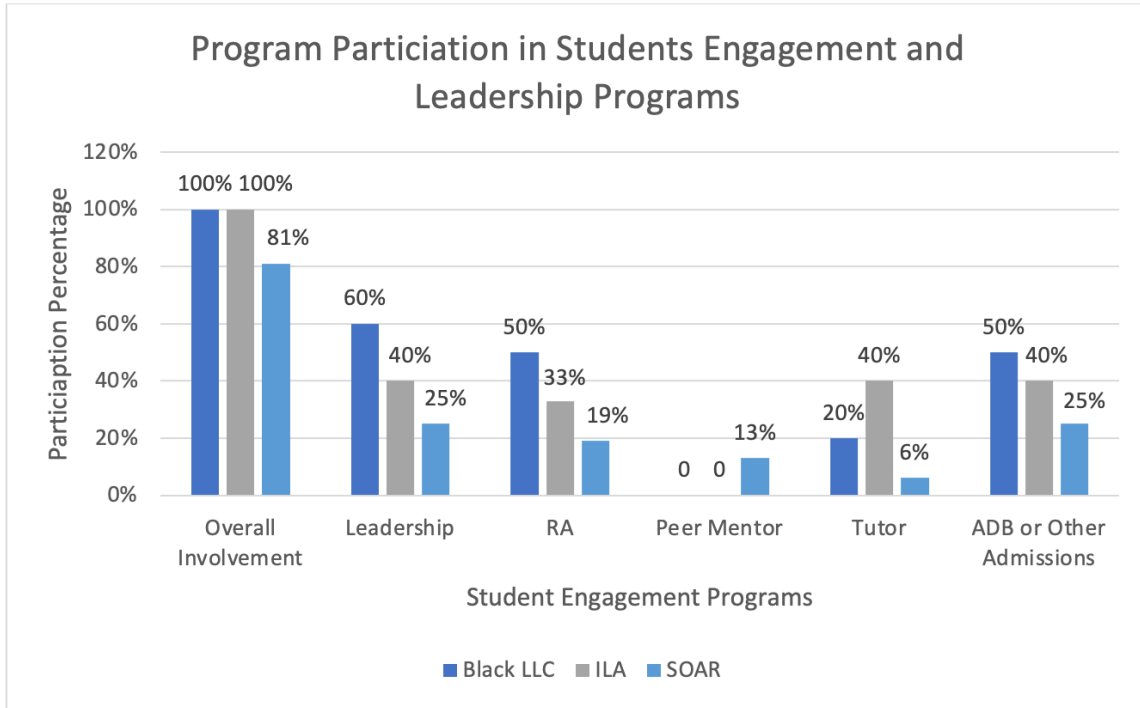
PROGRAM EVALUATION

Initial data that compares the GPAs of students of color in specific programs with the students of color who did not participate indicate that students of color in the Black LLC and the ILA programs had higher semester and cumulative GPAs as compared to the students of color not involved in one of these programs. The cumulative GPA for the students of color involved in SOAR, however, was slightly lower than both the non-participant students of color and students overall. More review needs to occur to understand how the SOAR program and the institution at large can better support the first-generation, low-income students of color who are part of this program.



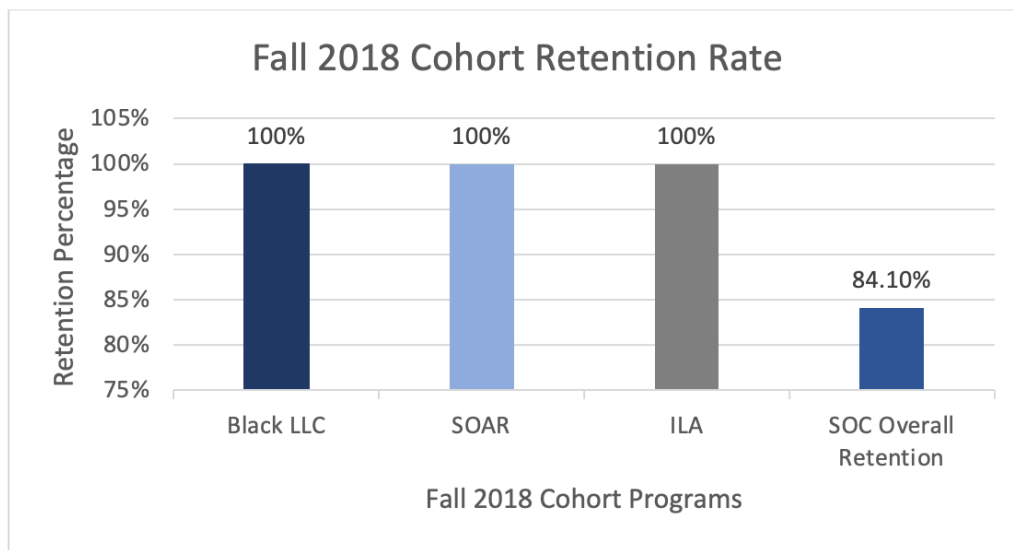
[SOC Cumulative GPA Comparison by Program in table format.](#)

Students of color who were involved in these programs were engaged in other aspects of campus life such as leaders in the classroom, student club organizations, peer mentors, resident assistants, student senate, admissions ambassadors and tutors. Preliminary analysis indicates that students of color involved in these retention programs were highly engaged on campus but this inquiry also revealed a gap in our ability to track student engagement by race overall on campus. Therefore, there is no comparable data with students of color who were not involved in a retention program.

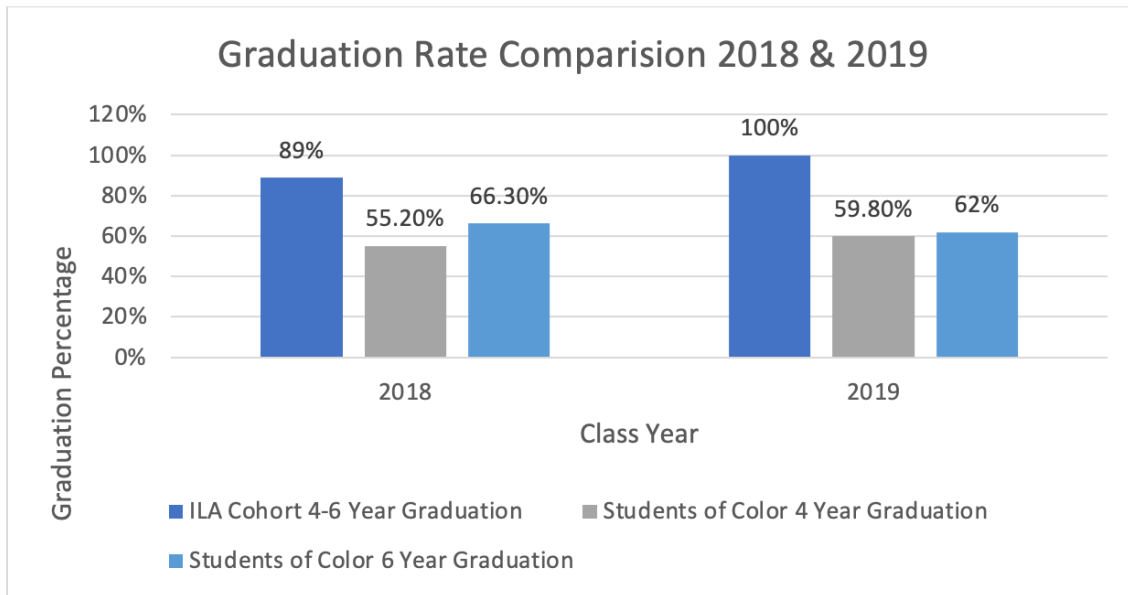


[Program Participation in Student Engagement and Leadership Programs in table format.](#)

Students involved in these programs retain and graduate at higher rates compared to all students of color.



[Fall 2018 Cohort Retention Rate in table format.](#)



[Graduation Rate Comparison 2018 & 2019 in table format](#)

LESSON LEARNED

Students who live in the Black LLC and are also part of either ILA or SOAR showed more significant connections to the campus community, demonstrating the potential power of the residential experience and the wrap around care offered by multiple programs. These programs add to the literature that indicate that for students of color attending a predominantly white institution, faculty mentors, staff relationships, and a peer cohort offered within a framework of racial equity and justice continue to be potent resources supporting the success of Black, Brown and other students of color.

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SUPPORTING RACIAL EDUCATIONAL EQUITY THROUGH A SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM

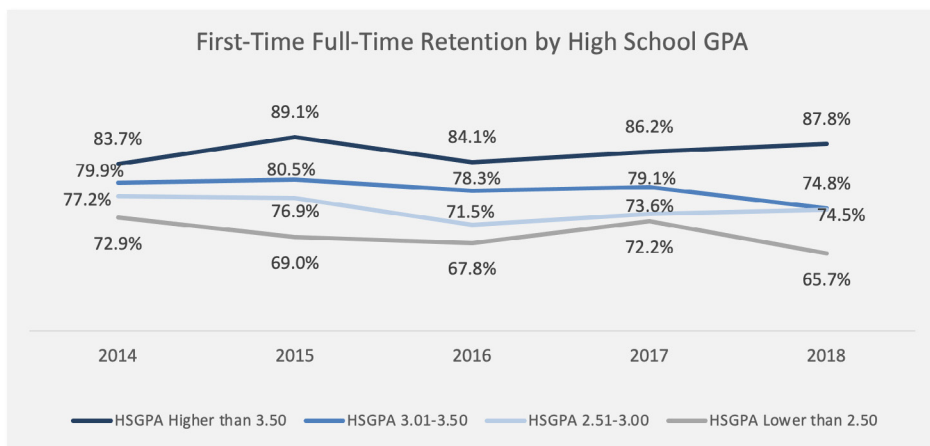
BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY
BY CECILIA DEOLIVEIRA, SABRINA GENTLEWARRIOR
& SYDNÉ MARROW

Keywords: Summer Bridge, Retention, High School GPA

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

“Education ... beyond all other devices of human origin is a great equalizer ... the balance wheel of the social machinery” (Horace Mann, 1848). Bridgewater State University (BSU), a four-year public institution in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, reflects often on this statement made by its founder Horace Mann. The university has a historic commitment to supporting the success of all students, as demonstrated by the goal we have set for ourselves of working to eliminate all educational equity gaps experienced by students attending our institution (https://www.bridgew.edu/sites/bridgew/files/BSU-Institutional-Strategic-Plan-01_15_18_0.pdf). President Fred Clark has summarized the goal of his presidency as “supporting the success of every student, one student at a time” (<https://alumni.bridgew.edu/file/2019-BSU-Impact-Report.pdf>). In order to achieve this aspirational goal, the campus utilizes multiple strategies and interventions designed to help address factors that are premised in systemic racism and other forms of oppression that result in some of our students coming to BSU with student success challenges premised in cultural, not personal factors (McNair, Bensimon and Malcom-Piqueux, 2020).

As part of this work and through data-informed discussions, it was acknowledged that nationally incoming college students with a lower overall high school GPA are at a higher risk for not retaining to their second year of college as compared with their peers with higher GPAs (Westrick, Le, Robbins, Radunzel & Schmidt, 2015). Upon examining our institutional data (see chart below summarizing five years of BSU data on high school GPA and retention to the second year at the institution) our institutional data reflected this national trend as well. BSU’s Office of Institutional Research data indicates that every year approximately 40% of the campus’s incoming first-time, full-time students fall into the overall 2.0–3.0 high school GPA band. Similar to national data (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2009; Zhao, 2016), racially minoritized students are typically overrepresented in this group; approximately 33% of first-time, full-time students with a high school GPA of 2.0–3.0 enrolling at BSU are students of color.



[First-Time Full-Time Retention by High School GPA in table format](#)

In an effort to provide support and wrap around services to first-time full-time admitted students, with lower high school GPAs, BSU examined the literature to determine if offering a summer bridge program would be a useful strategy to support the success of these students. Summer bridge programs are an especially potent retention strategy for students at risk for non-persistence (Douglass & Attewell, 2014; Greenfield, Keup, Gardner, 2013; Habley, Bloom, and Robbins, 2012; Sablan, 2014). Effective summer bridge programs typically include curricular and co-curricular components in order to provide participating students information on key retention resources, a successful college course experience, and first year college credits – which is key to student momentum (Douglass & Attewell, 2014; Greenfield, Keup, and Gardner, 2013; Sablan, 2014). Quiroz and Garza’s (2018) research also underscores the importance of summer bridge programs offering curricular and co-curricular programming that is student-centered and culturally relevant. Summer bridge programs, like all of our work in higher education, need to be premised in a racial equity framework in order to truly meet the needs of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian and other students of color attending our institutions (Bensimon, 2020).

MOVING FROM A BOUTIQUE PROGRAM TO A KEY FIRST-YEAR RETENTION STRATEGY

Based on the literature and in view of the need underscored by our institutional data, the program was piloted in the summer of 2017 with 26 students. During the program’s first year, the students were drawn from the 2.0-2.5 high school GPA band. In subsequent years due to the strength of the first year’s retention data, the program was offered to students in the 2.0-3.0 high school GPA band. As the data from this initial pilot group of students indicated a positive correlation between program participation and retention, the number of participating students was increased to 57 students in 2018; of these 26% were students of color. In the third year of the program (summer 2019), 72 students participated with 31% being Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian and other students of color. Mindful of the counsel that institutions of higher education need to focus on evidence-based strategies that support racially minoritized students and “do it at scale” (Center for Community

College Student Engagement, 2014, p. 25), in summer 2020, the program was scaled dramatically to 153 students; 30% of these were students of color. This program scaling was made possible through grant funding from the Lumina Foundation.

Recruitment: Each year recruitment of scholars to the program begins in April. The Division of Student Success and Diversity (SSD) works from a list provided by the Admissions Department of all deposited incoming first-time, full-time students with a high school GPA 2.0-3.0. Students are sent a program invitation letter that is followed by an email. Students also receive calls encouraging participation from BSU staff. All communication to the students is strengths-based and done in a manner to mitigate stereotype threat in order to “set the stage for the expectation for success” (Quiroz & Garza, 2018, p. 109). The program flyer included in this document illustrates one example of how we communicate about this program in a respectful, inclusive and celebratory manner.

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY

BEARS SUMMER SCHOLARS

What is the BSU Bears Summer Scholars Program?

The BSU Bears Summer Scholars Program is designed to help students succeed. Program participants will:

- complete a free, 3-credit summer course
- learn skills that are key to achieving the highest potential as scholars and future campus leaders, and
- have a head-start on navigating the BSU campus

Qualifications

We offer the BSU Bears Summer Scholars Program to incoming BSU students with a high school GPA of 2.0-3.0. We are excited to report that students in the last two years of the BSU Bears Summer Scholars Program have achieved success and retained at BSU at some of the highest rates at the University.

Program Overview

Enrolled students complete the **Introduction to Public Speaking (COMM102)** course. This course is a Core Requirement that every BSU first-year student must complete. It runs for five weeks over the summer, **July 6 through August 6, 2020**. A lunch workshop is planned each week and is a great space for students to get to know one another as well as learn about specific campus resources and how to access.

Summer 2020 Program Requirements

- Acceptance to Bridgewater State University for fall 2020 as a first-time student
- Receive an invitation to participate in this program
- Complete the BSU Student Orientation in June 2020
- Register for the COMM102 course, and attend every class

Questions

Contact Cecilia DeOliveira, Director of Student Success Interventions within the Division of Student Success & Diversity, at 508-531-2512 or cdeoliveira@bridgew.edu.

Recruitment of a robust and diverse participant pool has been challenging for two main reasons. First, many of the students indicate that they are relishing the thought of being done with high school in June and are not yet

ready to immediately launch into a college summer bridge program one month later. In addition, many of these students in the recruitment pool need to work during the summer to help finance their college education; taking time off from work to attend the program can be difficult. While this is a potent factor for many of our low-income students offered the opportunity to participate, there is a greater likelihood that BSU's FTFT racially minoritized students will be low income/Pell Eligible as compared to their white peers (66% per year for students of color versus 29% for white students). Recruitment materials underscore the value of the program to students (more than \$1,200 each) and that the entire program is offered free-of-charge to the participants.

Program details: Students participating in the program receive, at no charge, a three-credit Introduction to Public Speaking course which fulfills a requirement within the core curriculum, the course textbook, parking for the duration of the program, and five lunches during which focus is placed on community-building and offering students key student success and retention-oriented resources and information. The public speaking course was chosen in consultation with academic affairs as successful mastery of the course objectives helps to support students' success throughout their time at BSU in general, but also in a range of other courses in which they have to do class presentations, participate on team projects, etc. The course also supports students in using their voices and sharing their perspectives; these competencies are important for all students but may hold special salience for Black, Brown and other students of color who too often find that their voices and perspectives are silenced and minoritized. In summer 2020, 143 students were enrolled in the Introduction to Public Speaking course.

In addition, a pilot program began in summer 2020. Ten students, entering BSU with a stated desire to pursue a degree in BSU's Riccardi College of Business, were enrolled in Management 130, a gateway course in the college (instead of the public speaking course). This course provided students with introductory material about the college as well as helped them determine which major they wanted to declare within the college. This college-based pilot of the program is an exciting next step and will be assessed for effectiveness going forward.

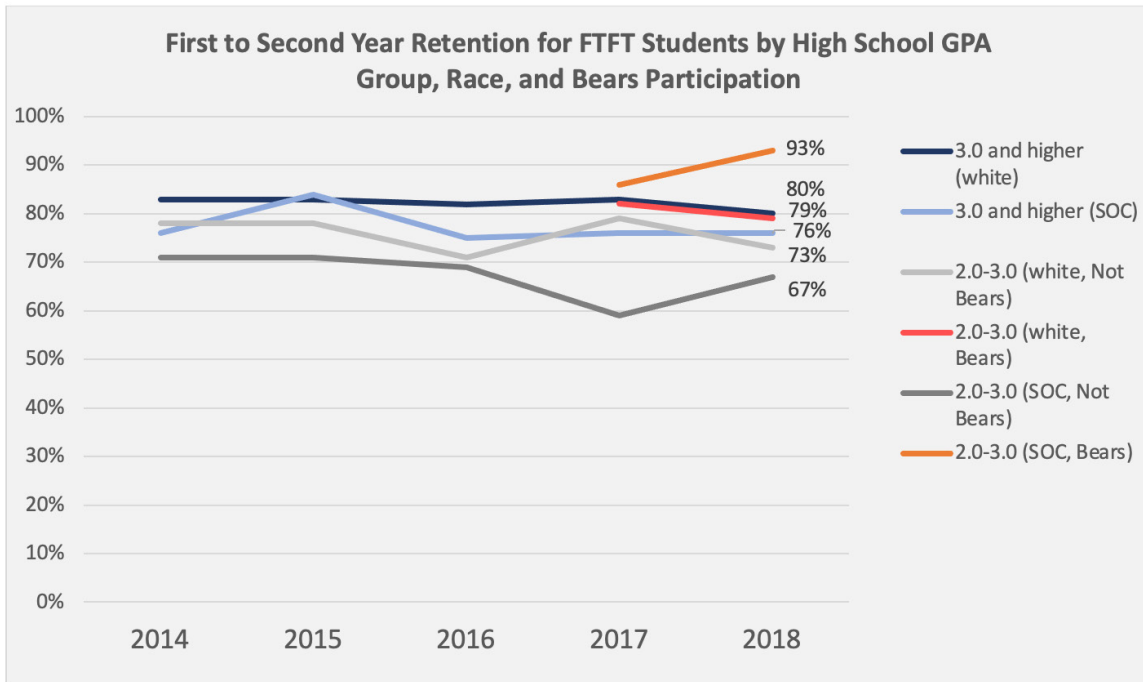
All students participate in student success workshops with topics that include: fostering a growth mindset; enhancing time management skills; navigating the university and identifying key resources; utilizing high impact practices. The final session encourages students to share remaining key questions related to succeeding at BSU with real-time support and answers from an array of staff.

The faculty who teach in the Summer Bears Program have extensive experience supporting the success of students and bring to their work practices linked to educational equity. The faculty and staff meet extensively before, during and after the program each summer as a learning community in order to actively strategize about ways the program can best support the success of program participants. Due to uncertainties related to COVID-19, the summer 2020 course delivery and student success programming were provided via remote delivery format.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Following best practice (Quiroz and Garza, 2018), the program is evaluated each year by asking the students for their perceived usefulness of the Summer Bears Program in supporting their current and future success. Evaluation questions focus on a range of topics including those that help program staff assess the programming students found most helpful, and the questions about the campus that remain even after program completion. This input is used to help inform future programming and program innovations.

Campus data from the Office of Institutional Research indicates that the program is effective in supporting student retention. In 2018, 83% of Summer Bears participants were retained compared to 76% of non-participants. When looking only at students who were eligible for Summer Bears but did not participate (high school GPA below 3.0), the retention rate was 72% compared to Summer Bears participants in the same GPA group at 82%. Participation in the program appears to be even more impactful for racially minoritized students, who retained at 93% compared with white participants at 80%.



[First to Second Year Retention for FTFT Students by High School GPA Group, Race and Bears Participation in table format](#)

LESSONS LEARNED

To effectively serve racially minoritized students, centralize the leadership of Black, Brown and other people of color, staff and faculty as well as issues of racial justice: Recruitment for the Summer 2020 program occurred in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder. Some of the Black and Brown families that were contacted about their student participating in the program had specific questions about what BSU is doing for racial justice; these questions were answered directly and honestly. It should be underscored that the program leaders making these calls are racially diverse staff; on numerous occasions the Black and Brown families indicated that they found comfort in the fact that staff involved in the program are also people of color. The importance of Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and other people of color being hired into campus leadership positions where they can offer educational equity programs and strategies is again underscored by this example.

Involve the entire campus on behalf of students served: Summer bridge programs benefit greatly from wide campus support and participation. The BSU Bears Summer Scholars Program is possible only due to interdivisional support from across the campus. The involvement of the registrar,

advising center, staff administering high impact practice programs, student affairs professionals and notably the faculty teaching in the program is key. The support from the Office of Institutional Research has also helped to ensure that the program is evaluated in an ongoing fashion to ensure that participants are being effectively served. Creating intentional conversations with these colleagues has been key to the success of the program.

Be responsive to students’ needs when creating program innovations: Due to the many stressors faced by potential program participants, many students cannot participate in the full five-week program that includes the course and the student success programming. In order to honor the realities of these students’ lives, another version of the program was offered in Summer 2020 called Summer Bears Early Arrival. Due to Covid-19, this program was offered virtually. This program does not include the academic course offered through the Summer Bears Program, but instead emphasizes three days of highly interactive programming that endeavors to build community, share student success information, and introduce participants to key resources and individuals. Students’ program participation in a similar program

offered at BSU a few years ago was correlated with higher retention rates than similar students who did not participate in the program. Based on this information, we are hopeful that the program will prove beneficial to participating students. The program will be assessed going forward as well.

Seek opportunities to provide continued care and support: In an effort to enhance the program beginning fall 2020, staff will begin to offer support and resources to participants over their entire undergraduate education at BSU in an effort to build community and continue to share key retention-oriented information and support. Strategies to offer students stipends for participation are also being explored.

Identify funding resources in order to scale program: As discussed earlier, in order to make this program easily accessible to low income students, the Summer Scholar Bears Program is offered free-of-charge to the students. Prior to the summer 2020, this was accomplished using institutional funds. BSU's ability to scale to 153 students in the summer of 2020 was made possible by Lumina Foundation Equity Institutions funding. Bridgewater State University is deeply grateful to the Lumina Foundation for these financial resources.

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THE M.A.L.E.S. (MEN ACHIEVING LEADERSHIP, EXCELLENCE AND SUCCESS) PROGRAM

NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY COLLEGE BY MICHELE CUBELLI HARRIS

Keywords: Summer Bridge, Male Students of Color, Retention, Mentoring

INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

North Shore Community College (NSCC) in Danvers, Massachusetts, is a public, non-profit, two-year institution of higher education. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts created the college in 1965 to serve residents living on the North Shore. The campuses, curriculum, and resources are designed to provide pathways for all to access affordable higher education. NSCC is a special place – caring about students and their successes, and the communities it serves (<https://www.northshore.edu/about/index.html>).

Lynn, a neighboring city to NSCC, has a high poverty rate of 20.2% and accounts for 11% of the state's total immigrant population (2015 2011–2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, U.S. Census). Many residents of the North Shore's Gateway Cities of Lynn, Peabody and Salem (42% of NSCC's credit headcount) do not speak English as their first language at home (48.9%, 20.2% and 23.3%, respectively) and/or are not proficient in English. In Lynn, 32% of residents are foreign-born, in Peabody, 8.5% of residents are foreign-born, and in Salem, 15% are foreign-born.

Many minoritized populations do not attend or complete college. Such individuals are at a distinct disadvantage as compared to their peers who have degrees in terms of job opportunities, income, and other social and economic capital. The income disparity between college graduates and non-college graduates is widening across the country. According to research by the Economic Policy Institute, college graduates, on average, earned 56% more income than high school graduates (Economic Policy Institute, 2015). The long-term negative economic impact of low earnings potential is detrimental to individuals and families and the cities, towns and states where they settle.

A 2017 Harvard Business School (Heffrin, 2017) study conducted for North Shore Community College found that while men are more likely than women to be low-completers of higher education across all races, the cohort with the highest rate of low-completion of college were young Black and Hispanic men, age 20–22. Specifically, the study revealed Black and Latino males residing in zip code 01902 (a section of Lynn, Massachusetts) had the highest risk of low-completion compared to the rest of the North Shore area.

Latino/Hispanic students are the fastest-growing racially diverse population at NSCC, comprising 24% of the student body, followed by Black/African American students at 9%. Despite these gains, the Harvard Business School study reveals a significant need for our institution to increase higher education access for Black and Latino/Hispanic males. In response, NSCC launched a new initiative in the summer of 2018 – Men Achieving Leadership, Excellence and Success (M.A.L.E.S.) – to increase college enrollment and completion rates for this target population.

The M.A.L.E.S. program supports Massachusetts' Department of Higher Education Equity Agenda (<https://www.mass.edu/strategic/equity.asp>) by supporting the enrollment, success, and graduation of males of color participating in the program. NSCC's approach brings together promising practices that embrace the culture, identity and community to enhance access and achievement for males of color attending the institution. Program activities include: a summer bridge program, a first-year student mentoring program, a student club, and selected strategies embedded in the MA Department of Higher Education 100 Males to College initiative (e.g., courageous conversations about race and culture in higher education and taking college courses during high school).

THE SUMMER BRIDGE COMPONENT

Informed by state and national best practices, the Summer Bridge was established in 2018 as a program designed to prepare students for success at North Shore Community College. The program aims to develop the academic and non-cognitive college readiness skills essential to excel in college and career. The philosophical approach embedded throughout the curriculum is the idea of establishing a sense

of belonging and purpose, as well as developing a growth mindset. To that end, the program focuses on closing educational equity gaps and increasing access, retention and achievement for low-income males and/or Black, Brown and other males of color. The programmatic framework includes: one noncredit math essential skills experience; one three-credit First Year Experience course; Summer Success Workshops on a variety of skills and experiential learning topics; and a supportive network for students to explore the college environment. This six-week program is free for eligible male students accepted into the program.

The recruitment of students for the summer bridge program was extremely cumbersome. Students were required to be accepted to the college, which requires a completed application packet, including either a high school transcript or a diploma. Program recruitment included outreach and marketing occurring during the spring semester targeting guidance counselors of feeder high schools as well as, new fall applicants and prospects residing in the target zip code areas. Outreach includes phone calls and emails through the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) platform. Interested students complete a short form via a google doc sharing their interest in the program. Interested students are invited to orientation sessions throughout June. Orientation sessions ensure that students had been accepted to the college, have taken the Accuplacer test, and, if applicable, have a completed a financial aid application. Students also receive a tour of the campus by student orientation leaders to learn more about the college. Students who complete all steps receive an acceptance letter and are registered for the course. Assistance is provided to students needing additional support to complete the application process.

Students participate in two courses as a cohort. The program begins in Summer Session II and includes a First-Year Experience Course (3-credits) and a Math Path Lab (noncredit). A faculty/adjunct faculty member staff both courses. The Math Lab includes a peer tutor. Students' proficiency in math is varied; however, with support from the tutor, the math professor works with them to increase their math scores. Along with the traditional content, the F.Y.E. course raises the students' awareness of what it means to be a male student of color in college, including readings,

research and classroom experiences that focus on various issues faced by Black, Brown and other male students of color. Additionally, it is taught by a person of color, creating an opportunity for guidance and mentorship built into the classroom.

As part of the City of Lynn's summer meals program, the two-day schedule includes free breakfast and lunch. Additionally, each day ends with a Transition Talk session facilitated by a staff or faculty member to ease college transition. Sessions provide an overview of all student support services, including presentations from internal departments and computer information literacy skills. Students complete a brief survey at the end of each of the weekly sessions.

The program began the second week of the summer semester, and most, if not all, of the students had incomplete applications. Additionally, while students were hopeful about increasing their math aptitude, many did not want to sit in a math class during the summer. The fact that we offered breakfast, snacks and lunch was encouraging to students. Attendance declined over the summer of 2018. We offered the Transition Talk session at 4 PM as the last part of the day. After a couple of solid weeks of attendance, some students would leave for the day after the snack and be absent during the Transition Talk. We were competing with conflicting schedules, primarily as a result of students' work schedules and other responsibilities. For summer 2019, while we were not able to shift the class times, we were able to slightly reduce the amount of time in classes and shorten the lunch hour. The day ended at 3 PM; attendance was steadier and more consistent as a result.

MENTORING COMPONENT

Recognizing that it is not enough to simply encourage racially minoritized males to enroll in college, it is important that they succeed and graduate. A mentoring component of the program was also established in 2018 for Black and Latino male students, ages 18-23 who are first-time college students who enroll in classes at NSCC. The components of the M.A.L.E.S. Mentor Program ensure a steady transition to college and strive to empower students as engaged learners and members of their communities. The student success element of the program provides academic and social support, mentoring and an annual community service initiative. NSCC staff and faculty members, as well as volunteers

from the greater community, serve as mentors. Interested individuals completed a questionnaire and agreed to basic expectations, including meeting at least once per semester in person with their mentee. The college partnered with The Mass Mentor Partnership for a half-day mentor training for all mentors. The M.A.L.E.S. Mentor Program has a capacity for up to 20 participants.

Identifying mentors took far longer than anticipated. As a result of not being able to solidify and secure enough mentors for the first fall semester, the mentor component was delayed and kicked-off at the start of the spring semester with a meet and greet session. Students and mentors were then matched based on the natural affinity towards each other. We did not limit our mentors to men of color. Our mentors included individuals of all identities. Mentors and mentees meet once per month to focus on factors influencing the mentees success at NSCC. Mentors report out on mentees' progress to the program coordinator, who follows up with mentees offering additional support and resources if useful.

In order to provide additional holistic support, mentees are required to meet with their academic advisor at least once a month. Those eligible are strongly encouraged to apply to the TRIO Program, thus building an authentic community and fellowship among marginalized and/or historically underrepresented student groups. Additionally, the program coordinator regularly monitors the academic progress and acts as a point of contact and coordinator for the services provided to the student across the college. These services include outreach to all M.A.L.E.S. students based on the academic alert report, including sending encouraging messages to students that are progressing successfully.

THE STUDENT ORGANIZATION

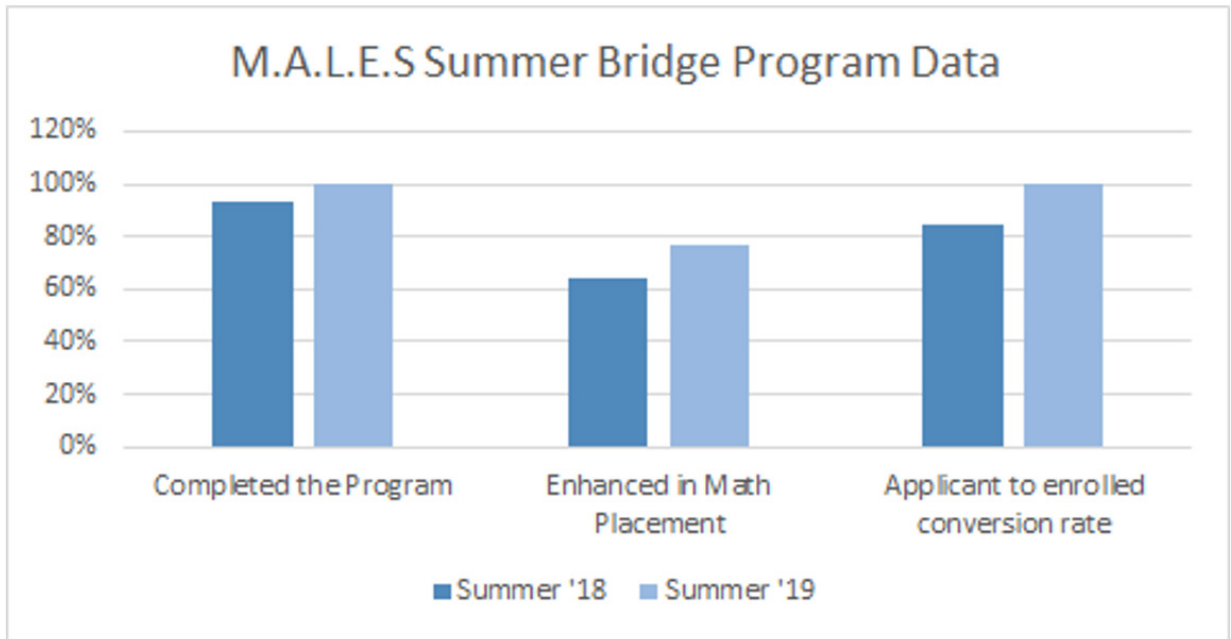
Students outside of the parameters of Summer Bridge/Mentor components began to ask about opportunities to be part of a brotherhood on campus, and the discussion of creating a club/organization took place. Students expressed interested in taking on executive board positions, and the M.A.L.E.S. student organization kicked off at the start of the spring 2020 semester. During the fall and spring semesters, the Transition Talks that began in the Summer Bridge Program continued. At students' request, the name was changed to R.A.P. Sessions (Represent. Achieve.

Persist.) as a way to underscore that the sessions were focused on subjects students care passionately about. These sessions consistently provide first-year students exposure to critical issues to their academic and personal success and in developing realistic goals. Topics vary, and presenters speak to students on matters relating to test-taking; note-taking; critical thinking; preparing for your first exam; preventing academic probation and suspension; career exploration & strengths inventory; financial literacy; healthy masculinity; spoken word; gender and sexuality; boosting college success; growth mindset; overcoming setbacks; self-advocacy; and overcoming challenges/motivation. Additionally, as a partner with Salem State University on the 100 Males to College Program, our students participate in at least three events each year on the Salem State campus.

Due to Covid-19, the organization is currently running a weekly virtual R.A.P. Sessions to keep the students engaged and discuss challenges resulting from these unprecedented times. This also provides students with an opportunity to strengthen the brotherhood bond. Students learn from each other's challenges and successes and decrease the isolation one can feel.

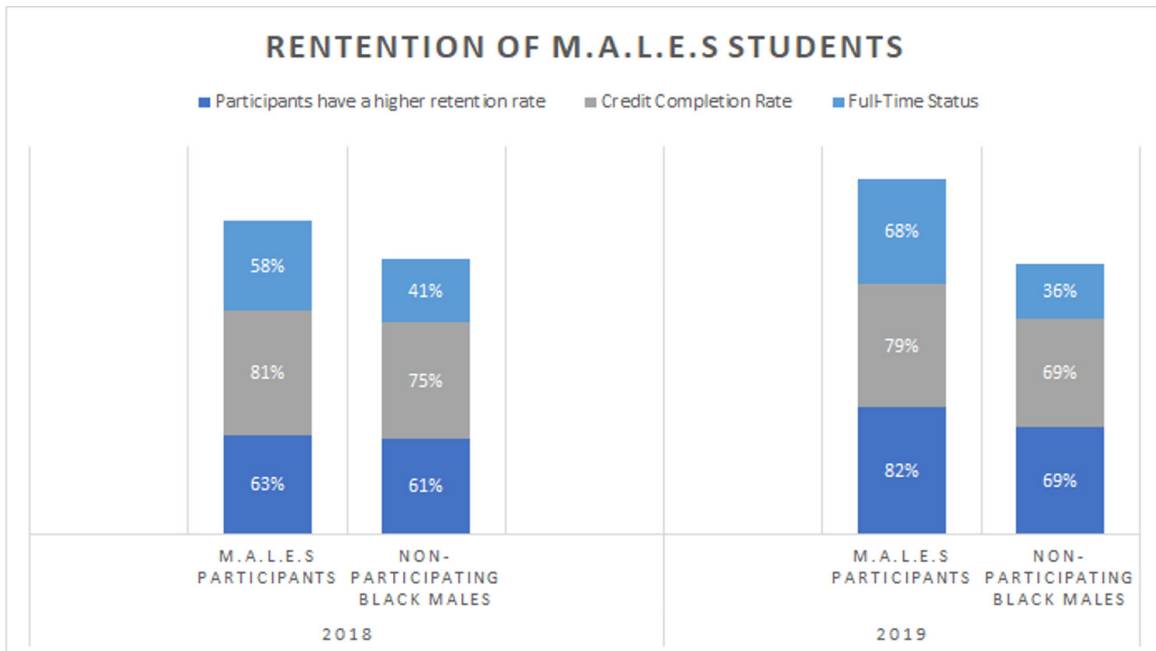
PROGRAM EVALUATION

The early data on the program components are promising. As shown on the next page, summer bridge program participants have strong program completion, and the majority shows increased success in math placement and college attendance at NSCC.



[M.A.L.E.S. Summer Bridge Program Data in table format](#)

Once enrolled at NSCC, program participants have a higher fall to spring retention rates, credit completion rates, and full-time attendance than their peers that do not participate in the program.



[Retention of M.A.L.E.S. Students in table format](#)

LESSONS LEARNED

Supporting the success of racially minoritized males' success into and through college is one of the more vexing issues facing higher education institutions. The M.A.L.E.S. Program underscores that students thrive when institutions offer culturally responsive and racially equitable student success resources that honor the lived experiences of the students that are served. As this work continues, NSCC will conduct focus groups with the students to learn more about how the institution can become even more student-centered.

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REFERENCES

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CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENTS: BUILDING A DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CURRICULUM TOOLKIT OF SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO FACULTY

SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

BY GREG BEAVER

Keywords: Curriculum-Based Racial Equity Content, Culturally Inclusive Pedagogy

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Suffolk University is driven by the power of education, inclusion and engagement to change lives and positively impact communities. Committed to excellence, Suffolk University provides students with experiential and transformational learning opportunities that begin in the center of Boston, reach across the globe and lead to extraordinary outcomes for its graduates.

Suffolk University's FY20 data indicate students of color comprise 26.8% of the student body, and white students are 51.5% of the overall enrollment. Eighteen percent of students are international students; almost 4% of students are of unknown race/ethnicity. With a five-point retention gap between students of color (at 74% retained) and white students (at 79% retained), the Suffolk's Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI) team is identifying strategies to eliminate this equity gap.

SUPPORTING THE SUCCESS OF MINORITIZED STUDENTS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Research indicates that an inclusive curriculum strengthens students' sense of belonging, ensuring that they can see themselves reflected in the topics, reading lists, case studies and assessments (McDuff, Hughes, Tatam, Morrow & Ross, 2020). Although there are no institutional data available indicting the need for increased materials related to race and ethnicity, Suffolk's Racial Equity and Justice team hypothesized, there may be limited racial equity and justice-oriented course material available within the overall curriculum. A preliminary survey of Suffolk's diversity and inclusion materials conducted in 2018 yielded a list of

syllabi, course requirements and accreditation standards that merely indicated the existence of materials. To accurately determine the availability of curriculum content focused on race and ethnicity, a survey was created and sent to faculty to determine what students were exposed to specific to race and ethnicity. (See Appendix A for the research materials.)

The survey was intended to provide information on content in the curriculum specific to race/ethnicity, discrimination, bias and equity and to ascertain how, where, and when to provide curriculum enhancements if requested by faculty. The tangible outcome of the initiative was to develop a database with resources and campus resources available to all faculty members.

In ensuring that course content reflects the diversity of the students served, it is hoped that students of color are better able to see themselves in the curriculum, helping to build a sense of belonging and providing an opportunity for all students to draw on their diverse experiences and perspectives. Curriculum enhancements also help white students to gain perspective from students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, improving the climate for inclusion on campus.

CURRICULUM CONTENT REVIEW

The workgroup consisted of members from a cross-section of campus stakeholders including Institutional Research; Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence; faculty from College of Arts and Sciences; faculty from Sawyer Business School; and Diversity, Access, and Inclusion. Each area represented provided insight based on their experiences

with instruction and survey design. The first step in this initiative was to gather information on courses, course content, methods and activities from the current faculty. In February 2020, the team created an online survey to ask current faculty if they include any course material related to race, ethnicity, or diversity and inclusion in general. An email was sent to all 640 faculty asking if they would be willing to share course materials or syllabi if it contains material focusing on race/ethnicity or diversity, equity and inclusion. Faculty members were asked if they would like more information on how to supplement their course content related to these issues. In total, two emails were sent to current faculty, separated by two weeks, with the link to this survey in an effort to increase response rates.

SURVEY RESULTS

To date, 98 usable responses from faculty were received, representing a 15% response rate to the surveys. Included in the responses were 49 courses that currently include material related to race/ethnicity, and faculty provided a summary of the activities they use in class. In comparison, 122 courses include material around the more general topics of diversity and inclusion. More than half (56) of the faculty offered to share resources, syllabi or details of the activities that they use in class. Two-thirds (69) of the faculty requested supplemental resources around race/ethnicity, while almost the same number (66) of faculty requested supplementary resources dealing with diversity, inclusion and equity. In total, responses included faculty from 24 separate departments across all three schools (44.8% from the College of Art and Design, 13.5% from the law school, and 29.2% from Sawyer Business School. The remaining 12.5% did not identify a course number or faculty name, so school was unknown). A more in-depth overview of the results can be found <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oax7-WLgoqLTa7JAUyz765iwYpHqQPLh1whpIEmFoKs/edit>.

After summarizing the faculty responses' content, the team invited a few faculty members to describe in more detail how they include race and/or equity in their courses and created an online panel discussion format to share with the greater Suffolk community. An email was sent to all Suffolk faculty and staff, inviting them to take part in an hour-long virtual panel discussion, which was held on October 9,

2020, via Zoom. Roughly 25 faculty and staff attended the panel discussion and asked questions of the three panelists. During this online discussion, a new LinkedIn Learning website, designed to house the curriculum enhancement survey results, was introduced. Other helpful materials (TED Talks, shared slides from Suffolk faculty, links to information on cultural intelligence, Project Implicit, etc.) on how to build an inclusive curriculum were provided. The team called this LinkedIn Learning website the Diversity and Inclusion Curriculum Toolkit. This website is accessible to all Suffolk faculty and staff and will be expanded with new materials and suggestions over time. The team also recorded which faculty requested more information or were willing to share materials. The team plans to reach out to these faculty members in the near future.

LESSONS LEARNED

Based on the faculty's responses, it was learned that race/ethnicity and diversity and inclusion are being covered in courses across the curriculum. Many faculty members were willing to share their materials, and others were interested in receiving information on how to better incorporate these concepts in their instruction. Consequently, the need to increase materials and make them available to faculty is a relevant and appropriate initiative for the institution at this time.

In the future, the workgroup intends to meet with department chairs and co-curricular leaders to discuss the best approach for increasing more opportunities for students to engage in race/ethnicity activities through curricular and co-curricular avenues. The goal is to determine suitable places to insert new initiatives or provide more training on how to deliver content by including the voices of all stakeholders.

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REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A: CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY SURVEY INVITATION AND QUESTIONS

Dear Colleague,

As part of the Leading for Change Higher Education Diversity Consortium, members of the Racial Equity and Justice Institute committee at Suffolk University prepared a short survey for you to complete to collect information on which courses offer any content that deals with race/ethnicity and/or diversity, equity and inclusion.

Your participation in this short survey is voluntary and your responses will remain confidential, but will be valuable in understanding how race/ethnicity are addressed in the classroom. Thank you for your support in answering the following few questions.

SURVEY LINK**Survey Questions*****Introduction***

As part of the Racial Equity and Justice Institute at Suffolk University, we are sending you this survey to help us determine which courses on campus offer content (broadly defined) that deals with race/ethnicity and/or diversity, equity and inclusion.

Diversity refers to the traits and characteristics that make people unique, equity refers to providing everyone access to opportunities to be successful, while inclusion refers to the behaviors and social norms that make people feel welcome.

We would also like to find out if any faculty would like information on how to supplement their course material related to race/ethnicity and/or diversity, equity and inclusion.

Providing this information is voluntary and will not be used in evaluation of your work in any way, but will be valuable in understanding how racial equity and justice are addressed in the curriculum. Any information you provide will be confidential and only used by the Racial Equity and Justice Institute.

Thank you for answering the following few questions!

Do any of your courses have a curriculum component that focuses on race/ethnicity broadly?

Please provide department, course number and title in the text box (e.g. SBS-200 careerExplore).

Yes Maybe No

Course 1

Course 2

Course 3

Course 4

*Do any of your courses have a curriculum component that focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion broadly?
Please provide department, course number and title in the text box (e.g. SBS-200 careerExplore).*

Yes Maybe No

Course 1

Course 2

Course 3

Course 4

What methods or course activities do you use to implement curriculum around race/ethnicity?

What methods or course activities do you use to implement curriculum around diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Would you like to share your course materials on this subject or syllabus if it contains curriculum focusing on race/ethnicity or diversity, equity and inclusion?

- Yes I'm willing to share course materials
- Yes, I'm willing to share syllabus
- Yes, I'm willing to share both materials and syllabus
- No, I'm not willing to share

Would you like more information on how to supplement your course content related to race/ethnicity?

- Yes
- No

Your name (Optional)

Department

Thank you for completing this survey. We will be in touch by email if you elected to either share or implement race/ethnicity or diversity materials.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS ON DESIGN DECISION MAKING

WENTWORTH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
BY ALEX CABAL & AARON CARPENTER

Keywords: Social Consciousness, Bias, Design Decision-making

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

“Founded in 1904, Wentworth Institute of Technology (WIT) is a technical design and engineering university offering career-focused education in Boston, Massachusetts. Wentworth offers bachelor's degrees in 17 engineering, technology, design and management majors and requires students to complete two cooperative education semesters in work placements” (<https://www.forbes.com/colleges/wentworth-institute-of-technology/#680a07336829>). Wentworth's commitment to equity is evident in a range of institutional strategies including the Center for Diversity & Social Justice (<https://wit.edu/diversity>) and the hiring of an inaugural vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion (<https://wit.edu/inclusive-excellence/vp-diversity>). This emerging practice focuses on one way that WIT is infusing issues of equity into our pedagogies.

EQUITY THROUGH INTENTIONAL DESIGN

Engineering educators are often not prepared to have conversations about equity and diversity in the classroom. However, the engineering curriculum is not neutral, and knowledge is produced within a power-driven social and cultural system (Mejia, Chen, Dalrymple, Lord, 2018). Engineering and design student outcomes are not entirely technical and must include supporting students in developing an understanding of professional and ethical responsibility, the broad education necessary to understand engineering impacts in a global and societal context, and knowledge of contemporary issues. Students in engineering and design majors must identify and address the conscious and unconscious bias that lie within their own and their community members' design decisions. Questions like, “who does your design help?” and “who isn't it helping?” typically go beyond the usual technical goals that drive the designer.

The primary objective of this project was to develop, deliver and evaluate a series of classroom-ready activities that infuse students with hands-on exercises to facilitate the development of enhanced social consciousness on students' design decision making. By creating several hour-long, self-contained exercises focused on finding and discussing biases, we sought to provide students with insight into their own design choices, start larger community discussions, and help Wentworth establish itself as a strong engineering school with socially-aware and socially-responsible students.

This training was created and implemented by a group of faculty members from mechanical engineering, electrical and computer engineering, and humanities and social sciences as well the director of the center for diversity & social justice programs. Faculty from the college of architecture, design, and construction were also consulted as staff from learning and innovation technologies.

Based on the work of Mejia et al. (2018), the first step was to implement an exercise based on a set of pictures from the Visual Explorer Cards from the Center for Creative Leadership. Pictures are then chosen by students to reveal something about their own ideas regarding their major. Many will choose pictures that represent their own culture, upbringing or unconscious biases regarding their field of study. The facilitator then leads a discussion regarding the choices. The faculty team also created exercises regarding privilege, race, class, ableism, gender and gender identity, and more. Each of these exercises are broad enough to be used across the entire campus at all student levels but will also be designed to be easily modified to fit specific courses and majors. This will allow for similar conversations to happen across the campus, helping to breakdown silos between majors. Two examples of these classroom discussion exercises can be found on the next page.

WHAT DO YOU SEE?



- DO YOU SEE PROBLEMS? DO YOU SEE SOLUTIONS?
- WHAT IS ITS USE? WHO IS IT FOR?

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

- DO YOU SEE PROBLEMS?
- DO YOU SEE SOLUTIONS?
- WHAT IS ITS USE?
- WHO IS IT FOR?



Faculty professional development occurred to ensure the exercises were well understood and well run by individual instructors. Part of these activities focused on supporting faculty in ensuring they had the tools needed to conduct classroom discussions in a welcoming, inclusive and safe manner.

ADDRESSING EQUITY IN ACCREDITATION

As the exercises were developed, the faculty team created accreditation rubrics that pair with the exercises. This will help individual departments report their assessment data to their respective accrediting bodies. For example, ABET

(Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) oversees the accreditation for all of Wentworth's college of engineering and computer science. ABET has some requirements related to culture/social impact on engineering design. For example, the ABET outcome 2 is as follows: "An ability to apply engineering design to produce solutions that meet specified needs with consideration of public health, safety and welfare, as well as global, cultural, social, environmental and economic factors." The rubrics for ABET include how to design within a real-world context, taking into account society and politics. These exercises offer a common assessment tool.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Focus groups with students who participated in courses using these materials were conducted in order to learn more about the impact of the materials on their learning. Initially, some of the students paid most of their attention to the aesthetics of the image. Specifically, they made comments like, “nothing’s in focus” or “everything’s in black and white.” After some discussion, they were able to focus more on the use of the tools represented in the images. Not surprisingly, the focus groups also revealed that students that received more in-depth information about bias reduction had greater awareness and competencies to address it in their work. Overall, however, the students felt that these conversations were important and valued.

Much is said about how higher education prepares students to right societal wrongs. It is incumbent that educators intentionally provide the discipline-specific knowledge and skills students need to do this essential work.

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INCLUSIVE HONORS PROGRAM ADMISSIONS

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY BY JENNY SHANAHAN

*Keywords: Honors Program, Honors, Admissions,
Test Optional*

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Bridgewater State University (BSU) aspires to be a leader in equity-driven, high-impact practices. In 2018, BSU opened the Center for Transformative Learning (<https://www.bridgew.edu/news-events/news/center-transformative-learning-opens>) with a dedicated and experienced assistant provost for high-impact practices. Due to the committed mentoring of faculty from across the university, BSU was recognized in 2019 by the Council on Undergraduate Research as a national leader for academic excellence and informing the practice with an equity orientation (<https://www.bridgew.edu/news-events/bsu-top-tier-undergraduate-research>). BSU's commitment to equity and high-impact practices has also been applied to its honors program through the inclusive honors program admissions process.

The goal of inclusive honors program admissions at BSU is to admit and retain undergraduate students of color in each cohort of the honors program at rates similar to or higher than the admission and retention of students of color in the overall cohort. (e.g., If 25% of BSU's first-year students identify as students of color, the university is working toward the goal of at least 25% of first-year honors students identifying as students of color.)

THE INEQUITIES OF RELYING ON "SHADOW EDUCATION"

Researchers have found that a disproportionately low percentage of students of color and first-generation students participate in honors programs because of deficit-minded policies and incomplete and inaccurate notions of which students are "deserving" of honors admission (Buchmann, Condrón, & Roscigno, 2010; Davis, 2018; Finley & McNair, 2013; Macias, 2013). Access to many honors programs favors economically advantaged students who have access

to the "shadow education" of test preparation and other educational-enhancement programs outside of school (Buchmann, Condrón, & Roscigno, 2010; Park & Becks, 2015). That "shadow education" afforded by college-educated, non-low-income parents has often resulted in higher SAT and ACT scores and robust resumes of extracurricular achievements. The opportunity gaps are then used as unfair evidence of lower ability and potential of incoming students of color (Bowman & Carver, 2018; Macias, 2013). As Davis explained in a 2018 article in the Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council, high school opportunities, or lack thereof, shape students' academic identities. The disparate opportunities are too often overlooked by honors programs whose admissions policies favor the credentials most commonly accrued by white and continuing-generation students (Davis, 2018; Macias, 2013).

The inequity in who is accepted to college honors programs as incoming first-year students reverberates for years to come. Participation in an honors program is correlated for students from all demographic groups with higher rates of persistence and four-year graduation and with college GPA, but those correlations are even greater for students from underserved groups (Bowman & Carver, 2018). The benefits of the high-impact practices embedded in honors programs -- learning communities, capstone/thesis projects and undergraduate research -- also accrue at the highest rates for students of color (Finley & McNair, 2013; Gipson & Mitchell, 2017; Sweat, Jones, Han & Wolfgram, 2013).

Honors Program admissions at BSU formerly depended on standardized-test scores along with high school GPA, a common practice in honors programs and colleges across

the U.S. However, the cultural, racial and socioeconomic biases of SAT and ACT exams have been well documented (Buckley, Letukas & Wildavsky, 2018; Park & Becks, 2015; Reeves & Halikias, 2017; Rosales, 2018; Selingo, 2018). High test scores are correlated with higher levels of parental education, socioeconomic status, and attending a high school with greater resources (Park & Becks, 2015). Low-income students are less likely to have taken a test-preparation course and less likely to have taken the SAT or ACT more than once, as compared to their peers who are not low-income (Buchmann, Condrón, & Roscigno, 2010). For all of these reasons, students of color and low-income students often have disproportionately lower standardized-test scores.

The practice of using standardized-test scores to determine merit scholarships and honors admissions persists despite the fact that SAT and ACT scores are not correlated with college success. In other words, lower standardized-test scores do not mean students are unprepared for honors courses. BSU's own institutional research data show that the SAT is a poor predictor of academic success at the institution. Those data are corroborated by broader research, including annual studies by the National Association of College Admissions Counseling (NACAC) which have found in each of the past several years that high school GPA, not test scores, had the strongest correlation with academic achievement in college, but that college admissions officers still weigh SAT and ACT scores heavily (Clinedinst, 2019; Clinedinst & Patel, 2018; Downey, 2016). A major study published by Johns Hopkins University Press found that the SAT and ACT "fail to identify talented applicants who can succeed in higher education" (Jaschik, 2018, para. 7) and that ending standardized-test requirements has resulted in more diverse pools of applicants, without any decline in graduation rates (Buckley, Letukas, & Wildavsky, 2018).

LEADING WITH EQUITY PRACTICES

The benefits of participation in the honors program accrue for BSU students across demographic groups, including those from underserved groups and those who might otherwise appear to be at risk of leaving the institution. For many years, honors students have had higher rates of persistence and completion than peers with similar

demographics and high school grades. Yet, participation in the BSU honors program had not been reflective of the diversity of the institution. Data from 2011–2016 show that between 9% and 11% of first-year honors students were students of color. During that same period, approximately 25% of BSU's first-year cohorts were students of color.

The goal of this initiative is to recruit to the honors program prospective first-year students of color, low-income students and first-generation students who have high school or transfer GPAs of 3.3 or higher on a 4.0 scale, as well as prospective transfer students of color with transfer GPAs of 3.0 or higher. This multi-part initiative begins with inclusive recruitment and admissions of prospective honors students and extends into inclusive programs, support, partnerships and resources offered throughout honors students' undergraduate careers.

RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Recruitment of new students: BSU intentionally recruits high school students of color to consider applying to BSU and to the BSU honors program in five ways:

1. Highlight the successes of honors students of color in our print, website and social media marketing materials, allowing prospective students of color to see themselves as BSU honors students. Marketing high-impact practices with attention to equity communicates that Black, Brown and other students of color truly belong and are welcome. The first flyer (as shared on the next page) used by the BSU honors program from 2014–2017 visually reifies a common assumption that the "typical" honors student is white and female.

The second flyer (as shared on the next page), informed by equity-minded practices, communicates clearly that Black, Brown and other students of color are welcome and successful participants in BSU's honors program.



BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY THE HONORS PROGRAM

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

Students wishing to undertake only upper-level honors work can apply to their major department to complete Departmental Honors. Departmental Honors takes place in the student's last two years. Commonwealth Honors *includes* Departmental Honors.

REQUIREMENTS

(vary by Department)

9 credits at the 300-400 level in Departmental Honors:
3-6 Credits must be in the form of an honors thesis. Remaining credits are earned in the form of honors contracts.

Departmental Honors in Psychology:
Three 1-credit colloquia
One 6-credit honors thesis completed over 2 semesters

Summer Grant: Students who complete a summer grant through the Office of Undergraduate Research qualify for a waiver of up to 3 credits of their honors requirements. A thesis cannot be waived.

Students can undertake **Interdisciplinary Honors** by completing their 9-credits within two departments. This version of Departmental Honors is often completed by double majors.

The **honors thesis** is a culminating research project. This rigorous and rewarding project is completed under the direction of a faculty mentor in the student's final year.

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA
Vary by department - check on Honors intranet site or meet with Departmental Honors chairperson in major

WHEN TO JOIN
Upper-level student (sophomore, junior, senior) or as transfer student

HOW TO APPLY
Submit Departmental Honors application to Honors Chair

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY
HONORS PROGRAM
Maxwell Library, Room 001
(inside the Academic Achievement Center)
Bridgewater, MA 02325
Tel: 508-531-1378 | honorsprogram@bridgew.edu



DEPARTMENTAL HONORS PROGRAM

Upper-level students are encouraged to apply for Departmental Honors, where they complete honors coursework within their major. Departmental Honors takes place in the student's last two years. Admissions criteria vary by department; most require a 3.0 GPA or higher.

Requirements

9 Credits at the 300-400 Level

- 3-6 credits are in the form of an **honors thesis**
- Remaining credits are earned in the form of **honors contracts or research grant waivers**

Interdisciplinary Honors

Students with two majors may opt for Interdisciplinary Honors as a means of combining both areas of study. Interdisciplinary Honors is composed of 9 honors credits total between two departments, including a 3-6-credit interdisciplinary thesis.

The Program

The **honors thesis** is a culminating research or creative project. Students frequently say it was their most rewarding experience at the university. They appreciate the one-on-one mentoring, immersing themselves in an area of study they love, and producing an exemplary sample of their work for graduate school and competitive job opportunities.

An **honors contract** is an independent project or assignment in a 300-400 level course within the student's major. Students not only have the opportunity to research a topic they are passionate about, they also work closely with a faculty member in their field.

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

Maxwell Library, Suite 330
honorsprogram@bridgew.edu | 508-531-1378
bridgew.edu/honors

- Hire racially diverse student ambassadors to give honors program presentations at admissions events, including fall preview days, admitted students days, and the annual honors program admissions dinner, as well as to “table” for the BSU honors program at college fairs held at diverse high schools.
- Host campus events for high school students of color involved in upward bound and urban scholars. During these events they hear from students of color in the BSU honors program about their experiences on campus and in honors. They also take part in campus tours and converse informally over lunch, all with students of color who are active in the BSU Honors Program and hold other leadership roles on campus.
- Refer explicitly to the BSU honors program admissions standards (promoting equity and inclusion, communicating a welcoming and supportive environment for prospective students from minoritized groups) in all communications. Myriad forms of

communication (emails inviting high school students to apply to honors at BSU, honors program brochure mailed to the home addresses of prospective students, the honors application form) state BSU's values as a diverse, inclusive community.

- Offer honors courses and co-curricular programming with themes of racial and social justice and attention to people and topics historically underrepresented in higher education. For example, honors first-year seminars in fall 2020 include Introduction to Latinx Literature; a course about the City of Brockton, Massachusetts; and a course in disability studies. The honors program book club is a co-curricular opportunity to read and discuss contemporary fiction and nonfiction texts in small groups. The book club includes nearly 200 students in fall 2020. The participants are reading, writing responses to questions about, and discussing Margot Lee Shetterly's *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race*.

Recruitment of Current Students: In addition to conducting outreach to prospective students of color, BSU has sought to connect with current students who are not in the program but qualify for it. The BSU honors program is comprised of two tracks: commonwealth honors, in which students participate from their first to final semester at BSU; and departmental honors, for students in their last two years. Students can participate in departmental honors in their major(s) even if they are not in commonwealth honors. The two tracks give flexibility in recruiting transfer students to the honors program, as well as second- and third-year students who started college at BSU but might not have been interested in or qualified for the program in their first year. GPA requirements for departmental honors vary by department (from no minimum GPA in social work to a 3.3 minimum GPA in psychology), but most require 3.0. Although students in departmental honors miss out on the benefits of taking honors courses in their first and second years, they gain many of the advantages of the program. Some advantages include: community-building and social events; early course registration; and, according to honors graduates, the ultimate benefit of honors -- completing a one- or two-semester honors thesis project, closely mentored by a full-time faculty member in their program.

To recruit more students of color to departmental honors, many of the same strategies have been used as for prospective first-year students recruited to Commonwealth Honors -- namely, highlighting the successes of honors students of color in campus communications and publications and openly stating BSU's values of diversity and inclusion. In addition to those communications, students of color have been approached in the places and groups many consider "home" on campus: BSU's Lewis and Gaines Center for Inclusion and Equity (LGCIE), and multicultural clubs and organizations. "Lunch and Learn" and "Snack Chat" honors information sessions are held, as well as honors-sponsored social events, in the LGCIE, led by honors student ambassadors who are active in the center. Likewise, honors student ambassadors ask to visit meetings of multicultural student clubs and organizations to explain the benefits and seek to dismantle misconceptions about participating in honors.

To recruit a broader diversity of upper-division students to departmental honors, a series of marketing materials and advising-related documents were created with the purpose of succinctly and clearly explaining the requirements of and pathways to honors. The Transfer Guide for Honors, departmental honors intranet pages, and departmental honors flyers (sent to academic advisors and to second- and third-year students with high GPAs) lay out the benefits of participating in and graduating with honors. They also demystify how to apply to departmental honors, how to meet the nine-credit departmental honors requirement, and how to identify a faculty mentor and register for an honors thesis. All of our forms and processes have been scrutinized and revised in keeping with universal design principles and for clarity and efficiency; all forms and documents are available in paper and electronic (including mobile-friendly) formats. One of the best means of ensuring that the resources are appealing and clear for students is providing compensation for small but diverse groups of students to test them and give us candid feedback. Students were asked to note how many "clicks" it took them to locate the information; where they may have felt unsure or confused; what questions they had; and to what degree the process seemed welcoming or intimidating, efficient or frustrating. Creating clear, smooth processes, with keen attention to respecting students' time, is seen as an inclusive practice.

Faculty members are invaluable partners in recruiting diverse groups of students to honors. In teaching and advising, faculty can encourage students to consider participating in honors. We have increased and diversified honors program outreach to full- and part-time faculty, as well as to staff and graduate assistants in the Academic Achievement Center. Using updated marketing, intranet-page, and social media materials that feature honors students of color and honors students of other minoritized groups (such as those who identify as gender-queer), instructors and advisors are invited to help find potential honors applicants among their academically strong students.

Faculty support for a more diverse and inclusive honors program at BSU has been evident in several forms: (a) increased numbers of faculty in every college who are mentoring honors theses and honors contracts; (b) more new honors-course proposals for first- and second-year honors students, many of which are intended to appeal

to students of color (e.g., Second-Year Seminar on African American Literature, Colloquia studies of Black-majority cities such as Detroit and New Orleans); and (c) significantly more faculty applications to serve on the honors advisory board. (In spring 2020, more than twice as many applications were received as in any previous year.)

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

For many years, the BSU honors program admissions criteria were (a) high school GPA of at least 3.3 on a 4.0 scale, (b) SAT score of at least 1170 (or ACT score of at least 24), and (c) a personal essay about leadership skills that was reviewed by a faculty or librarian member of the BSU honors advisory board. The director of the honors program had discretion to admit students to the program that met at least two of the criteria and often did so in cases in which the GPA was very high and/or the essay was particularly compelling.

The emerging practice of inclusive honors program admissions has changed the criteria to the following: (a) high school GPA of at least 3.3 on a 4.0 scale, or (b) SAT score of at least 1170 (or ACT score of at least 24). One criterion or the other is sufficient.

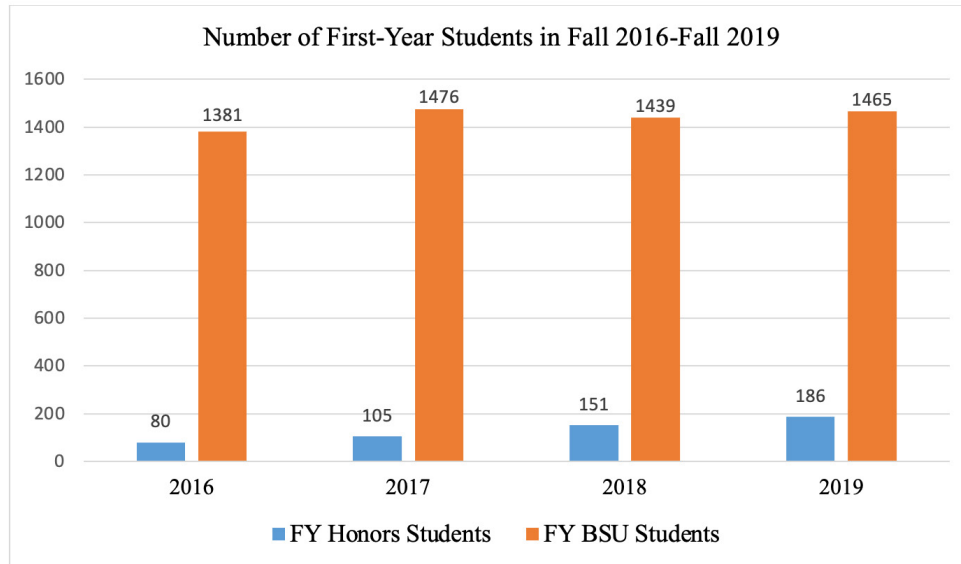
Eliminating altogether the standardized test score as a criterion for honors program admission was considered, but we were convinced to keep it as an option by then-current students who were consulted about the change. An honors student who identified on the autism spectrum noted that many academically capable students have low high school GPAs relative to their standardized test scores. Reasons for that disparity include social disengagement in high school, known or unknown learning disabilities, and/or physical or mental health concerns that have affected the student's school attendance, class participation, group work and other expectations that factor into course grades. An informal review of incoming students' GPAs and standardized-test scores also indicated that male students, who are underrepresented in the honors program, were more likely to meet the SAT/ACT criterion than the GPA criterion. In the interest of inclusion, we decided to ask prospective students to include either criterion in their honors program application.

Applicants to the honors program also write a 500-600-word personal essay in response to the prompt, "The Bridgewater State University honors program is a vibrant, diverse community of students excited about academic curiosity, service, social justice and leadership. Why would you like to be part of the BSU honors program, and how would you contribute to our community?" The essay is not part of the evaluation for admission to honors except in cases in which the student has not met either of the criteria (high school GPA or SAT/ACT score). Instead, the purpose of the essay (for applicants who meet at least one of the criteria) is to prompt them to reflect on their reasons for wishing to join the honors program and on the strengths they intend to contribute to the BSU honors community. It is an asset-based assessment that simultaneously helps include students who just miss the admissions criteria but are motivated to participate in honors and prompts reflection by incoming students on their own talents and abilities.

STUDENT AND INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS OF THE INITIATIVE

In two years the inclusive honors program admissions initiative has led to a 77% increase in the number of new honors students at BSU. In fall 2016 and fall 2017, before the inclusive honors program admissions initiative, honors students comprised 6% and 7%, respectively, of the overall BSU first-year cohort. In fall 2018 and fall 2019, the first two years of the inclusive honors program admissions initiative, honors students comprised 10.5% and 12.7%, respectively, of the overall BSU first-year cohort. Figure 1 illustrates the growth in the number of first-year honors students over the past four fall semesters.

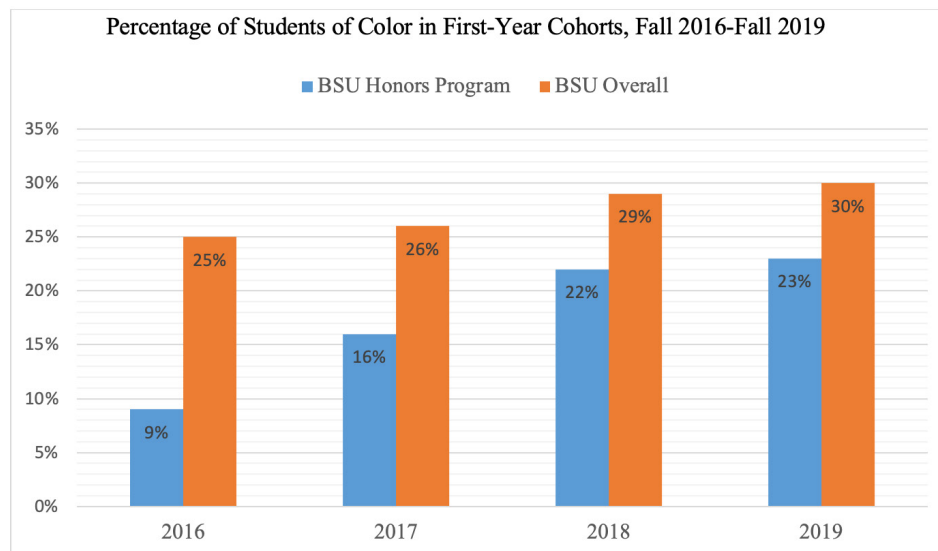
Figure 1



[Number of First-Year Students in Fall 2016 - Fall 2019 in table format](#)

In addition to the increased number of new honors students, the inclusive honors program admissions initiative resulted in significant growth in the program’s racial and ethnic diversity. In three years’ time, the percentage of students of color in the first-year honors cohort increased by 155%. During that same period, the percentage of students of color among all BSU first-year students increased by 20%. As Figure 2 illustrates, only 9% of first-year honors students in fall 2016 identified as students of color. In fall 2018 and fall 2019, the first two years of the inclusive honors program admissions initiative, 22% and 23%, respectively, of the first-year honors students identified as students of color.

Figure 2



[Percent of Students of Color in First-Year Cohorts, Fall 2016 - Fall 2019 in table format](#)

First-to-second-year retention of honors students at BSU has consistently been between 94% and 96% in the past eight years. Only one year of first-to-second-year retention data is available since the inclusive honors program admissions was implemented: fall 2018 first-year students to fall 2019 second-year students. For that group, the first-to-second-year retention rate was 96%. Students of color in that group had a first-to-second-year retention rate of 97%.

LESSONS LEARNED

We have learned three key lessons from the success of the inclusive honors program admissions initiative:

- a. Not requiring SAT or ACT scores for honors program admissions has significantly increased both the size and diversity of first-year honors cohorts.
- b. Multiple forms of marketing and communications that feature the successes of students of color in honors and convey values of diversity and inclusion may contribute to a more diverse pool of honors applicants.
- c. Larger, more diverse cohorts of honors students continue to be retained at exceptionally high levels (96% from first to second year). Students of color may experience an even higher rate of first-to-second-year retention (97% based on one year of data).

The percentage of first-year students of color in the honors program at BSU is still seven points lower than in the university overall. To continue to make progress, barriers to honors participation and the benefits or appeal of honors participation for students of color need to be identified. Research in the upcoming year will include two groups of students of color: those who qualified for the honors program but opted not to apply and those who accepted the invitation to honors. Program data is being examined more intensively to determine possible correlations between decisions about the honors program and students' intended majors, students' post-baccalaureate goals (e.g., graduate school vs. full-time employment), and students' other involvements (e.g., varsity athletics). For example, we know that incoming students majoring in the sciences with plans to go to medical, dental or physical therapy school after graduation from BSU are more likely to join honors than students majoring in the sciences who plan to work full-time after graduation. We have also noted that student-

athletes are less likely to participate in honors than students who are not varsity athletes. The anecdotal evidence is that varsity athletes who are students of color and qualify for honors express concern about not having enough time to participate in both honors courses and athletics.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PERSON(S) WHO CAN SHARE MORE ABOUT THIS EMERGING PRACTICE

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RACIALLY EQUITABLE STUDENT SERVICE PROVISION



RACIALLY EQUITABLE STUDENT SERVICE PROVISION

Campuses engaged in racially equitable co-curricular student support service provision acknowledge that too often our work disproportionately benefits the most privileged of our students and further marginalizes students from minoritized identities (Cabrera, Franklin and Watson, 2017; Harper, 2009; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Nunn, 2021; Pérez, Ashlee, Do, Karikari, & Sim, 2017). Campuses characterized by racial equity and justice reject the premise that “one size fits all” in serving students, understanding that such an approach is based in universalism and whiteness (Brown McNair, Bensimon, Malcom-Piqueux, 2020; Person, Gonzalez, Luccesi, Sullivan, 2020). Rather campuses that engage in racially equitable and just co-curricular student service provision assume that it is the institution that must change to serve Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous and other students of color – not that the students are deficient (Harper, 2009; Museus, 2010; Nunn, 2021; Zhao, 2016).

EMERGING PRACTICES

Campuses that centralize racial equity and justice in their co-curricular student service provision share common characteristics. First, these institutions proactively engage Black, Asian, Latinx, Indigenous and other students of color using a range of culturally responsive approaches rather than passively waiting for students to reach out to campus staff (Harper, 2009; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Nunn, 2021). North Shore Community College’s emerging practice titled “Suspension Appeal Letter Writing Workshops” demonstrates how this campus disaggregated their data on academic suspensions, saw inequitable outcomes, and decided their processes needed to change. By creating a practice characterized by strengths-based outreach, support for students navigating the institutional appeals process, and retention-oriented programming, students are persisting – especially the racially minoritized students that had been disproportionately affected by the old process and policy.

The student service provision model at equity-minded campuses is also premised in building upon the assets and cultural wealth of racially minoritized students, families and communities (Bean-Folkes & Lewis Ellison, 2018; Harper, 2012), while working to acknowledge and eliminate the impacts of historical and current racism (Farmer-Hinton, Lewis, Patton, & Rivers, 2013; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). “The Program for Asian American Student Advancement (PAASA)” at Middlesex Community College provides wrap around support to enrolled Asian American students; it is important to note that the services are offered in a culturally inclusive care model that acknowledges the traumas of racism, war and genocide on the communities served. The program works extensively with cultural, spiritual and social Asian-American community leaders in order to offer support and resources between the campus and larger community.

Student service provision premised in the cultural wealth and capital model appreciates and builds on the assets of racially minoritized students, and provides strategies to aid students in resisting the premises and practices of racism (Yosso, 2005). Northeastern University’s “Black/Latinx Program” intentionally pairs Black/African American and Latinx students with established professionals who share their racial/ethnic identities in order to provide students not only with networking and social capital opportunities, but also with role models who are thriving professionally in a culture that is not yet racially equitable or just.

Equity-minded campuses also provide services to students within a culture of care (Bean-Folkes & Ellison, 2018; Guiffrida, 2005). Services are offered within a wholistic frame that conveys that racially minoritized students are expected to succeed, however, understand that some may need economic, social, cultural, and/or career readiness resources in order to remediate the impacts of systemic

RACIALLY EQUITABLE STUDENT SERVICE PROVISION

racism (Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, Strayhorn, 2008; Love, 2019; Person, Gonzalez, Luccesi, Sullivan, 2020). The emerging practice titled "Multicultural Student Center Drop-In Sessions and Student Success Cohort at Bristol Community College" is a strategy providing wholistic support, resources and identity-conscious care with the Multicultural Student Center being used as the hub of student success information and support (Pendekur, 2016).

Equity-oriented mentoring programs offer key resources to racially minoritized students attending predominately white institutions (Furr, 2016). Ideally, mentoring programs help students of color know that they are not alone (Nunn, 2021) and that minoritized students succeed in higher education. Mentoring programs also emphasize that an array of resources exist that mentees can draw on – including their own aspirations and assets (Harper, 2009; Pendakur, 2020; Smith, 2020). Wentworth Institute of Technology's "Bridges Mentoring Program" is a peer-to-peer mentoring program that leverages the ways in which purposeful connections with students from similar racial and ethnic backgrounds can increase incoming students' sense of belonging (Museus, Lám, Huang, Kem & Tan, 2012).

"The Partners in Excellence Program" at Regis College utilizes both peer and professional mentors to support the success of students of color and first generation students. In recognition that systemic racism minoritizes students of color and that too often they do not have access to student engagement opportunities on our campuses to the same level as their white peers (Harper, 2009), the program encourages robust student engagement and student leadership experiences. Finally, the program builds on students' skills in advocating for themselves and others. The manner in which student resistance to oppression is woven into the program design while placing the emphasis for anti-racist change on the institution is noteworthy (Osborne & Walker, 2006; Steele, 2010; Yosso, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Racially equitable co-curricular student service provision offers Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous and other students of color a culture of care that conveys in ways large and small that they matter, that they belong, that they will be supported in their success, and that they can find a sense of home on our campuses. Pedakur (2020) indicates that by centralizing racial equity and justice tenets and practice into our co-curricular work we begin to actualize the "emancipatory" potential of higher education (p. 88). The emerging practices in this section of the handbook share strategies for how this is occurring at some of our Racial Equity and Justice Institute campuses.

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SUSPENSION APPEAL LETTER WRITING WORKSHOPS

NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY COLLEGE BY MICHELE CUBELLI HARRIS

*Keywords: Retention/Persistence, Academic Suspension,
Appeal Letter*

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

North Shore Community College (NSCC), with a fall 2019 enrollment of 5,388, is committed to providing students an education that is “affordable, accessible, . . . [in] an inclusive, safe and diverse student-centered environment” (<https://www.northshore.edu/about/presidents-letter.html>). NSCC is committed not only to the values but also the practices of diversity and equity (<https://www.northshore.edu/about/initiatives/diversity/>). The Academic Suspension Appeal Writing Workshop is one example of NSCC’s equity-oriented efforts on behalf of our students.

From fall 2013–spring 2014 and fall 2014–spring 2015, a team of administrators and staff at NSCC noticed that while the success of the students went up by a variety of measures, the retention/persistence rate plummeted from 98.2% of the students to 30.5% of the students. It became apparent that this posed a significant racial educational equity issue, as a disproportionate number of those non-returning students are students of color.

ADOPTION OF STUDENT-CENTERED PROCESSES AS LEVER FOR EQUITY

The appeal process during previous academic years was that students on academic suspension who wished to appeal the decision would schedule a one-on-one meeting with the vice president of academic affairs. The student was asked to explain what happened to interfere with their ability to complete their semester successfully. Upon hearing the students’ response, the vice president of academic affairs issued a decision as to whether or not the students’ appeal would be granted. What was noticed, however, was that far fewer students were appealing their suspensions. It also became apparent from the data that our white students were more likely to appeal their suspension and be let back as compared to racially minoritized students attending NSCC.

As a result, the college redesigned the appeal process to include a mandatory academic suspension session, a more stringent appeal letter expectation, more customary conditions for return, and the addition of mandatory advising as part of the re-enrollment process. The goal of this program revision was to close the gap between students of color and white students successfully appealing their academic suspension and registering for the subsequent semester. It was also hoped that this revitalized process would re-engage participating students and suggest appropriate student support services. The new academic suspension appeal process follows.

Program Recruitment: During the first semester of the program, as grades posted, the academic affairs department issued letters to all suspended students offering them an opportunity to appeal their suspension by attending an appeal session. Of those students, a separate report of all the students of color was prepared; this information was then used to offer these students equity-oriented services intended to help close educational equity gaps. Initial outreach included phone calls to offer a verbal explanation of the assistance provided and to ensure that they knew the steps to take to register for an appeal session. Students were encouraged to sign up for an Appeal Letter Writing Workshop that immediately follows each suspension appeal hearing.

Since the staff person responsible is not a content specialist, they worked directly with the staff of academic affairs and student financial services. They also collaborated with academic advisors to ensure the appropriate information was being shared if students had questions. The phone outreach also provided an opportunity to recruit male students of color into the M.A.L.E.S. (Men Achieving Leadership, Excellence and Success) Program, coordinated

by the same staff person. (This Emerging Practice is also available in this practitioner handbook.) In subsequent semesters, outreach consisted of a text message and an email inviting students to sign up for an Appeal Letter Writing Workshop that immediately followed each suspension appeal hearing.

ASSET-BASED OUTREACH TO STUDENTS REGARDING SUSPENSION APPEAL SUPPORT

Text: *We are here to support your college success! Let us help you navigate the appeals process. Connect with Michele at mharris@northshore.edu.*

Following the text message, a mail chimp email was sent to the same cohort, as follows:

Subject Line: Would you like to appeal your suspension? I can help!

Greetings:

At NSCC, we understand that life can get in the way of our plans, even when we try our best. And, we believe that you deserve another opportunity to work toward your educational and career goals. I am writing to help you get back on track -- in a classroom this summer or fall, working toward your dreams!

I understand that you ended your last semester on academic suspension. I also know that it may have been challenging to go through the appeal process for a variety of reasons.

I am here to help you!

If you would like to return to school, I can help you navigate the appeal process. To do so, please take the following steps:

Step 1:

Sign up for one of the ***mandatory suspension appeal information sessions*** online at this link

Step 2:

Join me for an ***appeals letter writing session*** that follows the mandatory meetings. RSVP HERE. During this session, I will guide you through the appeal letter writing process, and you will be able to submit your appeal application on that day.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or catch me at one of the appeal sessions.

I look forward to meeting you!

Appeal Letter Writing Session Outline: The facilitator provides a brief introduction to those in attendance. While the targets of the initiative are students of color, all students in attendance are welcomed to the session. Sessions are held in computer labs on both campuses (Danvers and Lynn), immediately following the suspension appeal hearing.

During the letter writing workshops, students log in to their student portal account. They are provided with assistance in confirming the following information required on their appeal application: whether or not their FAFSA was in denial; their cumulative GPA; and number of completed credits. A brief overview of student support services is also reviewed with the students.

Students are asked to open up a word document to begin their letter. A sample letter is displayed on the screen and broken down into the four parts required on the appeal application. These include:

- What challenges did you face while enrolled at NSCC?
- What, if anything, worked well while enrolled at NSCC?
- What will you do differently to be academically successful? Please be specific.
- If you were previously suspended from NSCC, what resources did you use at NSCC and how often? Please indicate the reason(s) you were not successful with meeting the conditions outlined in your earlier appeal.

Only one part of the letter is shown at a time. The facilitator talks through the sample responses and offers individual assistance with writing structure, etc. Students seek one-on-one assistance from the facilitator to structure their letter in a way that ensures they are meeting the required outline of the appeal letter. Participating students are encouraged to complete their letters, print them out, and are assisted in the completion and submission of their appeal application immediately following the session. Students are relieved to be able to print their letter, complete their application, and submit it to the academic affairs department on the same day (instead of having to work on the packet in isolation and make another trip to campus to deliver it).

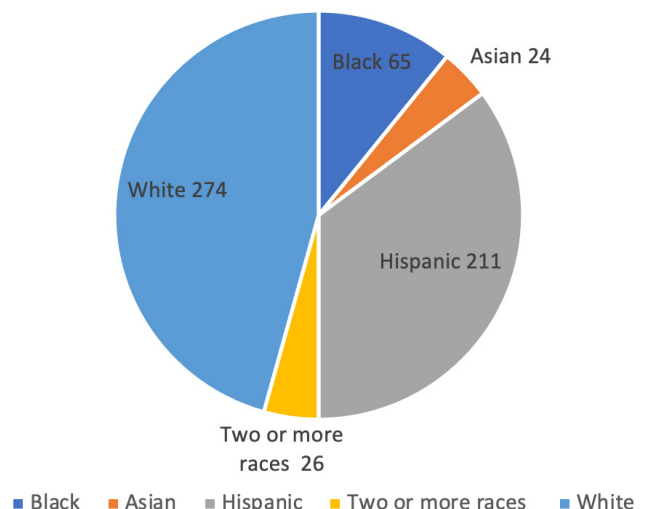
INTEGRATING STUDENT SUPPORT

An equally valuable set of outcomes is that students discuss their challenges with one another at the workshop and find commonalities, ultimately feeling less isolated. Students leave the session feeling a sense of accomplishment that, for many, feels new. As a result of students sharing the challenges they were facing, NSCC gained valuable insight. Ultimately in spring 2019, NSCC began creating student success programming based on common themes and issues students identified as assets and challenges in their educational process. These sessions occur each semester and provide the necessary support to address some of the challenges students were facing. For example, students were expressing a lack of motivation to return because they didn't think they were in the right degree program. As a result, workshops like "Your Roadmap to Degree Completion" were created to introduce students to the various pathways available at the college, their relevance to education and how they lead to graduation. Students leave with action steps to begin making progress toward a career and/or a more appropriate academic decision. Other examples of programming created based on student feedback are the creation of weekly support group sessions for single mother students and workshops on minimizing stress before finals.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

In spring 2019, 600 students were placed on academic suspension at the college.

Spring 2019 Suspension



[Spring 2019 Suspension in table format](#)

Out of the 600 students, 234 students attended the spring 2019 appeals writing workshop and received resources from the college. Of the Black or Hispanic students who participated in a spring workshop, 94.5% were retained a year later compared to a 95% retention rate for the white students who attended the same workshops.

LESSONS LEARNED

Students are incredibly thankful upon receiving the offer (via phone call/text/email) to aid navigating the letter-writing process. It appears that meeting students with a warm and welcoming, judgment-free zone, helps to mitigate stereotype threat. Students demonstrate a high level of accountability and follow-through (i.e., if they can't make it to the session they signed up for, they reach out and ask about other opportunities). This low-cost, student-centered process change is proving to be a potent tool for educational equity.

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PROGRAM FOR ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENT ADVANCEMENT (PAASA)

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BY PATRICIA DEMARAS, PAMELA FLAHERTY,
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*Keywords: Cultural Competency, Community Partnership,
Belonging, Financial Literacy*

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Middlesex Community College (MCC) in Lowell, Massachusetts, was established in 1970 and provides access to affordable education for a diverse community from all ethnic backgrounds and identities, preparing individuals for success and lifelong learning. The institution promotes academic excellence, provides workforce development opportunities, and empowers all learners to become productive and socially responsible members of the local and global communities. MCC strives to be deeply responsive to the needs of the multiple racial and ethnic communities in the region.

In 2015, Asian Americans in Lowell comprised 20.9% of the city's total population of 110,000, including the second-largest Cambodian population, consistent with the trend in Massachusetts as a whole in which the Cambodian population grew from 22,886 to 28,424 between 2000 and 2010. During this same period, the Asian American community in Lowell grew from 18,781 to 22,764 or 21.2% of the city's population. Overall, a large percentage of residents of the post-industrial city of Lowell need access to quality educational programs if they are to participate fully in the promising regional economy. This is demonstrated by the low educational attainment of many of the city's residents.

As a consequence of the trauma and displacement from their countries of origin and limited opportunities for formal education, most Southeast Asian immigrants who arrived in Lowell generally had limited educational attainment. Parents had little experience with postsecondary education in the U.S. Furthermore, the trauma and PTSD resulting from war and genocide experiences continues

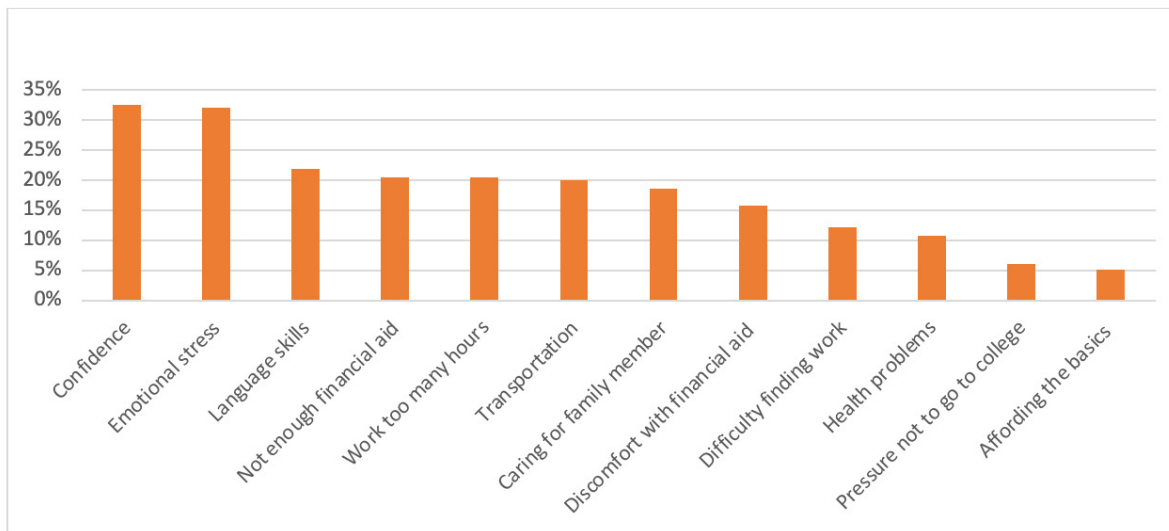
to affect subsequent generations including people's overall functioning, resulting in the so-called "family contagion" phenomenon.

In March 2016, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) awarded Middlesex Community College a five-year, \$1,732,245 development grant from the DOE Office of Postsecondary Education's Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) program. Through the grant, MCC created the Program for Asian American Student Advancement (PAASA) to provide a range of support services and co-curricular activities designed to improve their college-engagement experience and thereby their persistence, retention, and graduation or transfer outcomes in higher education. Middlesex has always striven to build more reliable connections with the diverse Asian-American population in Lowell, Massachusetts, and has worked with local Cambodian organizations, and developed extensive relationships with educational and community-based organizations. The AANAPISI grant allowed MCC to strengthen its community partnerships and improve academic success for Asian-American students at Middlesex Community College.

ASSESSING ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' NEEDS

A survey of over 240 MCC Asian American students enrolled in the spring 2016 provided the following picture of the difficulties and challenges facing this population. The result was based on the question: What difficulties have you experienced as an MCC student or applying to MCC? (Choose all that apply).

Difficulties Identified by MCC’s Asian American students (N=240)



[Difficulties Identified by MCC’s Asian American students \(N=240\) in table format](#)

Using institutional research data, the Asian American student survey and focus groups, MCC identified the significant challenges to the academic success of its Asian American students who come from this context.

Need for a personalized support network: Many of MCC’s respondents to the 2016 survey of Asian American students expressed difficulties related to stress and low confidence levels – more than 32% cited emotional stress as a difficulty, and 32.5% cited trouble with confidence. Another 10.7% indicated health problems as an issue. Given the prevalence of family trauma, poverty, and the lack of exposure to higher education in the students’ background, it was found that many of MCC’s Asian American students would benefit from a support network and accessible resources in adapting to the college environment. Research (Lee, Juon, Martinez, Hsu, Robinson, Bawa, and Ma, 2009) on Asian American young adults and mental health suggests that many feel extreme pressure to meet expectations, are likely to experience cultural dissonance, and are reluctant to seek professional help for mental health issues but are more likely to turn to peers.

Low income: Consistent with the economic data regarding the poverty and income levels of the Asian American population in Massachusetts and the Lowell area, there is a high demand for financial aid/support among Asian

American students at MCC with more than 70% (746 out of 1,052) of those enrolled at MCC applying for financial assistance. Also, information from MCC’s survey of Asian American students showed that almost 16% felt the financial aid application was too difficult or they did not feel comfortable asking for aid, more than 20% did not receive enough financial aid, and 20% said they worked too many hours.

Language difficulties: Although Southeast Asians living in Massachusetts have a higher percentage of U.S. native-born, in many cases, these students and those who are from the “1.5 Generation” (who came to the U.S. before adolescence) speak English relatively well but have lingering issues with written English, especially academic idioms/usage. Even for those who enter college through ELL classes, it can take years to achieve the proficiency required to function comfortably in the educational environment. MCC institutional research data shows that 36% (N=199) of the students who entered ELL classes in 2011–2016 were Asian American. In a study conducted by MCC’s Institutional Research Office regarding the outcomes of ELL students, although they had relatively good persistence and retention rates, their four-year graduation rate is significantly lower than the general college population, at 8% versus 12%. Those ELL students with the most

insufficient income, the Pell recipients, were even more vulnerable, with only 6% graduating after four years compared to 14% of those who were not Pell recipients.

Low completion and transfer rates: Eighty-eight percent of MCC survey respondents said their goal in attending MCC was to get enough credits to transfer to a four-year institution. However, IPEDs information (2012-2015 Outcomes) demonstrated that for Asian American “First Time Full Time” (FTFT) students, the graduation and transfer rates between 2008 and 2015 were consistently lower than the average for all groups together.

Need for resources within the community: As self-reported on admissions applications, 46% of MCC’s students are the first in their families to attend college. Educational attainment among Asian American populations can vary widely and is lower among Southeast Asian groups for the reasons cited earlier. During the focus groups conducted for the funding proposal, the Asian American students (both high school and college-aged) expressed that they have great respect for their parents/families who are a strong influence on their aspirations. Their parents were supportive of their goals, but their parents generally did not have much experience or information about college because they had come to the United States as adults and had to focus on employment and family well-being. Many of these same students also expressed concern about the cost of education and stated that it would be a primary consideration in attending a community college. Lack of engagement between the college and the families of First Generation College Going (FGCG) Asian American students is an essential consideration in terms of supporting Asian American students’ attendance and how to plan for, finance and complete college.

DESIGNING HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORT

The Program for Asian American Student Advancement’s (PAASA) initiatives were designed to provide a holistic support system for Asian American students and their families. The goals of (PAASA) are as follows:

1. To increase the retention, completion/transfer rates of Asian American students by building a support program with dedicated staff for advising and support, a mentoring program, and leadership opportunities that reflect the cultural identity of MCC’s Asian American students

2. To improve the persistence and retention rates of Asian American and low-income students by providing increased access to financial, advising/planning support and resources
3. To improve the academic transition of Asian American/ELL students to college-level coursework and program of study completion and transfer
4. To develop the competence and expertise within the institution – as well as the institutional infrastructure – to serve Asian American students and their families effectively.

The program components designed to meet these goals include:

Academic, and social support as well as mentoring: Since the opening of the Asian American Connections Center (AACC) in March 2017, the center is the heart of the Program for Asian American Student Advancement (PAASA). It houses many of the events and activities that build cultural bridges within the college community. PAASA’s staff comprises the program’s director, program specialist, and three part-time UMass Lowell graduate fellows. MCC is currently in its fourth year of PAASA implementation.

Academic interventions for ELL transition and college completion: The AACC continues to be a safe and welcoming space in which students could feel a sense of community and make connections to the college. PAASA provides holistic support for students that include mentoring, academic advising, financial aid support, and providing career and leadership development opportunities. In year three, 401 individual students used the AACC. Its faculty series, financial literacy workshops, film screenings and speaker events were intentionally designed to help students develop positive mindsets to promote resilience, retention and persistence.

Additionally, PAASA expanded the Multicultural Career Institute to focus on Asian American students by developing and enhancing career readiness skills. The institute enrolled 20 students in a resume building, cover letter composition, mock interviews, job search and a career forum. This program provides MCC Asian American students guidance

from UMass Lowell (UML) mentors for a complimentary transfer experience to UML and other four-year institutions. The program matched 20 MCC mentees with 20 UML mentors according to their field of studies.

PAASA partnered with the Academic Centers for Enrichment (ACE) in hiring learning specialists and 10 supplemental instruction (S.I.) leaders through the funding of the AANAPISI grant. ACE provided supplemental instruction to all ELL courses. In fall 2018 and spring 2019, MCC continues to see a positive impact for students enrolled in the ELL and ENG SI courses. The S.I. program collaborated with the AACC and the English department to advise all ELL students into English composition courses with S.I. support, transitioning Asian American students from the ELL curriculum into college-level writing courses.

Increased Resources for Planning, Access to Financial Aid: The initiative has helped students gain access to college financial aid. PAASA's financial literacy workshops delivered important information in culturally and linguistically accessible ways so students and their families could increase their knowledge of the financial aid process. The workshops have recently expanded to include financial wellness content covering topics such as budgeting, learning how to save money and reducing debt. The goal of the financial wellness program is to provide students with personal financial literacy, knowledge of financing higher education and repayment, and other skills aimed at building their financial understanding and responsibility.

Additionally, MCC outreached to the Asian community by collaborating with community partners. This included working with the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA), the Lao Family Mutual Assistance Association, and the Burmese Community Development Center (Saydanar) to deliver culturally/linguistically responsive college financial literacy workshops. Also, PAASA recently partnered with the Vietnamese Tuong Van Buddhist Temple through its youth program. By partnering with these community organizations, MCC can extend its reach by providing information disseminated through the community partners. These organizations publicized on-campus workshops to their members as well as sponsored off-campus workshops. MCC measures this outcome by increasing one community partnership each year to help

the institution outreach to students and families that usually would not attend an on-campus event.

Improving Institutional Cultural Competence: Many students and their families have fled war-torn areas and continue to suffer from PTSD due to their experiences. With this in mind, the grant enables MCC to provide cultural competence training to faculty and staff to improve cultural awareness, understanding, and interactions with Asian American students and their families. Additionally, in year three, there has been continued progress on the development and implementation of Southeast Asia-focused curriculum modules to improve academic engagement.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Asian American students' population at MCC has increased from 11% in fall 2015 to 13% as of the fall 2017 semester. It was a positive shift, in light of declining enrollments elsewhere, and may point to a positive change in the perception that MCC, with its specialized services and programs, is attractive for Asian American students. A table on the next page provides an overview of program outcomes.

The table below provides an overview of the major grant initiatives and the outcomes to date.

MCC's AANAPISI Project Initiatives & Outcomes	
Initiatives	Outcomes
Provide academic, and social support as well as mentoring	<p>In year three, the retention rate for Asian American students who participated in AACC activities was significantly higher than the retention rate for Asian American students who did not participate during year three of the grant. Specifically, 58% of those students using the AACC were retained compared to 51% of those students not having contact with the AACC.</p> <p>Sixty-five percent of students participating in the mentoring program have graduated and transferred to a four-year institution with a GPA of 3.0 or higher.</p>
Academic Interventions for ELL Transition and College Completion	<p>Although only 30% of the Asian American students in these courses attended Supplemental Instruction (S.I.) sessions, the 22 students who utilized S.I. sessions had GPAs that were 42% higher than the GPAs of students not participating in S.I. sessions. The average GPA in year three of the grant for students that participated in S.I. during the fall 2018 and spring 2019 is 2.83 versus 1.56 of non-S.I. users, an 8% increase from year two of the grant.</p>
Increased Resources for Planning, Access to Financial Aid	<p>The AACC hosted five financial literacy workshops in year three of the grant and had 45 attendees - achieving 99% of the targeted goal for the year. It is worthy to note that for two-thirds of the participants, it was the first time they received information about college financial aid. Ninety-three percent of participants reported increased understanding of financial aid due to the workshop, and 70% reported increased knowledge about FAFSA.</p>
Improving Institutional Cultural Competence	<p>The goal of this initiative is to engage and train 300+ faculty and professional-unit staff annually through a multi-session professional training program, affecting all parts of the college. Currently, 276 faculty, staff and administrators have been trained, well on the way to meeting the five-year target of 300 workshop participants (92% of target).</p> <p>Faculty Fellows and Faculty Ambassadors have developed and embedded 12 curriculum modules into existing coursework across all disciplines in addition to the 22 existing modules developed and integrated in previous grant years. Thirty-four modules were produced under the grant auspices, exceeding the five-year target of twelve modules</p>

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

The program continues to improve as more data is gathered on program effectiveness. One of the challenges the AACC staff continues to face in year three is the inability to reach out to students before they fail a course. Each semester there are some students who struggle with course completion. This issue can prevent them from persisting from one semester to the next. Therefore, AACC staff must be able to connect with students promptly, especially with those who are on the verge of failing a course or those students that are on academic probation, warning or academic suspension. Those students who are failing also typically experience difficulties with financial aid due to their academic status. As a result, students become discouraged and stressed out, contributing to

course withdrawals and retention. The AACC staff has been using multiple strategies in addressing these issues, such as continuing to work with the academic progress coordinator to access students' midterm and end of semester grades. Having this data helps staff identify the students who are not in good academic standing and enables staff to implement an appropriate academic intervention plan before the end of the semester. The other strategy is continuing to have midterm check-ins with students to assess and address any issue they may be facing. The key to increasing students' persistence and retention will depend on the staff's capacity to connect in a timely way with students and assess their academic progress, as well as providing a support system to address their needs.

RACIALLY EQUITABLE STUDENT SERVICE PROVISION

Beginning fall 2018, students with a high school transcript with an overall GPA of 2.7 were allowed to register for ENG 101 English Composition I without taking a placement test. The change in state policy to enable placement via GPA worked well in mathematics, saving students time and money on developmental coursework, driving the state to extend GPA placement to English courses. One unanticipated outcome of the new system is that ELL students who are placed by GPA directly into college-level classes are now dispersed among many different course sections, making it more difficult to provide targeted Supplemental Instruction (S.I.). The Academic Center for Enrichment addressed this challenge with English faculty and recruited additional faculty to participate in the S.I. program, including the newly re-designed English Composition I and English Composition II courses. In the first two years of the grant, ENG 102 English Composition II sessions were not included in the targeted courses. However, the changes above to placement policy and a significant curriculum re-design on academic writing across the disciplines required a shift in strategy for ELL student support. The re-designed ENG 101 and ENG 102 curricula spread out the process of academic writing across the two courses, changing the emphasis of ENG 101 to writing with scholarly sources and moving the research paper to ENG 102 as well as adding academic writing standards for a variety of academic disciplines. Considering these curriculum changes combined with reducing ELL students enrolled in specific ELL courses, faculty and students were recruited for S.I. support in ENG 102 for grant year three.

The challenge of providing the successful S.I. model to ELL students has increased. Non-native speakers are spread out over many ENG 101 and ENG 102 sections, requiring new solutions to deliver this support to this population. In spring 2020, a modified version of S.I. to our Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) English courses will be provided. ALP is a co-requisite developmental education model in which students who would have placed into developmental English or ELL course are put into a 3-credit college-level English course linked with a 3-credit developmental Writing Skills Seminar course (ENG 099). The S.I. model for this pilot has been modified to embed a peer writing tutor in each of the ENG 099 sections to support students

learning the writing process and connect with the ACE department. Embedded tutors will not only assist students with writing in the classroom but also refer them to the Writing Center to continue working with them one-on-one.

Another challenge is engaging Asian American students of South Asia descent in the program. PAASA has successfully attracted many Southeast Asian American students to events and services; however, we continue to struggle to engage Asian American students from India and China. Moving forward, we plan to utilize UMass graduate fellows and work-study students to help increase the AACC's visibility and outreach efforts on the Bedford and Lowell campus.

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BLACK/LATINX PROGRAM

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY BY ANTHONY WILDER

Keywords: Social Capital, Networking, Career Planning, Professional Identity

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Northeastern University, a private research university in Boston, Massachusetts, is internationally known for its unique model of experiential co-op education aptly summarized as “academic rigor + immersive experiences = The Northeastern Advantage” (<https://www.northeastern.edu/admissions/about/>). Key to a Northeastern University educational experience is real-life work experiences in students’ disciplines of choice. A student envisioning themselves as successful in their future field is key to their success. The BLACK (Black Leaders Accessing Consciousness Through Knowledge) and LATINX (Latinx Accessing Their Intellect through Networking and Exchange) Program is an alternative spring break program designed to provide Black/African-American and Latinx undergraduate and graduate students at Northeastern an opportunity to interact and network with Boston area professionals who share the same identity. The program includes off-campus visits to meet with Black/African-American/Latinx professionals at various companies and organizations, community leaders and business owners. The program also includes professional development and career planning workshops that build on lessons learned during the three-day program. The primary goal of the program is to bridge the knowledge and social capital gap that can hinder underrepresented students’ post-collegiate career efforts.

BUILDING PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS AS A TOOL FOR EQUITY

When the BLACK/LATINX Program was created, institutional data that pointed to an equity gap was not available. However, feedback and anecdotal evidence from the Black and Latinx students suggested that they would benefit from intentional mentoring from racially diverse individuals in various professional occupations as systemic racism has limited the number of Black and Latinx in certain professions.

	% Black	% Latinx
U.S. Population (2019)¹	13	19
Employed in...		
...accounting professions (2019) ²	6	9
...investment banking, securities, commodities, etc. (2019) ²	5	8
...architectural, engineering, and related services (2019) ²	7	10
...scientific research (2019) ²	7	9
...computer programming (2016) ³	8	7
...statistics/data analysis (2016) ³	8	4

¹ United States Census Bureau. (2019). QuickFacts United States. Retrieved on August 25, 2020, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. Retrieved on August 25, 2020, from <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>

³ Muro, M., Berube, A., Whiton, J. (2018). Black and Hispanic underrepresentation in tech: It’s time to change the equation. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/black-and-hispanic-underrepresentation-in-tech-its-time-to-change-the-equation/>

Research by the Pew Research Center (2018) also shows that Black and Hispanic STEM employees are more likely than their white or Asian counterparts to report that there is too little attention given to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the workplace. Black and Hispanic individuals working in STEM fields are also *more likely* to face discrimination in recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices; experience *higher rates* of feelings of imposter syndrome; and are *less likely* to find role models in their fields. Black and Hispanic employees are overwhelmingly more likely to report discrimination in the workplace (STEM and non-STEM).

The goals of the BLACK/LATINX Program are as follows:

- 1) To increase students’ knowledge and awareness about the challenges, resilience and professional accomplishments of Black and Latinx professionals

experience in the workplace: Students attend workshops and site visits focused on the intersection of identity and professionalism, personal branding, overcoming imposter syndrome and navigating challenges related to identity in the workplace.

- 2) To build social capital and professional networks: Students have the opportunity to visit companies in the Boston area, meet with organization leaders, and participate in networking events and conversations.
- 3) To help attendees expand their professional aspirations by meeting successful individuals who share their identities: Students attend panels and meet Black/Latinx professionals who are pioneers and leaders in their organizations and professional fields.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Interdepartmental teams implement BLACK/LATINX including: staff from the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (OIDI); Employer Engagement and Career Design (EECD); and two of the cultural centers on campus, the Latinx Student Cultural Center (LSCC) and John D. O'Bryant African American Institute (JDOAAI). The planning committee meets regularly throughout the school year to plan.

When choosing host sites we seek diverse representation of industries (education technology, business, medical, arts, etc.); interest based on participant feedback; connections to people within companies; and research about a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion. In recent years, we have partnered with companies and organizations such as Google (technology), State Street Corporation (finance), Ellevation Education (education technology), Partners HealthCare (health care), and the Museum of Fine Arts (arts, nonprofit). The university capitalizes on personal connections individuals may have with specific companies/organizations.

The university recognizes that in order to make this program appealing to a variety of students, it is important to ensure that the site visits and guests are as diverse in their industries and identities as possible. Northeastern strives to help students understand that their degree/area of study and professional sector are not always aligned. For example, companies in the health care sector employ individuals with

finance degrees. Barriers to participation are eliminated as much as possible. For example, transportation and meals are provided during the three-day experience.

Outreach to companies begins as early as August and September for the following March. During the fall, student leaders are identified to serve as program assistants (PA). They are critical to conducting outreach to students through social media and other platforms. PAs are also helpful in working with the planning committee to develop a marketing plan. During the fall, the rubric and application that is used to decide who will be selected for the program is evaluated. Questions from the application to participate include the following: a) Please describe your extracurricular involvement on campus or off-campus (if at all). This includes organizations, jobs, leadership positions, service, leadership/mentoring programs, etc. b) How would you describe your professional or paraprofessional experiences to date? c) Why do you want to participate in the BLACK/LATINX Professional Immersion Experience? d) What do you wish to gain from participating in the BLACK/LATINX Professional Immersion Experience, and how will you apply it to your future professional endeavors? e) This program will require you to meet and interact with professionals across various industries for an extended period of time. How do you stay engaged when working with others? How do you take advantage of opportunities to meet with prominent guests?

Marketing for the program begins in December and becomes more robust in January. This is done through social media, on-campus TV ads, email blasts to co-op advisors, newsletters, etc. In early spring we open applications to students with a mid-February submission deadline.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Students are surveyed before and after their participation in BLACK/LATINX. The feedback from the students has been overwhelmingly positive. Overall, the responses and reflections of the students touched on the following themes: Increased comfort in networking and understanding of the importance of networking; learned how to execute personal branding (online and in person); learned the importance of feedback and practice of skills; increased self-confidence and ability to navigate imposter syndrome; learned the importance of finding mentors and sponsors as

a part of advancing careers; learned to be more open-minded about the variety of careers within various fields; felt more empowered to address and overcome barriers; learned more about diversity and inclusion in the corporate sector. These themes are illustrated in the following participant evaluation exemplars:

- *“This program reinforced the importance of having a strong network, which will help you move along in your career. The idea of a shared experience with Black/Latinx students at Northeastern will be something I always remember.”*
- *“Great discussions about identity and professionalism. Takeaways: company culture and values matter. I have to figure out my own values and place importance on those values.”*
- *“The things learned and experiences at these events are not usually taught in a classroom setting. You have to be intentional about learning them and someone has to be intentional about teaching you, which is what we got here.”*
- *“I have learned that challenges are bound to happen and when I am forced with one, I need to face it with a positive mindset. Stand for what I believe in.”*
- *“This has been an extremely positive and welcoming experience that was well thought out and provided a space for both students and professionals a place to be honest about identity.”*

The quantitative program assessment data is also positive (N=20):

- **100%** of participants said they would recommend this program to other Northeastern students and are likely to participate in similar programming in the future.
- **100%** of participants feel that the BLACK/LATINX Program is important to the breaking down of professional barriers for underrepresented identities in the workplace.
- **100%** of participants agree that BLACK/LATINX provided them with the opportunity to build networks and connections with high-level professionals.
- **94%** feel that participating in this program increased their

knowledge of professional development strategies to amplify their preparation and motivation for career success.

- **94%** of participants report a greater understanding of how to navigate challenges related to identity in the workplace.
- **88%** of participants report a greater understanding of the intersection of identity and professionalism.
- **81%** participants report identifying areas in which they require more professional growth.

LESSONS LEARNED

Proactive networking external to campus is essential to building partners who will support the program. It is important to organize face-to-face, pre- and post-event conversations with students in order to fully support their learning and success. These individual conversations made it clear that the international students seek career support more than domestic students, so the university has had to work harder to connect with and get the attention of domestic students who may not realize the impact of identity on job seeking and/or their career. This program underscores that students desire to see someone just like them in a future role to which they aspire. Many of the students will be that “first someone,” so the university tries to incorporate the experiences of others who have been pioneers in a professional environment as a strategy for equity and racial justice.

BRIEF NOTES ON ADDITIONAL EQUITY PROGRAMS

Northeastern University also wanted to share about two additional practices being implemented in an effort to support educational equity. Northeastern University provides coordinated support and care to students who are first-generation, undocumented and/or low-income students as institutional data indicated that these students experienced equity gaps in a number of areas including course completion rates and engagement in co-op and study-abroad opportunities. The First-generation, Undocumented and/or Low-income Network (FUNL) is comprised of a robust interdivisional group that regularly meets to discuss the needs of these students and what the institution can do to support their success. The group is premised on the idea that the campus needs to change to

serve the students. They meet regularly with representatives from the First Gen Low Income Student Union to ensure that the group's work is informed by the wisdom, experiences and voices of the students they seek to serve. In response to evaluation data received after FUNL events, the network is: planning more employee development to support FUNL-identifying students at all stages of the admissions process; recognizing and addressing the mental health needs of FUNL-identifying students; and asset-based work with minoritized students. The FUNL Network also organizes Northeastern's annual First Gen Celebration, a weeklong series of events to celebrate and affirm first-generation students, staff and faculty. Additionally, the network is beginning to identify areas where university processes are not sensitive to the needs of these students so that they can be modified going forward.

“Nothing about us without us” is an ethic that characterizes effective educational equity work (<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2017/nothing-about-us-without-us-is-for-us>). Northeastern University has put this tenet into practice through the EMPOWER Retreat and Conference. The impetus for the initiative in 2011 was staff realization that multicultural student organizations were not receiving needed funding from their on-campus Student Finance Board. The cultural center staff asked these students to come together and create a plan for action to address the issue. Karin Firoza, director of the Center for Intercultural Engagement at Northeastern University, writes, “The EMPOWER Student Initiative strives to link communities, ignite social consciousness, and inspire leadership among Students of Color at Northeastern.” Now entering its ninth year, EMPOWER offers Black and Brown students and their white allies a range of events throughout the academic year, including a series of workshops, trainings, a full-day conference and a weekend retreat. These opportunities provide students with spaces to connect and build on their existing assets and strengths, explore their social identities, and understand and navigate systems of power. After participating in the program, one student wrote, “I am more confident being Black. It's inspired me to be more conscious about it and celebrate it and that of others.”

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MULTICULTURAL STUDENT CENTER DROP-IN SESSIONS AND STUDENT SUCCESS COHORT

BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BY ROBERT DELALEU, MELISSA ROGERS &
MEREDITH MICHAELSON

Keywords: Retention, Wrap Around Services, Intentional Programming

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Bristol Community College (Bristol) in Fall River, Massachusetts, offers more than 150 career and transfer programs of study that lead to an associate degree in science, arts, applied sciences, and certificates of accomplishment or achievement. Graduates can transfer to many baccalaureate colleges throughout the state and country, as well as earn career-focused degrees and certificates (<http://www.bristolcc.edu/>).

During the 2018–2019 academic year, Bristol Community College reported an overall first time, full-time retention rate of 59.6%, which was slightly above the state average and a small improvement from the 59.4% first time, full-time retention rate from the 2017–2018 academic year. However, this rate was somewhat lower than the first time, full-time retention rate reported in the previous two years of 60.8% in 2014–2015 and 61.2% in 2015–2016. While the changes were slight, many at the college felt the need to be proactive to turn around this decline. It was realized that more could be done to analyze the trends in this overall rate -- to see if there were themes in terms of who the college was retaining – and perhaps more importantly, who they were losing.

The institutional “dive” into the data highlighted the need for several initiatives, including the need for more intentional focus on specific populations of students. Institutional data indicated that African American, Black and Cape Verdean and Latinx males were retained at lower rates than their white peers. Similarly, Pell-eligible students also experienced a retention gap as compared to their non-Pell peers.

At the beginning of this academic year, a new strategic planning process was launched. A crucial part of this launch was when the president of the college highlighted several equity gaps that are persistent at Bristol. It was clear that these specific gaps and addressing them would be at the heart of our strategic plan, not only aligning with the mission but also with the Massachusetts Equity Agenda (<https://www.mass.edu/strategic/equity.asp>).

SUPPORTING THE SUCCESS OF RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS

A range of services has been developed at Bristol in an effort to close educational equity gaps. This emerging practice will describe the ways in which the Multicultural Student Center has been used as a hub for student success for racially minoritized students. Since the Multicultural Student Center is a central place where students of all races and ethnicities congregate, Bristol began offering drop-in sessions where students are given the opportunity to increase their knowledge of key student success resources. These sessions also build community among participants, as well as a culture of student success-oriented behaviors. Overall, the goal is that the sessions support the continued persistence and retention of students who utilize the service.

Students with minoritized racial and ethnic identities are emphasized in the marketing efforts for drop-in sessions. Marketing for these sessions occurs formally through social media and email campaigns. The center’s student leaders and work-study students are also in ongoing contact with other students who utilize the center. As relationships are built and students are educated on the available services, center staff follow up with students and encourage them to access these department resources, workshops and/or employees – further developing important relationships designed to support these students throughout their time at Bristol.

RACIALLY EQUITABLE STUDENT SERVICE PROVISION

Drop-in sessions within the Multicultural Student Center are held by a variety of offices on campus, including (but not limited to): admissions, financial aid, academic advising, student/family engagement, and academic affairs. Members of the president's leadership team, including the vice president for student support services and enrollment management, the vice president for academic affairs, and the president, also offer some drop-in sessions throughout the academic year.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Currently, Bristol has incomplete data on program effectiveness. It is believed that students attending these drop-in sessions will be more likely to register early, submit their FAFSA on-time, and engage with different academic support services such as tutoring. Multiple studies have shown a link with increased retention and persistence rates (DiPerna & Elliot, 2002; Marx, 2016; Tinto, 2012). Future assessment will determine if this is indeed the case. In addition, it is hoped that the sessions lead to an increased sense of belonging and engagement with the college that scholars also believe to lead to increased retention and persistence (Tinto, 2017; Yeager & Walton, 2011; Walton, 2014). It is hoped that by attending these sessions, students will develop a growth-mindset by demonstrating that there are resources to help them if they have questions or run into bumps in the road (Dweck, 2006). Ultimately, they will know that there can be other options than giving up – thus strengthening their resiliency, and hopefully increase their likelihood to persist over time (Dweck, 2006; Haverila, 2020). Future assessment plans for drop-in sessions include tracking more closely the retention and persistence rates for students who participate in the sessions as compared to their peers who do not use these services.

The data that does exist assessing program effectiveness shows that more than 200 students have been served from fall 2016 to fall 2019 through drop-in sessions. The quantitative assessment data on drop-in sessions indicates that during the FY20 school year, students who participated in Multicultural Student Center drop-in sessions had an overall GPA of 2.52 compared to a 2.43 overall GPA of all Multicultural Student Center users who did not attend the sessions.

The qualitative data on the program indicates that students using the drop-in sessions believe that the information they received decreased barriers to their success. They also indicated that workshops are more beneficial when comfortable with those who are presenting.

"You were able to ask questions right then and there. Going online and talking over the phone can be confusing and frustrating, however, getting answers immediately helped settle my anxiety."

"My experience with the Multicultural Student Center drop-in sessions has been a positive one. For me, it was great to interact with students and faculty on campus and have support from all the students and faculty. I would recommend the drop-in sessions to any student. I feel like it's extremely helpful and useful with keeping students up to date on events on campus and any issues that might be occurring within student life."

"MSC virtual drop-in sessions gave me an outlet to express myself during these tough times."

LESSONS LEARNED

Responding to pandemic: The Multicultural Student Center has recently begun offering virtual drop-in sessions for students who are unable to be present on campus due to Covid-19. So far, virtual drop-in sessions are geared towards learning about Multicultural Student Center resources; however, the office is looking to involve other departments in the virtual process in the future. Due to the transition of COVID-19 and the pressures of remote work, the multicultural affairs department and student leaders have developed sessions to boost morale and check on students'

overall well-being. The college is committed to meeting students where they are at and giving them a support system that works for them – even if we can't be physically present with them.

Deepening service provision model: While the college is encouraged by the assessment data discussed here, there is an opportunity to provide more structure and intentionality to drop-in sessions to increase its effectiveness. Bristol is currently developing a Student Success Partnership pilot program for incoming students in the fall 2020 semester that would combine both drop-in sessions and individualized support. Drop-in sessions will continue to take place as normal for any student to attend. The Multicultural Student Success Cohort program will create an engaging opportunity for a group of 20–30 first-year students from underserved student populations to build a supportive community with peers, faculty and staff that goes beyond attending the various sessions offered. The program will include multiple components designed to foster the students' success at Bristol including:

- intentional, ongoing outreach through a variety of mediums from Multicultural Student Center staff and advising throughout their first year at Bristol;
- the Navigator for Pathways to the Future/Title III will be their assigned advisor and will work with them throughout their first year to encourage their continued academic success and utilization of academic support services (Tinto, 2012);
- students will be personally invited to attend a series of drop-in sessions and other programs (especially in their first semester) designed to give them the tools and knowledge they will need to be successful at Bristol and beyond;
- students will be asked to share their lessons learned, their plans for continued success, and their advice for incoming first year students (Yeager & Walton, 2011);
- participating students will be assigned a peer mentor through the Multicultural Student Center.

It is hoped that the added structure will result in even more robust student support in order to eliminate racial educational equity gaps.

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BRIDGES MENTORING PROGRAM

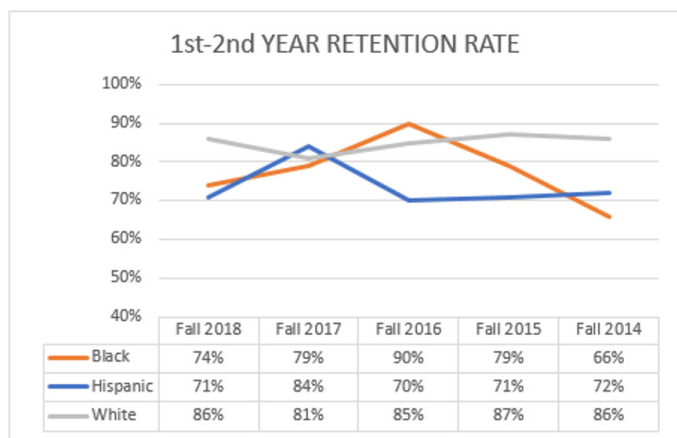
WENTWORTH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BY ALEX CABAL

Keywords: Mentoring, Networking, Support, Students of Color

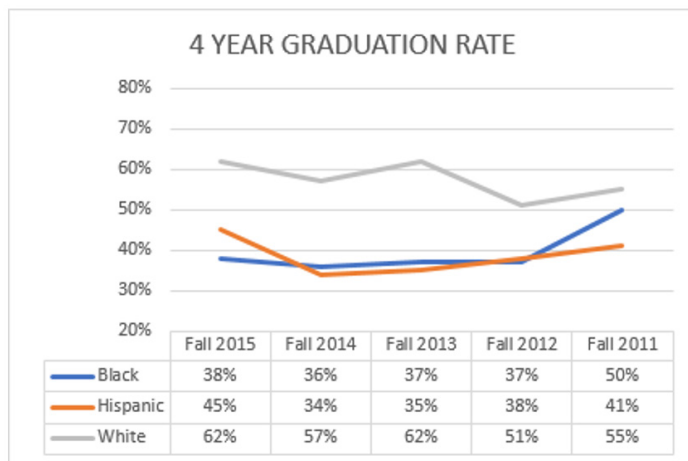
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Wentworth Institute of Technology (WIT) in Boston, Massachusetts, is a private institution, founded in 1904, that focuses on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) education. WIT has a total undergraduate enrollment of 4,341. The institution has a long commitment to diversifying STEAM professions through the support of our diverse student body. WIT's equity efforts are being conducted through a range of strategies.

Institutional retention and graduation rate data indicated that interventions were needed to close racial educational equity gaps (see charts below). While this emerging practice will describe the Bridges Mentoring Program that has been designed to increase racial educational equity at WIT, an additional strategy, My Brother's Keeper, which is newer on our campus, will be shared via a brief program overview found in a text box on the next page.



[1st-2nd Year Retention Rate in table format](#)



[4 Year Graduation Rate in table format](#)

The goal of the Bridges Mentoring Program at Wentworth is to provide support through peer-to-peer mentoring to first year students of color as they transition from high school students to undergraduate college students. Bridges gives students the opportunity to have personal connections to students who can help them navigate their first year at Wentworth and provides key retention-oriented support and programming.

Mentor recruitment: Former participants of the program return as mentors for the following class cohort. Mentor positions are on a volunteer basis, but discussions about paying mentors are occurring. The director of Center for Diversity & Social Justice Programs (CDSJP) begins recruitment towards the end of the spring semester.

Mentee recruitment: Recruitment for participants begins in July after all new student orientation has ended. First-time, full-time students of color receive an email describing the program and encouraging their participation. Staff members work closely with the Office of Housing and Residential Life to secure early move-in access for the residential students participating in the program, which serves as a program incentive.

FOSTERING CONNECTION AND SUCCESS

Bridges mentors host a welcome ice-cream social the evening before the one-day program with those who moved in early and commuter students who can join. The kick-off day of programming offered to program participants includes information on leadership and involvement opportunities at WIT, an overview of financial aid services and resources, an introduction to the library and a workshop on succeeding academically in college. The day also offers the incoming students/mentees an opportunity to engage in team building activities with their Bridges mentors.

The mentorship program focuses on social interactions rather than academic ones. Mentors are not trained in any capacity – rather the program allows relationships to grow among all students involved. Mentors receive communication from the director of Center for Diversity & Social Justice Programs (CDSJP) about upcoming events. They are also given autonomy in the implementation of the programs. Most outings are organized by CDSJP but led by mentors. Mentors share what they would like to do while a professional staff member organizes the events such as bowling, movie screenings and food outings. The program ends with a dinner hosted by the dean of students office before finals spring semester.

WIT has recently piloted a campus-based version of My Brother's Keeper based on President Obama's national model for supporting the success of males of color (<https://www.obama.org/mbka/>) in order to support the retention of males of color attending WIT. The program blends individual sessions focused on academic goal setting with an array of cohort-based activities intended to cultivate community, academic success, engagement in high impact practices and professional networking. For additional information contact Ricky Meinke, assistant director, Center for Diversity & Social Justice Programs at meinker@wit.edu.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness found some preliminary quantitative evidence that the Bridges program increases first-year retention and graduation of participants. The strongest evidence to date, however, is qualitative data as students spoke about their program experience.

“Being a part of Bridges gave me the opportunity to have a family to lean on while my time at Wentworth, especially during my first year. Whenever I felt lonely, I always had my Bridges mentors and friends checking on me. Bridges also allowed me to make the first step to be involved on campus; with Bridges, I was introduced to so many different leadership roles including being an RA. After being a member of Bridges, I got inspired to pass forward the opportunity I had, and decided to be a mentor, which is such a rewarding experience because I got the opportunity to help other students thrive that look like me and that have gone through similar paths in life as me.”

“I found Bridges to be a wonderful experience last year, especially as an incoming first-year student. Being a part of the Bridges program gave me the opportunity to make friends that I had more in common with than just classes. It also made me feel more welcomed and less alone as a woman of color in the Wentworth community. The Bridges program was a very personalized experience, there was a lot of casual time with the mentors and plenty of good advice was given along with helpful talks with members of student engagement and the deans. I believe that Bridges aided me in becoming as involved on campus as I am now because the mentors were very encouraging to join clubs that focused on people of color. I decided to return and be a Bridges mentor this year because I wanted to aid in giving a similar experience to the incoming first-year students of color and help ease their transition into college by making them feel welcomed and not alone.”

Key to the success of this program is the willingness of former program mentees to continue to serve as mentors.

“In my experience, as a mentor and a mentee, Bridges is an experience every student of color should have. It give you resources in the Center for Diversity & Social Justice and introduces you to a community in the school which is indispensable. The social environment and casual events allow for someone, who knew not one person coming to Wentworth,

to have a family (with Alex as the awkward DAD). The upperclassmen Bridges mentors also help in academics and if you are ever lost in registration or just need someone to talk to, they are always there for you. I returned as a mentor because I wanted the next year of Bridges mentees to have an even better experience than my year of Bridges mentees”

LESSONS LEARNED

Complexity of group mentorship model: Individual mentorship became difficult as students’ schedules changed throughout the semester. Some students had strong mentoring relationships while others lacked connection. Group mentoring worked out much better. Students formed group relationships rather than individual ones. Staff has also received requests from returning students who would like to participate in the program after learning about it from their friends. Because of the cohort model, it’s been difficult to allow to students to join mid-way through the program. The most effective service delivery method for mentoring will continue to be explored in the years ahead in order to support the success of participating students of color attending WIT.

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THE REGIS MENTORING INITIATIVE: PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE

REGIS COLLEGE BY DENISE MASHMASARMI

Keywords: Retention, Student Success, Evidence-based Practice, Enrollment, Mentorship

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Regis College is a leading university in greater Boston with nearly 3,000 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students in the arts, sciences and health professions devoted to engage, serve and advance in a global community. Since the late 1800s, the Sisters of St. Joseph have run 125 educational institutions in the Boston area. They founded Regis College at a time when higher education options for women were limited. Since its founding in 1927, Regis College has continued to evolve to meet the demands and needs of the contemporary student. The college went co-educational in 2007, has added doctoral programs, and is now a four-schooled university serving students around the globe on its Weston, Lawrence and online campuses. The mission of providing access to an education based on Catholic intellectual traditions, while striving for excellence tempered with gentleness, endures today on a campus that prides itself on welcoming all without distinction.

The Partners in Excellence (PIE) mentoring program was born out of a desire to provide support to men of color and first generation students on the Regis campus as we have seen the disparities that existed between them and their more privileged peers. Regis began admitting male students in 2007 and has worked hard to recruit and retain men. Male students currently represent roughly 25% of the undergraduate student population, and most men of color tend to be athletes. Anecdotally, we were aware that men of color faced challenges on our campus and some of our men of color were not completing their degrees at Regis.

Additionally, over the past three years black male students have experienced racism during athletic events with other teams. The college has worked with the athletic department at our neighboring institutions to resolve the conflict utilizing restorative practices. These events shed light on the experiences that Black men and other men of color

experience on and off campus. While working on a broad range of strategies to support the success of students of color, Regis was guided by the voices of students of color. These students feel as though they lack access to tools and opportunities on how to be successful. Regis was also guided by the literature that highlights the importance of providing males of color mentoring by faculty and staff of color in order to support their college success at predominantly white institutions.

The mentoring program was formed to help meet the needs of our male students by concentrating resources in one place and building the community among students of color. However, as the male mentoring initiative was developed, the need became clear to build up support for our first-generation students and other students of color.

In analyzing student data, it was noted that the retention rates for men and women of color are much lower than their white peers. Also noted was that first-generation college student status equally impacted retention rates for students of color and white students. As an institution with 23% first-generation students, it was known that it was also important to provide support to increase success among first-generation college students, as many hold intersecting identities as students of color. The mentoring initiative expanded its focus to serve first-generation and students of color of all genders.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Regis Partners in Excellence mentoring initiative was developed as an effort to provide support to first-generation college students and students of color. Regis is known for having a diverse student population that does not match the demographics of faculty and staff of the institution. It was imperative that the college assess current student support services and how mentoring could provide an additional resource to historically minoritized students.

After researching various mentoring programs for first-generation students and students of color, it was decided that utilizing both peer and professional mentors would benefit the mentees in navigating the college environment.

Program Objectives: A committee of faculty, staff and graduate student professionals met in summer 2019 and developed the following objectives of the mentoring program:

- To assist students of color and first-generation students in their transition to college by connecting them with a student and a faculty, staff member or graduate assistant who will serve as an advocate and source of support and guidance.
- To facilitate student growth, development and engagement through mentoring with student peers, faculty and staff.
- To help new students achieve a sense of belonging at Regis College through establishing rapport with student peers, faculty and staff.
- To improve retention rates of students of color and first-generation students at Regis College by 10%.
- To close the educational equity gap between continuing generation students and first-generation students.
- To close the educational equity gap between Black, Brown and other students of color and their white peers.

Peer Mentors: Peer mentors were recruited in the spring/summer 2019 semesters. These students were often leaders on campus, in roles such as resident assistants (RAs), Pride guides, orientation leaders or members of student clubs and organizations. Peer mentors were placed in a fall course titled Co-Curricular 105: Hot Topics that has a focus on peer and team leadership. The course was designed to assist peer mentors in building rapport and developing authentic relationships with their mentees. This course gave peer mentors an opportunity to ask questions, exchange success stories, and receive support and feedback on difficult situations. Peer mentors were encouraged to connect with

their mentees regarding academics, time management, coping behaviors, resources on campus and utilization of these resources.

Program Recruitment: The program worked to recruit student participants (mentees) during summer orientation and the first week of the fall semester. Directors of the program obtained enrollment information from admissions and utilized data from the common app to determine student's first-generation college student status. Mentees were partnered with a peer mentor based on major, personal interests or hometown. Professional mentors were selected based on matching demographics with students including field of study, race/ethnicity, first-generation status and gender.

The program is advertised in a number of ways including a Regis Mentoring Initiatives webpage that offers the following program description: Partners in Excellence “provides personal guidance and support to the student mentees through the assignment of trained peer, faculty, staff and graduate mentors. Through structured and unstructured interactions with mentors, first-year students participating in the program will establish meaningful relationships that increase their engagement in and out of the classroom, contributing positively to their retention at Regis (<https://www.regiscollege.edu/about-regis/inclusive-excellence/partners-excellence-regis-mentoring-initiative>).”

PROGRAM PILLARS

Program objectives are met through the program pillars or the key ideas of engagement, identity and empowerment. The program gathered in large groups once a month over a meal in the fall semester, these meetings brought peer mentors, mentees and professional mentors together to engage in activities intended to actualize the program pillars.

In developing the program pillars, focus was placed on areas that provided a holistic college experience but also integrated the core values of the institution. (<https://www.regiscollege.edu/about-regis/regis-glance/mission-regis-college>).

Engagement: Students participated in activities that encouraged them to increase their involvement in the many opportunities that the university provides. Through

RACIALLY EQUITABLE STUDENT SERVICE PROVISION

increased involvement, students strengthened bonds with their peers, faculty and staff, and the institution. Additionally, students gained leadership skills and received support as they endeavored to step into new roles on campus or create opportunities that enhance their own experience and those of their peers at the university. During the 2019-2020 academic year, students participated in monthly large group meetings with varying themes to include leadership development, emotional intelligence and handling microaggressions. Additionally, the college hosted first generation programming, social gatherings, and partnered with offices for additional leadership and diversity training.

Identity: Students who participated in PIE had the opportunity to explore their own identity through self-reflection and personal development activities, as well as through interactions with peers, faculty and staff. Students were also encouraged to explore the intersection of their multiple identities as well as how they navigate those identities while at Regis and as they move into the professional world. During the fall 2019 peer mentoring course, students were able to discuss challenges such as imposter syndrome and how to better understand and navigate difficult conversations. Peer mentors shared their own experiences and how they've navigated these challenges at Regis. In a large group, identities were explored. All participants shared what identities were most important to who they were, and this conversation shed light on the fact that many of our program participants face unconscious bias and microaggressions in their everyday community experience. As a program that serves students of color and marginalized populations, it was important for the next large group to discuss unconscious bias and how to interrupt microaggressions, to further support their identity development and how they respond in those situations.

Empowerment: Students participated in activities designed to increase their awareness of their community and provide service to the dear neighbor without distinction. Love and service to the dear neighbor without distinction is a core value of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, who founded Regis College. This value guides the Regis community, how they interact with one another, and how they interact the greater community outside of Regis College. Students learned the importance of connectivity by networking

both inside and outside of their communities. Through these interactions, students gained knowledge about the importance of self-advocacy as well as advocating for those who may not be comfortable or able to advocate for themselves. Through the various large group sessions, participants were able to learn about the identities of others and learn about interrupting and challenging racism and discrimination. Also, through one-on-one interactions with peer mentors, mentees were able to learn more about campus resources and how to advocate for themselves in these areas. Peer mentors were encouraged to advertise events and opportunities on campus and in the local community that would assist in getting mentees comfortable with their new environment. It was also refreshing to see that peer mentors who didn't know they were first-generation bond with one another when they discovered it applied to them. Ideally, there would have been more opportunities for students to serve the local community, however the impact of the pandemic altered these plans.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

In order to determine the effectiveness of the program, Regis compared the grade point averages (GPA) of PIE mentees to their first-year peers that did not participate in the program.

Student Cohort	Fall 2019 GPA	Spring 2020 GPA	CUM GPA
PIE First-gen Mentees	3.04	3.22	3.22
Non-PIE First Generation	3.07	3.16	3.22
PIE SOC	2.96	3.21	3.08
Non-PIE SOC	3.08	3.19	3.13
First Year, Non-PIE Students Overall	3.24	3.39	3.31

Similarly, Regis looked at the GPA of its peer mentors and compared their academic performance to their non-PIE peers.

RACIALLY EQUITABLE STUDENT SERVICE PROVISION

Student Cohort	Fall 2019 GPA	Spring 2020 GPA	CUM GPA
Peer Mentors	3.33	3.40	3.37
All Non-PIE Students	3.23	3.40	3.31
Upper Class Non-PIE Students	3.27	3.43	3.31

While we completely acknowledge the importance of academic performance and maintaining a good grade point average, we also know that the success of first-generation students and students of color is not completely measured by their academic performance. PIE mentees were also encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities and pursue campus leadership roles. Nearly half of all PIE mentees pursued campus leadership roles including applying to serve as resident advisors, orientation leaders and pride guides; applying to be a PIE peer mentor; or running for office in a student government/student organization.

In addition to GPA comparisons and student engagement data, 17 of the 30 PIE mentees were surveyed at the end of the fall term regarding their satisfaction with the PIE mentoring program and their perception of the impact of the program and their peer mentor on their Regis experience. Of the PIE mentees surveyed, 82% indicated they were very satisfied or satisfied with the program and the remaining 18% indicated they were neutral. Of the PIE mentees surveyed, 76% indicated that participating in the PIE program contributed positively to their experience at Regis. Similarly, 76% indicated that interactions with their peer mentors contributed positively to their experience at Regis.

PIE mentees were also asked about the one thing they liked most about the program. Statements made by students include: “I got to meet new faces on campus that are able to relate to me” and “Everyone was so helpful.” Some students referred to the helpful nature of the program staff and their mentors. PIE mentees made statements alluding to what they liked such as “Making connections with mentors and students,” “I made new friends and connected with other people,” and “The relationships built.” When asked would they recommend the program to other first generation and/

or students of color, 88% of the mentees surveyed they would make the recommendation with 12% stating they possibly would recommend the program.

LESSONS LEARNED

Program as student success lever for all involved: This initiative has been beneficial for both the mentees and peer mentors. The college originally didn’t account for the benefits that existed for peer mentors but have been pleasantly surprised by the progress in their academics and overall feedback.

Link curricular and co-curricular programming: In the inaugural program year, peer mentors were placed in a fall course designed to provide them resources and skills in connecting with their mentee. Ideally this would occur in the summer months so that peer mentors are prepared for any challenges they may have. This fall Regis will be implementing a course for mentees. The course is designed as a resource to further assist students in navigating the campus, building community, developing autonomy and learning about their identities. Through this course students will be introduced to more campus partners, but also to break down barriers. The college wants to assist students in combatting imposter syndrome or feeling as though they do not have a connection to the campus. In addition to providing students with the cultural capital to be successful in college, a segment of the course will focus on diversity and inclusion, and helping students understand how to seek out resources that are geared to their specific success as students of color and first-generation college students. Academically, with the fall course the college will be better able to develop rapport with our mentees early on and can assist with academic referrals.

Adapting program to pandemic: Currently, with the global health crisis and switching to fully online learning and resources, it is anticipated that there will be a drop in students’ GPA, levels of engagement and an increase in stress and anxiety. Qualitative data collection will likely be harder to obtain compared to last semester. Regis College faculty and staff are in conversation regarding addressing these challenges and can share resulting program innovations if contacted.

During this transition, directors of the program personally reached out to each mentee and peer mentor to assess their needs and offer support and/or referrals to on-campus resources.

**CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PERSON WHO CAN
SHARE MORE ABOUT THIS EMERGING PRACTICE**

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RACIALLY JUST POLICING:

A Model Policy for Colleges and Universities



RACIALLY JUST POLICING

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Salem State University

Middlesex Community College

Westfield State University

Mount Wachusett Community College

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Every year, at colleges and universities in the Commonwealth and across the country, students, staff and guests of color are singled out for suspicion. After these incidents, the affected campus community members sometimes reach out to civil rights organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts (“ACLUM”). At ACLUM, we have responded to an incident in which police cordoned off a university building for half an hour to question someone whom an anonymous caller identified as an “agitated Black male” with “a heavy backpack;” in fact, he was a university employee returning from the recreation center. We have responded to an incident in which police questioned a young Black woman after receiving a call that she was in an unoccupied dormitory (with an active dining hall) sitting on a dormitory couch in the room off of the dining hall and seemed “out of place;” in fact, she was a student. We have responded to an incident in which police stopped, questioned, and ultimately arrested a Black man while he was walking toward the campus gym; in fact, he was a basketball coach. These incidents, and countless others, unjustly required Black people to rebut a suspicion of criminality, instead of requiring the caller, dispatcher or officer to justify the suspicion. Crucially, by the time affected parties contact ACLUM, they have likely already suffered irreparable harm.

ACLUM, in partnership with Bridgewater State University (“BSU”), drafted this model policy to suggest a different approach, intended to prevent these injustices from happening in the first place. The policy is based on a recognition that not only do students and staff of color wish to prevent these incidents, and not only does ACLUM wish to prevent them, but so too do colleges and universities themselves. We have all come to recognize that the status quo has caused people of color to suffer

repeat racial injustices at our institutions and that maintaining it will allow those harms to continue. We all need and want proactive solutions that can help stymie racial profiling and provide a starting point for real change. Racism is a public health issue that affects the emotional and mental health of those directly and indirectly impacted – and as with all health issues, prevention and early intervention are worth more than any cure.

METHODOLOGY

ACLUM and BSU started with the premise that racial profiling and other instances of racial injustice will continue to occur on campuses unless colleges and universities identify the problem and work toward structural solutions. To help identify problems and solutions, we surveyed presidents, police chiefs and diversity administrators from 27 Massachusetts public colleges and universities in September 2019 about their current anti-bias policies and practices. Eighteen schools responded either in writing or through informal meetings. ACLUM also received input from the State University Council of Presidents and the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges.

The responses demonstrated that colleges and universities are trying to provide a safe and supportive environment for all members of their communities through identifiable policies and practices. Responding institutions included diversity goals in their strategic plans and created committees and advisory groups to realize those goals, created non-sworn staff positions within police departments to respond to community needs, and administered implicit bias training to all faculty and staff members (though there was no uniformity to these trainings or information available about their effectiveness).

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While these responses were buoying, they also revealed opportunities for improvement. Many responding institutions had difficulty defining, articulating or even acknowledging that people of color on campuses are too often treated as if they are “others” who do not belong. Some institutions, while recognizing feelings of alienation among people of color, seemed to attribute these feelings to characteristics of individuals of color, to stereotypes, or to the national dialogues around race – rather than to institutional policies or practices that do not account for the experiences of people of color. As a result, some respondents regarded the work of creating a culture of belonging as one of reinforcing group similarities and deconstructing barriers (e.g., explaining existing services and programs to students of color), rather than creating positive policies and practices aimed at recognizing and embracing unique experiences and rendering services in a manner that addresses those differences.

To understand how identified policies and practices work and affect student experience, ACLUM met with undergraduate, graduate and professional-level students at Harvard University, Greenfield Community College, and Bunker Hill Community College, among other institutions. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic halted meetings with additional students.

These conversations with students, the college and university survey responses, the aid of police reform experts, and independent research (see “Selected Sources”) helped inform our policy recommendations. These recommendations also drew upon the institutional expertise of the ACLU, ACLUM and Bridgewater State University. Subsequently, the recommendations were revised during the national conversations around policing that occurred in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd.

APPROACH FOR ADOPTING RECOMMENDATIONS

This model policy proposes statements of principles and recommendations, coupled with guidance on best practices to implement each recommendation. We encourage institutions to adopt these recommendations with the understanding that there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution to these issues. We recognize that differences in setting (e.g., residential versus non-residential campuses), location (e.g., urban versus remote) and other factors may make wholesale adoption impossible. It is up to each institution to determine how best to adjust and adopt this model to fit their own structure and needs. The recommendations offer a framework on which to build a racially just policing model. The “best practices” go one step further; they provide a roadmap for implementing each recommendation and should form part of the policies and procedures of each institution’s campus safety plan.*

Our recommendations center on the following themes:

- *Community-driven policing.* Community-identified needs as expressed by students, faculty and staff must inform how public safety departments operate on campuses. This can only be achieved through continuous, open dialogue with community members. At colleges and universities, the need for community-driven policing is especially acute because those communities will continue to change with each new generation that matriculates through the institution. Institutions must establish systems to ensure that policing addresses current community members’ needs and expectations.
- *Establishing community expectations.* University and college police departments must clearly articulate their purpose/mission to the campus community.

*Although some colleges and universities have their own police departments, others do not. As explored below, this document is not intended to encourage or affirm the creation of police departments nor the stationing of police officers on college and university campuses.

This model of adapting the policy recommendations to fit individual institutional needs follows the approach taken by, and accordingly borrows language from, the Mass. Board of Higher Education in its 2016 report “Securing Our Future: Best Practice Recommendation for Campus Safety and Violence Prevention.”

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Police should not aim to monitor or intervene in every dispute; their services should be limited to situations involving risks of physical harm to other person(s). This must be effectively communicated to the community, who should likewise be informed about what steps the police will take when activated – from the information that dispatch will solicit from a caller, to the department’s post-encounter reporting systems.

- *Transparency.* A lack of information about the operation of police departments allows disinformation and mistrust of police to fester. Community members must have access to the information necessary to determine whether police are working in a racially just manner. Police must also evaluate their own actions to be able to identify issues as they arise and appropriately address them. This internal evaluation should consist of regularly collecting and reviewing relevant demographic and outcome data, as well as providing bias training. This training should establish expectations that will, in turn, be incorporated into performance reviews. Further, police should not be expected to police themselves but rather should establish a commission made up of students, staff with subject-area expertise, and administrators to receive input from the community.
- *Reckoning with the history of policing.* Police must reckon with the history of how modern policing evolved in some parts of the country and the discriminatory manner in which police have operated in communities of color from slavery to mass incarceration. That history and that reality affect the success of policing on campuses; it should not be ignored. Among other actions, officers should receive training on how encounters can affect individual community member’s

emotional and psychological well-being and how to deliver services in a manner that recognizes that impact. Officers should work towards establishing professional relationships with community members, remaining open and providing answers to questions about stops and other actions.

We hope that institutions – especially those that may not be able to adopt fully the recommendations – will use these themes, as well as the principles articulated throughout the report, as guideposts on their path to change. We hope aspects of this report will inform agreements (including contracts, mutual aid agreements, and memoranda of understanding) that institutions enter into with any municipal or private police forces that provide services to their campus, including by having any such agreements informed by, evaluated and discussed with community members. Specific proposals notwithstanding, this policy ultimately aims to point institutions in the right direction: achieving more welcoming and supportive campus communities, and lessening the occurrence and impact of biased incidents such as racial profiling.

These recommendations require varying levels of effort to implement. Some will demand additional funding, such as the development of a mental health services department or the restructuring of existing mental health services to operate as a first responder team. Some will require policy changes or program enhancements, such as training and awareness that will rely on leadership, coordination and nominal financial resources. Most, however, should not require increased funding. Instead, the recommendations are intended to take advantage of the college and university setting, drawing on the availability of faculty experts or relevant courses. Moreover, creative solutions and budget re-prioritization may go a longer

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way toward implementing the policies than increased funding. What this report strives to do by presenting the recommendations in this manner is outline options, reiterating that one size does not fit all; it does not fit all campus needs, institutional structures, or budgets and resources.

Importantly, ACLUM re-emphasizes that before enacting these recommendations, institutions should determine – in collaboration with their community members – what form campus public safety should take, and whether the maintenance of a police department, or the stationing of officers on their campus, is appropriate for their community. If an institution and its community decide to have police on campus, these recommendations offer a way forward for administrators to maximize a safe living and learning environment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This model policy is designed to help colleges and universities reduce incidents of biased policing, including racial profiling, on their campuses. It was developed over a period of two years in close collaboration with stakeholders, including students, administrators and police officers, at higher education institutions in Massachusetts. The policy proposes statements of principles and recommendations, coupled with guidance on best practices to implement each recommendation. It seeks to encourage institutions to determine, in conversation with community members, what circumstances warrant police presence, intervention and action.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

“College and University Support for Police Reform Initiatives.” Colleges and universities should structure their first responder services in a manner that enables the police to limit its resources to instances or risks of physical harm to another and operate in a manner that is directly responsive to the needs and expectations of the community.

1. **Establish a Community Mental Health and Support Services Department** to provide first responder services for calls about individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health or substance-use issues.
2. **Establish a Community Oversight Commission or Advisory Group** with the authority to solicit community input, review police records and data (e.g., concerning racial disparities), investigate issues and recommend changes to police policies and practices.

“Building Trust & Legitimacy.” College and university police departments should adopt policies and procedures that are designed specifically to eliminate instances — whether actual or perceived — of biased policing, including racial profiling, and to address the diverse and dynamic needs of their campus community.

3. **Adopt and publish a police mission statement** that establishes that the practices of the department will not impede community members’ physical, emotional

and psychological safety and that police services will be delivered in an anti-biased and equitable manner that takes into account the historical role of and tensions with policing in communities of color.

4. **Limit undue encounters and undue escalation** by requiring police to have and to articulate the specific bases for initiating encounters, by ensuring that all encounters are properly documented and regularly reviewed, by giving individuals stopped the information necessary to follow up after an encounter, and by using physical descriptors specific enough to identify an individual or particular group of individuals when communicating about people suspected of crimes.
 5. **Respond to “suspicious persons or activities” calls only when there is an objective, reasonable basis to believe that the deployment of police services is needed**, and develop protocols for dispatch (or their equivalent) on how to collect sufficient information from callers to ensure that officers engage with an individual based on objective information that can inform their assessment.
 6. **Develop a community engagement plan** sufficient to ensure that the police department can operate in a manner responsive to the community-identified needs, including by evaluating the department on community engagement goals and indicators, and that the community receives updates on and are invited to discuss the department’s work through live forums.
- “Training & Education.”* College and university police departments should provide regular and continuous training to department personnel on bias detection and inclusivity, designed to help such persons minimize and self-correct both perceived and actual biases.
7. **Ensure that officers receive continual training on topics that prepare them to navigate issues unique to the campus environment as well as to respect issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, mental health, disabilities** and other factors that may influence a person’s perception of, or reception to, police. Officers should be evaluated based on their implementation of this training.

“Transparency & Oversight.” College and university police departments should strive to keep the community informed about their actions, providing regular opportunities for review to ensure that policies and practices meet the expectations, norms and values of the community.

8. **Regularly disclose and analyze data** on officers’ encounters with community members in order to help the department and the community identify and address any racial or other disparities or the lack thereof.

9. **Develop and implement an interactive communications plan** that openly relays information about certain police activities in real time to the community; that ensures the department responds to concerns about specific practices, events or issues; and that provides a means for the community to review policies, practices, certain contracts and other pertinent subjects.

THIS DOCUMENT RENDERS NEITHER LEGAL ADVICE NOR LEGAL GUIDANCE.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY SUPPORT FOR POLICE REFORM INITIATIVES

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY SUPPORT FOR POLICE REFORM INITIATIVES

The university or college should commit to the following principles:

1. The purpose of the police department is, fundamentally, to ensure the physical safety of all community members equally and to respond where there exists a risk of violence or physical harm to members of the campus community; the engagement of police services should be limited to its purpose.
2. Colleges and universities should prioritize and protect the mental and emotional health of their students and other members of their community. The use of police officers to respond to mental and behavioral health crises and persons dealing with substance-use issues is generally inappropriate.

- a. Police are not mental health counselors, and despite best intentions, few police officers have the comprehensive training and skills needed to provide an ideal response to mental and behavioral health and substance-use related crises. Institutions should refrain from burdening the individual suffering the crisis with having to effectively communicate with, work with, and navigate help from an armed law enforcement officer.
 - b. Universities and colleges have obligations under the U.S. and Massachusetts Constitutions, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act, to take into account a person’s physical and mental disabilities when setting policy, when effecting arrests and during other police encounters. See, e.g., *Gray v. Cummings*, 917 F.3d 1 (1st Cir. 2019). This obligation extends to the police that the institution employs or whose services it contracts.
3. Due to officers’ unique role as first responders to violent or dangerous activity, the use of officers to arbitrate trivial disputes or disagreements over university resources (e.g. disputes over room reservations, noise complaints, lunchroom etiquette or annoying behavior) or to settle other non-violent disputes may be inappropriate. Those calls for service would be best handled by professionals specifically and specially trained to de-escalate and mediate the behavior in question.
 4. Universities and colleges should understand and continuously monitor how their police department interacts with students, faculty, staff and other members of the community through the collection and analysis of demographic and outcome data. They should also monitor how students, staff, faculty and other community members perceive the department.

RECOMMENDATION #1: COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AND SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Guiding Principle: To the greatest extent practicable, police should act only as protectors of physical safety; as a matter of policy, police should not be used as first responders to engage with individuals experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis or other non-violent issues where there is no reasonable basis to conclude that the individual poses a threat of harm to another person.

Best Practices:

1. The college or university's first responder services should include a community mental health and support services team of social workers (or their equivalent), clinicians, and other (non-law-enforcement) staff advisors. This team should operate independently of the police department.
2. The community mental health and support services team should have a dedicated, separate phone line and email account that community members may use to obtain mental health and support services.
 - Communications received through the dedicated phone line and email account should neither trigger police response nor result in a police report or after-incident involvement by the police department absent specific allegations involving a risk of physical harm to another person.
3. Absent a report of violence or of a non-speculative risk of physical harm to another person, calls for service involving mental or behavioral health or substance-use issues should be referred to and handled by officials in the community mental health and support services team.
4. Absent a report of violence or of a non-speculative risk of physical harm to another person, complaints about student-life activities (such as noise complaints) should be referred to and handled by officials in the community mental health and support services team.
5. Where there is a report of violence or of a non-speculative risk of physical harm to another person, and the person exhibiting the reported behaviors has known or suspected mental or behavioral health or substance-use issues, officials in the community mental health and support services team should respond in order to support and guide police officials at the scene.
6. When responding to calls and complaints alone, community mental health and support services officials should be empowered to call in police as backup when needed but retain control of the scene even after police arrive, unless and until police intervention is necessary. When called, officers should intervene only when necessary to prevent imminent, physical harm to another person or, within the officer's discretion, at the request

of the responding community mental health and support services official.

RECOMMENDATION #2: COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMISSIONS

Guiding Principle: While acknowledging their own expertise, experience and dedication to the equitable administration of its services, police departments should be accountable to, learn from, collaborate with, and respond to the needs of the constantly changing and diverse campus community.

NOTE: ACLUM understands and acknowledges varying opinions about the college or university administration's role in the daily operation of the police department. Some experts and scholars believe that administration should actively monitor and oversee the department's operation because a department should not be expected to police itself and should be held to account by a neutral, external party. But some experts and scholars believe that the department should act independently in order to alleviate the risks and appearance of police acting as a force of social control or to enforce certain standards of behavior. In recognition of these different views, we present two alternative best practices for implementing this policy recommendation. These approaches are not contradictory; both affirm the need for community input and a regular review of data for disparities with the aid of a third party. They differ as to who convenes the group, and what powers the group possesses to investigate allegations or patterns of misconduct. ACLUM recommends that universities and colleges implement Option 1. However, we recognize that, in addition to the aforementioned concerns, certain structural or contractual obligations may make Option 2 more feasible.

OPTION 1: OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Best Practices:

1. Police departments should not be independent of or operate separately from the university/college administration. Police departments exist to serve the campus community, and their effectiveness depends on the support and cooperation of that community.
2. Much as municipal officers are responsible to the town or city's governing structure, a college/university

administrator who directly reports to the president/chancellor (such as a vice-president of student affairs) should have the responsibility of acting as an external force of accountability for the police department and of monitoring its behavior.

3. Whichever administrator has charge of maintaining the external accountability of the department should establish a formal community oversight commission to assist the police department in developing crime prevention strategies and policies as well as identifying and addressing known or perceived policing issues.
4. The commission should develop a mechanism to solicit regular feedback from community members at large, such as surveys or town halls, about what their safety needs and concerns are, including concerns about fair and impartial policing (see Recommendation no. 4). This feedback should be used to inform policing priorities and to reform police policies or practices.
5. The commission should regularly and independently review the police department's data for issues of racial disparity in police encounters or actions, as well as received complaints (including the manner of their disposition) for common allegations or serious charges, including but not limited to racial bias or profiling. If any disparities or issues are found, the commission should conduct an investigation and develop solutions or recommendations, including revisions and/or modifications to existing policies or proposing new policies, for review by the department chief and administrator in charge of maintaining the external accountability of the department. Any findings and recommendations should be made publicly available and published on a website maintained by the department.
6. The commission should – at a minimum – include the chief of police, the university official in charge of maintaining the external accountability of the department, at least two students, two members of faculty with expertise in criminal justice or related topics, and two staff members. The university or college should consider adding a representative of civil rights organizations active on their campus. The commission should meet regularly, not less than twice each academic term.

OPTION 2: ADVISORY GROUP

Best Practices:

1. Police departments should not be independent of or operate separately from the university/college administration. Police departments exist to serve the campus community, and their effectiveness depends on the support and cooperation of that community.
2. Much like municipal officers are responsible to the town or city's governing structure, a college/university police department should report directly to the president/chancellor, or another administrator who directly reports to the president (such as a vice-president of student affairs). The president/chancellor or alternate administrator should have the responsibility of overseeing the police department.
3. A formal community advisory group should advise the police department. The group should assist the police department in developing crime prevention strategies and departmental policies, as well as providing input on known or perceived policing issues.
4. The advisory group should develop a mechanism to solicit regular feedback from community members at large, such as surveys or town halls, about what their safety needs and concerns are, including concerns about fair and impartial policing (see Recommendation no. 4). This feedback should be used to inform policing priorities and to reform policy or practices.
5. The advisory group should regularly review the police department's data for issues of racial disparity in police encounters or actions. If any disparities are noted or found, the advisory group should assist in the development of solutions or recommendations when appropriate.
6. The advisory group should include the chief of police and representatives from each segment of the university community, including students, faculty, staff and civil rights organizations. The advisory group should meet as regularly as possible, preferably

BUILDING TRUST AND LEGITIMACY

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING TRUST AND LEGITIMACY WITHIN THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY

The police department should commit to:

1. Understanding and continuously evaluating its impact on the community in order to eliminate racial and other biases – whether perceived or actual – and ensuring that the department is meeting the community’s needs and expectations.
2. Providing accountability and fostering integrity among officers in their dealings with colleagues and the college or university community in order to, in part, establish social trust with the community.
3. Being rooted in just and equitable practices and eliminating discrimination in policing.
 - a. Departments should adopt and enforce policies explicitly prohibiting racial profiling and discrimination based on an individual’s or community’s actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, national origin, socioeconomic background, immigration or citizenship status, and/or other immutable characteristic(s) or physical trait(s). Profiling may be explicit or evidenced by statistically significant data showing disparate treatment.
 - Any departmental activity undertaken for the purpose of investigating or deterring unlawful conduct, or for rendering aid, should be justified by a legitimate public safety objective, e.g., prevention of violence or physical harm.
 - No police action may be justified solely on the basis of a person’s or community’s actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, national origin, socioeconomic background, immigration or citizenship status, and/or other immutable characteristic(s). Rather, such characteristics may appear in a timely, reliable, and detailed physical

description of a person suspected to have committed a particular crime and may – in combination with other factors – inform an officer’s analysis of which individual(s) matches the detailed physical description obtained.

- b. Racial profiling has placed communities of color in fear of unjustified or harmful police actions. Even where such barriers to trust, legitimacy, and effective policing are not necessarily due to the actions or inactions of a particular college or university’s police department, that department must still work to overcome these barriers if they are to equitably serve all within their community.
4. Adapting their practices to best serve the broad range of races, genders, sexual orientations, languages, disabilities, life experiences, and cultural backgrounds present in the campus communities they serve.
 - This can be achieved, in part, through the activation of community-driven policing principles, such as student group meetings and soliciting regular feedback from community members through surveys, complaint procedures, or other processes.

RECOMMENDATION #3: MISSION OR VALUES STATEMENT(S)

Guiding Principle: The department should adopt a mission statement that commits its officers and department to providing services in a manner that does not impede community members’ physical, emotional, and psychological safety and establishes that services will be provided in an anti-biased and equitable manner.

Best Practices:

1. The mission or value statement should emphasize every officer’s responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner that prioritizes and does not impede the well-being of the students, staff, faculty and guests.
 - As the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has recognized, police officers occupy positions of special public trust. *Bos. Globe Media Partners, LLC v. Dep’t of Criminal Justice Info. Servs.*, 484 Mass. 279, 292 (2020). “By assuming their unique position of power

and authority in our communities, police officers must comport themselves in accordance with the laws that they are sworn to enforce and behave in a manner that brings honor and respect for rather than public distrust of law enforcement personnel.” Id. (quoting *Police Comm’r of Boston v. Civil Serv. Comm’n*, 22 Mass. App. Ct. 364, 371 (1986)). “In accepting employment by the public, they implicitly agree that they will not engage in conduct which calls into question their ability and fitness to perform their official responsibilities.” Id.

2. The mission or value statement should commit the department to providing anti-biased, high-quality service to every community member without reliance on an individual’s or community’s actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic background, national origin, immigration or citizenship status, and/or other personal characteristics non-determinative of criminal activity to justify or determine the appropriateness of the policing action.
3. At the beginning of each academic year, the department should review the mission statement.
4. Officers should be trained on or be encouraged to engage in conversations about how police encounters can affect individual community member’s emotional and psychological well-being, particularly those persons from communities of color and historically underrepresented and over-policed groups. Police services should be provided in a manner that recognizes this impact.
 - Officers and department personnel should seek to understand how the historical roots and evolution of policing in America (and particularly the history of violence against communities of color) has left many individuals in fear of, or with mistrust towards, police officials.
 - Officers should not try to overcome these tensions and mistrust through the use of force or oppressive tactics but through equitable policing practices, perseverance and patience. Racism is a public health issue that affects a person’s sense of well-being and safety within a community and may impact their interactions with certain authorities. Officers have an

obligation to account for a person’s mental health in their interactions/encounters and provide services accordingly.

5. The mission or value statement should balance officers’ role to protect people and conduct investigations with their role as community partners and public servants.
 - By recognizing the need to serve as community partners, departments are not choosing equity over effectiveness; rather, departments are choosing to achieve effectiveness through equity. Policing objectives are more easily obtained through collaboration with the community that can only be achieved through transparency and the trust created by the equitable administration of police services.

Examples:

- The mission of the [name of College or University] Police Department is to work collaboratively with the [name of College or University] community, to treat all whom we serve with equal courtesy, professionalism, dignity and respect while providing the highest quality of service. Our officers are guided by a commitment to (1) helping foster a safe, welcoming and supportive educational environment for all students, faculty, staff and visitors to the campus, (2) protecting public safety in a manner respectful of the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of all whom we serve and that acknowledges the historically rooted tensions between police forces and communities of color, and (3) provide quality service to all.

RECOMMENDATION #4: FAIR AND IMPARTIAL POLICING

Guiding Principle: Law enforcement agencies cannot form productive relationships with the communities they serve if community members do not believe that the agency is working fairly and equitably to protect their civil rights and civil liberties.

Best Practices:

(A) Consensual Encounters

1. Before an officer initiates an encounter with an individual, the officer should consider the following:

- a. Setting aside the individual’s physical appearance, what specific behavior(s) is the individual exhibiting that rouse my suspicion?
 - b. Do those behaviors make me believe that this person poses a risk of violence or physical harm?
 - c. Who, specifically, would be physically harmed by this behavior? How?
 - d. Are other individuals in the immediate vicinity exhibiting those same behaviors such that the behaviors are indicative not of crime but of a shared activity, e.g., dancing, or of a community norm?
2. In almost all circumstances, an officer should not initiate an encounter with an individual or group when the hunch or suspicion is based upon that individual’s or group’s actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic background, national origin, immigration or citizenship status, and/or other immutable characteristic(s) or physical trait(s).
 - a. When evaluating whether to engage with an individual, officers should be wary of the impression that a person seems “out of place,” “sketchy,” “off,” or as if they “do not belong.” Reflexive judgments such as these are often influenced by implicit views about race, and do not refer to an individual’s behavior. As such, these judgments alone should not determine whether an officer initiates an encounter.
 3. In a consensual stop where reasonable suspicion does not exist, officers should inform the engaged-with individual(s) that the encounter is strictly consensual and that they are free to leave at any time.
- (B) Probable Cause or Reasonable Suspicion**
4. As required by law, enforcement actions (such as detentions, traffic and other stops, arrests, searches and seizures, etc.) should be based on reasonable suspicion or probable cause as supported by articulable facts, circumstances, and conclusions, and based upon an individual’s behaviors.
 5. Police officers may take into account reported race or ethnicity only when based on credible, reliable, locally relevant, temporally specific information that links a person of specific description to a particular criminal incident or incidents and is combined with other identifying information. Absent such information, race or ethnicity is never a relevant factor in determining whether there is probable cause or reasonable suspicion that a crime has been or is being committed.
 6. Suspect descriptions, especially (but not exclusively) when broadcast to the campus community, should contain specific, physical descriptions of a person suspected of a crime where relevant “Black,” “African American,” “Hispanic,” and other racial or ethnic classifications are non-descriptive, generic terms applied to a wide array of skin tones and identities; these terms do not describe a person’s physical characteristics. Note: This best practice is not intended to negate the need for officers to record the perceived and actual race of seized individuals in police documents.
 - a. When creating suspect descriptions, departments should consider whether the description could be used to isolate a specific individual or a small group of distinguishable individuals.
 - b. For example, police departments should not broadcast or use non-descript suspect descriptions such as “Black male in a white t-shirt.” Those types of descriptions do not contain enough information to be helpful in identifying an individual, and they also have the adverse effect of casting suspicion on an entire group as almost any group member may fit generalized descriptions. To the extent possible, descriptions such as “male with light/dark brown skin tones” should be favored over “Black male.”
 - c. Outdated and/or offensive racial terminology should never be used in a suspect description. Departments should consult their college and university’s office of diversity and/or student affairs.
 - d. If a caller uses (or an incident is otherwise reported using) one or more of these generic terms to describe a person, further details, such as complexion or the

caller's reason for ascribing the person that particular race, should be sought. Dispatchers, or the person taking the description, should consider asking the reporter/caller questions like "I heard you describe the individual as 'Hispanic,' could you explain why you think the individual is Hispanic?" or "I understand that you believe the individual was Middle Eastern, could you tell me why? What specifically did the individual look like?"

(C) Police Encounters

7. Whenever possible, officers should prioritize de-escalating a situation and ensuring individual's emotional and physical safety. This could mean using effective communication techniques to establish a rapport with individuals, like asking questions and providing answers to questions when posed.

8. When initiating an encounter, officers should identify themselves, whenever possible, by their name and rank. When concluding the encounter, officers should, whenever feasible, provide that information in writing to individuals they have stopped, along with an incident number and the reason for the stop.

- For example, law enforcement officers could carry business cards containing their name and rank and appropriate contact information. This would allow individuals to offer suggestions or commendations, or to file complaints with the appropriate individual, office or board. These cards would be easily distributed in all encounters.

9. If it is safe to do so, officers should, during an encounter, tell the individual in question why they are being stopped and/or searched.

10. Officers should not react negatively to questions regarding the legitimacy of a stop or interaction. If an individual expresses nonviolent discontent or dissatisfaction, officers should not attempt to quash that expression through shows of force. Officers should be polite and courteous above all, and should de-escalate situations peacefully and respectfully.

11. The use of force – including frisks, searches, and arrests – is never justified by an individual's engagement

in protected speech, including speech perceived as disrespectful, discourteous or provocative. Use of force is only appropriate where necessary to (i) effect the lawful arrest of a person; (ii) prevent a person's escape from lawful custody; or (iii) prevent imminent physical harm to a person.

12. Similarly, the show of force is not justified by an individual's engagement in protected speech and is appropriate only where necessary to (i) effect the lawful arrest of a person; (ii) prevent a person's escape from lawful custody; (iii) prevent imminent physical harm to a person; or (iv) proportionately respond to or deter a credible risk of violence assessed without regard to the race of those engaging in protected speech.

(D) Post-Encounter Reports

13. Following every officer enforcement action or encounter – including consent encounters, stops and searches – the officer should appropriately document the incident, clearly identifying the basis for the action including the specific articulable facts and circumstances providing reasonable suspicion or probable cause or supporting the officer's hunch. Such documentation should notate the perceived and actual race and sex of the individual, the location of the interaction, whether any search was conducted, and whether any contraband was recovered as a result of the search.

- Note: Most public colleges and universities have created systems by which to record traffic stop data. Any record of other police-community interactions can build on these systems and gather the same or similar information as what is or was collected during traffic stops.

14. The police department should regularly (ideally, once per semester) conduct a review of each officer's encounter documentation to ensure compliance with the prohibition on racial profiling (which has been defined to include a statistically-significant showing of disparate treatment as evidenced by relevant data) and reporting requirements. Those findings, together with the raw data, should be reported to the community oversight commission (or advisory group) and college/university administration officials.

15. At least annually, the police department should review and analyze the entire department's encounter documentation to look for any racial disparities. Those findings, together with the raw data, should be made public and reported to the community oversight commission (or advisory group) and college/university administration officials.

RECOMMENDATION #5: "SUSPICIOUS" ACTIVITY OR PERSON CALLS

Guiding Principle: Police services should be limited to responding to instances or risks of physical harm to another person; police should thus respond to calls about suspicious persons or activities only if the reported activity aligns with this purpose.

Best Practices:

(A) Informing the community when to contact police

1. Departments should provide guidance (including examples) on their website and in other prominent places about when individuals should contact the police and when they should contact other first responder services, such as the community mental health and support services department.

- Departments should strive to communicate this policy (in-person or via written material) during every first interaction between the university or college and its students, faculty or staff (e.g., new student or staff orientation).
- Community members should have the information necessary to not only access emergency services but also understand what type of response they may expect. To the extent possible, departments should inform the community about what actions the department will take to resolve the issue, including practices employed when an individual poses a threat to the safety of themselves or others. Any policy should also include information about what students can expect when police receive reports of an off-campus incident involving a student or other community member.

2. Departments should provide clear guidance as to what behaviors or activities are considered "suspicious" (or indicators of a risk of physical harm to another) and thus warrant police intervention.

Example: "What is Suspicious Behavior?"

The police department receives numerous complaints about suspicious activity. Sometimes, callers are unable to identify what is suspicious about a person. Without more, it is our general policy not to respond to such calls because often the person about whom a concern is filed is perhaps walking late at night alone on campus and is here for legitimate purposes like visiting a friend or attending an event.

However, there are specific actions someone might be taking that could be an indicator that the person is about to commit a crime or harm another person. If you see something like the behaviors listed below, please call the college/university police:

- Anyone attempting to pry windows or randomly trying doors to see if they are locked
- Unusual noises like screaming, yelling, gunshots or glass breaking
- Leaving packages, bags or other items behind

(B) Dispatchers (or their equivalent)

3. Dispatchers must gather sufficient information from callers to ensure that police response, if warranted, is based on reports of an individual's behavior, rather than their appearance.
- It is important that dispatchers be trained to, and know how to, question callers in order to obtain detailed information about the suspected crime witnessed as well as about descriptions of individual(s) suspected of being connected.
 - For example, as part of an investigation into an incident in which police were called on a Black student, dispatchers reportedly informed investigators that they understood that they were not meant to "ask 'what's suspicious' or 'grill' a caller on 'particulars'" for fear that the caller would feel "uncomfortable" or "offended." This mentality places the burden of proof on the targeted individual, who should enjoy a presumption of innocence and the free exercise of their liberty without undue interference. The better practice is to ensure dispatchers are gathering accurate and

detailed information that limits the likelihood of police encounters with people of color who are inaccurately described as suspicious. As provided below, there should be protocols dictating the level of inquiry expected of dispatchers in “suspicious person” or “suspicious activity” calls.

4. Dispatch procedures should include the following steps:

- Use a recorded line, if available, so that the information gathered can be accessed at a later time, if needed.
- Whenever possible, calls or reports about non-violent activities (or activities for which there is no reasonable basis to believe the activity poses a threat to the physical safety of another person) should be forwarded to or responded by other applicable university departments, such as residence life, community standards, or community mental health and support services.
- Obtain the location of suspicious activity. Determine whether the location is in a building or area that is closed, locked, after hours, or otherwise not intended to be occupied. Such a determination may aid in the assessment of whether the activity reported is suspicious and whether an officer response is warranted.
 - For example, a report of a person sleeping at a library desk during the library’s open hours is not in and of itself suspicious; nor is a report of a person innocuously eating lunch in a dormitory that requires ID access.
- Determine from the caller the specific behaviors that are considered suspicious. Dispatchers should ask questions designed to elicit information about whether the caller believes that the individual poses a risk of physical harm to another person and, if so, why. Gathering sufficient details will also help aid the officer’s independent assessment of a situation when responding.
 - Without more, the caller’s judgment, or their labeling of a person or unspecified behavior as “suspicious,” is insufficient justification for dispatching an officer to a scene.
 - Use of phrases such as “out of place,” “looks sketchy,” “seems off,” or “does not belong” may involve

judgments that are influenced by the caller’s explicit or implicit views about race. These kinds of phrases do not, by themselves, indicate that the person in question, or their behavior, is actually suspicious.

- Obtain a full description of the involved parties, including apparent gender; height; weight; clothing; physical characteristics, such as skin tone or complexion; and description of features.
 - If a caller describes an individual as “Black,” “Hispanic,” “Latino,” or other generic racial terms, dispatch should ask follow-up questions such as “Could you describe the individual’s skin complexion?” The response to such questions should not factor into the assessment of whether police response is warranted.
- Once sufficient details are collected from the caller, the following responses are recommended:
 - If the behavior is threatening or violent to others, notify officers immediately.
 - If the behavior is not threatening or violent to others, ask the caller to explain why the activity appears to be suspicious. If warranted, report the behavior to the community mental health and support services team.
 - If, after further questioning, the caller offers no information that provides an objective, reasonable basis to believe that a crime has been or is being committed and the dispatcher believes – based on the objective information – that there is no risk of harm to others, and thus no immediate need for a law enforcement presence or inquiry into the situation, the caller will: (1) be advised to call later if something else occurs; (2) be provided with examples of scenarios that constitute suspicious behavior; (3) be informed that a shift supervisor will be in contact at the first opportunity. If however, the caller insists that a police presence is needed after being provided this additional information, officers should be notified. In any case, the shift supervisor should be immediately informed of this interaction and outcome and be expected to participate in the decision-making.★★

- Dispatchers should also enter the call into the dispatch log, with all known and relevant information, to be subsequently updated with the officer's response and findings. In all situations, dispatch should attempt to obtain the caller's name and callback number for follow up by officers or other officials.

****NOTE:** Police departments should consider the circumstances under which a legal obligation to respond to calls or tips of suspicious activity may arise. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) recently reaffirmed that the special relationship between a university/college and its resident students may, in certain circumstances, create a legal duty to protect students from the criminal acts of third parties. *Helfman v. Ne. Univ.*, 485 Mass. 308, 316 (2020) (quoting *Mullins v. Pine Manor College*, 389 Mass. 47, 52-53 (1983)) (university's duty to protect their resident students is "grounded both on the 'reasonable expectation, fostered in part by colleges themselves, that reasonable care will be exercised to protect resident students from foreseeable harm' and the observation that universities 'generally undertake voluntarily to provide their students with protection from the criminal acts of third parties' ").

While this document renders neither legal advice nor legal guidance, ACLUM notes that in delineating the scope of this duty to protect, the SJC wrote that the "foremost" consideration "is whether a [college/university] reasonably could foresee that [it] would be expected to take affirmative action to protect the [student] and could anticipate harm to the [student] from the failure to do so." *Helfman*, 485 Mass. at 319 (quoting *Irwin v. Ware*, 392 Mass. 745, 756 (1984)). "[T]his duty hinges on foreseeability." *Nguyen v. Massachusetts Inst. of Tech.*, 479 Mass. 436, 455 (2018); see also *Helfman*, 485 Mass. at 321 (quoting *Mullins*, 389 Mass. at 56) ("A university's duty to protect its students extends only to those harms which, based on 'an examination of all the circumstances', were reasonably foreseeable at the time."). The Court further wrote, analyzing the duty in the context of a danger created (at least in part) by students' alcohol consumption, "This duty is limited in several important respects. It applies only when a university is already aware that a student is at imminent risk of harm. ... Equipped with such knowledge, a college or university merely must act reasonably under the circumstances.

In some cases ..., a reasonable response will include doing little or nothing at all, while in others, calling for medical or other forms of assistance might be warranted." *Helfman*, 485 Mass. at 321. This document was drafted with consideration of these legal obligations, see *Nguyen*, 479 Mass. at 456 ("[r]easonable measures by the university to satisfy a triggered duty will include initiating its ... protocol"), but ACLUM cannot represent that following this recommendation will be sufficient to satisfy the duty.

Departments should note, however, that liability for initiating encounters based on an individual's race, ethnicity, national origin, or other protected characteristics is clearly established. See, e.g., *Commonwealth v. Long*, 485 Mass. 711, 717 (2020).

(C) Officers

5. When responding to calls about "suspicious" persons or activities, officers should:

- Ensure that all the information needed to be able to investigate the matter appropriately has been obtained (e.g., full descriptions, vehicle involved, and what behavior is creating concern). Request additional information as necessary.
- Exercise independent judgment and investigate whether the caller's understanding of the situation was accurate. Officers should consider the following when determining whether a response is appropriate:
 - Does the person match the specific and individualized description given by the caller?
 - Does the person appear to be creating a safety hazard, exhibiting violent behavior, or carrying a weapon? Would engagement be reasonable under the circumstances and based upon the officer's own observations?
 - Is the person exhibiting suspicious behavior?
 - Is the person authorized to be in that space at that time?
- If the caller does not or did not indicate that violent behavior or a weapon is involved and after careful observation and consideration of the situation, the

supervisor or officer, depending on department policy, may choose not to engage. Officers should consult a shift supervisor as necessary or report the decision to the shift supervisor as required by department policy.

- If any aspect of the encounter suggests to the officer the possibility that the individual was reported due to race, ethnicity, religion or other status (even if the caller did not reference race or other status), the officer should notify their appropriate supervisor(s) to determine appropriate next steps. Next steps may include, for example, notifying the college or university's senior administration, or re-evaluating dispatch protocols.

RECOMMENDATION #6 PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Guiding Principle: To emphasize its role as community partners and public servants, officers should seek to learn from community members and thereby be responsive to their policing needs and preferences. Officers should not impose upon communities, but rather work with them to help the university or college foster a safe and supportive learning environment.

Best Practices:

1. Departments should make community engagement a core element of their operational philosophy. This means that the department must establish an expectation that all staff behave in a manner, and engage in activities, that support community engagement.
 - Operational philosophy is defined as “the basic fundamental beliefs, concepts and principles that, when operationalized, guide staff behavior and organizational performance.”
 - The ‘goal’ of community engagement is to create a sense of trust between officers and community members. However, departments should be mindful that the best way to build trust is for departments to operate in a nonbiased manner.
2. Community engagement should be carried out across every segment of the college or university community, including people of diverse faiths, races, ethnicities, cultural identities, national origins, gender identities or expressions, sexual orientations, disabilities, and socio-economic backgrounds. Departments should brainstorm and work with the college and university’s office of diversity and/or student affairs to address any barriers to community engagement.
3. Departments should make available police interaction surveys on their website (or notify the community via a posting in a prominent place) and in other prominent places that allow the public to provide feedback on interactions. Such surveys should be regularly reviewed and findings addressed with identified officers.
 - The surveys should allow the submitting individual to elect whether they want to receive information about the resolution or outcome of their survey and, where elected, such outcome information should be promptly provided to the individual by the department.
4. Departments should set measurable goals and performance indicators for community engagement and track the outcome.
 - All officers’ performance should be evaluated in part based on their efforts to engage community members, the partnerships the officer builds, and student evaluations/complaints/commendations.
 - All officer job descriptions should establish an expectation that they carry out racially just practices and adhere to policies such as those herein. The descriptions should convey that officers would be evaluated based on their adherence to these policies and practices.
 - Departments should conduct surveys with the community at the end of each academic year that focus on the department’s community engagement and outcome goals. Recording outcomes allows a department to assess what is and is not working in its engagement model. Departments should consider using student groups and other community organizations to distribute and collect the surveys.
5. Department personnel should have, as a command-level position, a community engagement officer or specialized community engagement team. Their responsibilities should include engaging with members of the community to explore and create new program

opportunities and awareness campaigns and being a direct, dedicated liaison to the community.

- The goal of this position or team is to learn the policing needs of the diverse range of campus community members in order to ensure that the operation of the police department is responsive to (and not averse to) those needs.
- Those filling this/these positions should have a demonstrated commitment to and expertise (as opposed to general or broad support of values) in serving members of diverse groups.
- Officers in this role should be clear that they are not acting as a surveillance or intelligence gathering unit to aid in the prosecution or investigation of a community, group or specific persons. Any intelligence gathering done by these officers should focus on learning the needs of a community or group in order to aid the operations or performance of the department in responding to those needs. Community members should be able to trust that these officers' only motive is improving relationships between the community and the department, thereby improving quality of life at the campus.
- The goals of community engagement should be clearly communicated and prioritize transparency. This means announcing to the community the creation of any program or designation of an officer for the purposes of community engagement.

NOTE: Officers should strive to positively engage with the community as members themselves of that community; however, the presence of a uniformed officer will not be appropriate or wanted at every event. In those situations, the officer's uniform will act as a barrier to positive engagement, and students may choose not to invite officers into those spaces as a result. Such exclusion decreases the effectiveness of policing, and departments should assess whether the community engagement officer should be a non-sworn position. This is not to imply that officers should be ashamed of wearing the badge or uniform, but it is to say that the needs of the community should be placed in front of that pride. And due to the historic role of and tensions with policing in communities of color,

departments should not expect that community members can or will set aside their fears and mistrust.

6. Community engagement works best when officers maintain their professional relationship with students and do not operate as, or refer to themselves as, "friends" or "best friends." Such labeling can be seen as minimizing or ignoring the historic problems with policing in communities of color. Examples of positive engagements include:
 - Allowing students to join in opportunities offered by the police, including, problem-solving teams, community action teams and trainings.
 - Inviting all student groups to meet with the department, including the chief, at the beginning of each academic year in order to foster a positive relationship with students and set the tone for future collaboration.
 - Departments should try to meet with student groups, including affinity groups, as frequently as possible and as needed in order to maintain open lines of communication and to remain responsive to any known concerns.
 - Hosting talkback sessions, either independently or in conjunction with a student organization, throughout the year that allow community members to voice concerns and for the department to provide answers or promise follow-up to those concerns.
 - Departments should strive not to take a defensive posture during these meetings but rather be receptive to criticism and input, ensuring that community members are heard and respected.
 - Departments should have the capacity to engage in conversations about hard topics, with respect for others and without judgment. This is important not only for building an inclusive community but for enabling the department to learn from its community and to fulfill its mission statement and the mission of the university or college.
 - The chief of police holding regular community lectures and updates, which could include spotlights on the work of individual officers.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE ON TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The police department should commit to regularly and continuously training officers, and department personnel who regularly interact with students, on bias detection and inclusivity in order to ensure their practices reflect the expectations and generational and cultural norms of all students. To maximize the effectiveness of training, officers should engage in regular training in addition to the minimum state requirements.

RECOMMENDATION #7 REGULAR, CONTINUOUS AND RELEVANT TRAINING

Guiding Principle: Officers should receive regular training on topics that prepare them to navigate and respect issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, mental health, disabilities, and other factors that may influence a person's perception of, or reception to, police.

Best Practices:

1. All officers – and department personnel regularly interacting with students – should receive on-boarding and training consistent with state requirements for certification.
2. All officers and relevant personnel should receive in-depth training each academic year and continuous training throughout the year that, at a minimum, is designed to detect and eliminate group-based bias(es) and promote understanding of, and responsiveness towards, identities and cultures. This in-depth training should be in addition to the state required minimum training for these specific topics.
 - a. Departments should ensure that officers receive training on the following: bias awareness, community problem-solving, procedural justice, de-escalation and situational decision-making, language & cultural competency, managing mental health crisis, intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and substance use disorder (SUD).
 - b. Because offensive or harsh language can escalate a minor situation, departments should underscore the importance of language used, train on what is and how to use inclusive and respectful language, and adopt policies directing officers to use inclusive and respectful language, including language respectful of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals.
3. Key lessons from trainings should be reinforced through performance evaluations.
4. Departments should, to the extent possible and practicable, frequently evaluate the effectiveness of training programs in order to help ensure that the training is achieving its goals. Departments should also, where possible, work with academics at their institution who have relevant experience to conduct the evaluation.
5. Where appropriate, members of the community should be allowed to attend and observe officer training sessions. Departments should consider inviting community members, including students, to speak during trainings on a voluntary basis and based on the expressed desires of the students or community.

TRANSPARENCY AND OVERSIGHT

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES ON TRANSPARENCY AND OVERSIGHT

The police department should commit to transparency, e.g. providing the public access to departmental policies, collecting and publishing encounter data, and responding to demands for a response regarding specific instances, which promotes accountability and trust.

RECOMMENDATION #8 ANALYZING AND DISCLOSING ENCOUNTER DATA

Guiding Principle: Without regular assessment of its encounter and arrest data, a department cannot know (and community members cannot be confident) that it is engaged in fair and impartial policing.

NOTE: This recommendation (#8) suggests that departments – in a manner designed to alleviate fears about or help identify racial bias in their policing and responses – aggregate, widely publish, and regularly and consistently update data on its encounters with community members. This recommendation also notes that the data should be anonymized to the extent necessary to protect student privacy. However, universities should be aware that such disclosures could be challenged on privacy grounds based on the fact that campus communities can be small and thus persons more easily identifiable based on the level of specificity in the data. But see *Student Press Law Ctr. v. Alexander*, 778 F. Supp. 1227, 1234 (D.D.C. 1991) (enjoining government from restricting university’s ability to release students’ personally identifiable information in law enforcement records under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g). Accordingly, this recommendation attempts to respect a student’s right to privacy, which is an important but not absolute right that must be balanced against the university’s legitimate interests. See *Bratt v. Int’l Bus. Machs. Corp.*, 467 N.E.2d 126, 133–34 (Mass. 1984) (holding that, under Massachusetts General Privacy Law, G.L. c. 214, § 1B, disclosure of private facts about an individual is proscribed under Massachusetts law only where “there exists no legitimate, countervailing interest”).

Best Practices:

1. As stated under recommendation #4, following every enforcement action or encounter – including consent encounters, stops and searches – officers should appropriately document the incident, clearly identifying the basis for the action, including the specific articulable facts and circumstances providing reasonable suspicion or probable cause or supporting the officer’s hunch. Such documentation should notate the perceived and actual race and sex of the individual, the location of the

interaction, whether any search was conducted, and whether any contraband was recovered as a result of the search.

2. Using this documentation, departments should analyze and publish on its website demographic data on all consent encounters, stops and uses of force. If the department does not have a website, it should notify the community – via a posting on a public-facing space normally reserved for communicating news – of the availability of the data.
3. At a minimum, such data should include the following information:
 - a. General (anonymized) description of and reason for encounter
 - b. Month and year of the encounter
 - c. Perceived and actual race, age, and gender of the individual
 - d. Badge number of officer(s) involved
 - e. Outcome (including whether the person was frisked, whether a consensual or non-consensual search was conducted and the result thereof, and whether the incident resulted in an arrest, issuance of a citation or warning).
4. Departments should develop a schedule for regularly publishing and updating data. Any plan should account for the department’s record keeping system and staffing.
5. All releases should be limited for privacy. Because this information would be subject to the Public Records Law (G.L. c. 66, § 10), departments should refer to G.L. c. 26, § 7, which governs exemptions to the law, for guidance.
 - This recommendation is not intended to apply to any interactions between community members and community mental health services department officials, or to responses to mental health or substance-use-related incidents.

RECOMMENDATION #9 OPEN COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

Guiding Principle: Police departments are accountable to their communities; accordingly, it is important that community members remain informed about and confident in the operations of the department.

Best Practices:

1. Departments should report, and make available to the community, census data regarding the composition of the department, including officers' race, ethnicity and gender.
2. Departments should publish a public communication schedule that establishes (1) guidelines about how and in what situations the department will communicate about incidents and (2) a general timeline detailing the process and timing for sharing public information following critical incidents.
 - Such a schedule should include a plan to communicate swiftly, openly and neutrally (respecting areas where the law requires confidentiality) the occurrence of serious incidents, including those involving alleged police misconduct, with community members.
 - Departments should strive to inform community members – immediately and in real time – about any incident that results in three or more officers present at a scene and about the presence of outside law enforcement agencies.
3. Departments should make their procedures and policies easily accessible and available on their website, including racially just policing policies, discipline procedures and policies, and use of force policies and reporting procedures. (If the department does not have a website, it should notify the community – via a posting in a public-facing space normally reserved for communicating news—of the right to request these policies.)
4. Departments should post on their website all policies or agreements – including memoranda of understanding (MOUs – governing or describing any information sharing between the department and any outside law enforcement agencies, including local fusion centers or personnel. (If the department does not have a website, it should notify the community – via a posting in a public-facing space normally reserved for communicating news – of the right to request these policies.)
5. Departments should not acquire or use remote biometric surveillance technology. However, if and when police determine that the need for such technology outweighs its myriad privacy and racial justice concerns, departments should inform the community prior to any permanent acquisition of the technology, and allow community members at least one month to provide input about this proposed acquisition which should include an opportunity for a hearing or other forms of community input. The procedure and timing for notification and community input can be relaxed in the event emergency circumstances. The decision whether to acquire any new technology should take into account this community input.
 - When informing the community, departments should provide information about how the technology works, who will use it, in what circumstances it will be used, as well as information about who will have access to the data it produces, under what circumstances, and for what purposes.
 - Community members should be informed that their submitted comments are subject to the Public Records Law and will also be anonymized and made public together with the institution's response.
 - Departments should post the information about the technology and the comment period on their website, through a social media post with a link to the relevant information, and by a notice posted at an easily-accessible location.
6. Departments should inform the community about its use of any technology that has the ability to invade personal privacy. They should do so through a posting on their website and a notice posted at an easily accessible location.
7. To help build community trust, departments should publish case studies (or “sentinel event reviews”) on their websites when a large or controversial policing

incident occurs on campus. See Nancy Ritter, *Testing a Concept and Beyond: Can the Criminal Justice System Adopt a Nonblaming Practice?*, National Institute of Justice (Dec. 1, 2015). The goal of the case studies is to provide answers to the community in instances where (1) perceived injustices occurred that were (2) either publicly acknowledged, discussed, or otherwise known, and (3) where community members are demanding or have demanded accountability.

- Published case studies should identify (a) the incident, (b) the investigation process, (c) the response, and (d) lessons learned from the incident, including any changes to department policies and procedures that resulted from the incident or an explanation for the lack thereof. They should not contain the name(s) of any involved student(s).
- Case studies should be redacted for privacy and be anonymized, including by eliminating any identifying characteristics. To the extent possible, or as required by the level of specificity contained in any report, the concerned individual should be made aware of the publication prior to its posting.
- Incidents involving sexual assault, mental health incidences such as suicide, overdose incidents or other highly sensitive incidents may not be appropriate for a case study. In incidents involving highly sensitive issues where public accountability is demanded, departments should inform the community about what policy changes have been enacted to address or prevent further issues of the same kind.
- Notwithstanding student names and other personally identifiable information that must be omitted, the type of information to be included in any such case study will depend upon the circumstances and facts of the police encounter and public response/demands. However, if an encounter has resulted in criminal charges, publishing information about the encounter may not be appropriate. In addition to consulting the involved parties and weighing the interests of transparency against the privacy rights of students, departments should consult their legal counsel prior to the publication of any case study.

- NOTE: Community members usually know when instances of perceived or actual racial profiling or other biased policing incidents occur. Choosing not to address a public incident delegitimizes a department and fosters mistrust among community members. While we recognize the student privacy interests at issue here, we also recognize that, on balance, the public interests in disclosure and transparency in policing may outweigh the privacy concerns. See *Globe Newspaper Co. v. Police Com'r of Bos.*, 419 Mass. 852, 858 (1995) (quoting *Attorney General v. Collector of Lynn*, 377 Mass. 151, 158 (1979)) (“[t]he public has an interest in knowing whether public servants are carrying out their duties in an efficient and law-abiding manner”).

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CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

The Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute Practitioner Handbook is being released September 2021 as institutions across the United States return to a more fully on-campus presence subsequent to COVID-19 and its impacts. While our institutions will be addressing and healing from the collective trauma we have experienced during the pandemic, Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous and other communities of color suffered disproportionate levels of economic stress, disease and death (Cole, Leak, & Martinez, 2021; Fortuna, Toulou-Shams, Robles-Ramamurthy, Porche, 2020). In addition, racially minoritized students have also had to “navigate systemic racism and its daily reminders, through the flood of imagery via news and social media depicting Black bodies in pain. Living in an unequal society as a target population takes an emotional toll” (Landertinger, Greene, Cooper, Hopson, 2021, pp. 156-157). Centralizing racial equity and justice in all that we do in higher education has never been more important than it is at this time.

Since the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Abernathy, Rayshard Brooks and George Floyd in the spring and summer of 2020, the realities of racism in higher education are being more fully acknowledged. A recent report examining the actions taken by campuses since these deaths found that a range of institutions have intensified their examination of campus policies, practices and pedagogies and have begun to redress the ways in which systemic racism informs their work (Wesley, Dunlap, Russell, 2021).

However, not surprisingly this same research notes that barriers to anti-racism and educational racial equity work remain with many still questioning the need to prioritize racial equity and justice (Wesley, Dunlap, Russell, 2021). We are mindful that higher education has a long history of exclusion, segregation and stigmatization of racially minoritized students and that the needed transformation will not be fast or easy (Cabrera, 2020).

Creating campuses that are racially equitable and just will require concerted and “audacious” effort to redress racism (Salomon-Fernández, 2020, p. 32). In whatever roles we play at our institutions, honesty, courage, personal growth and change, shared leadership, and accountability are needed to dismantle structures and policies steeped in universalism and whiteness (Kezar, Holcombe, Vigil, Dizon, 2021). Dr. Renée White writes, “anti-racism is a verb. It requires continuous action. It is the antithesis of complacency” (2020, p. 8).

Member campuses offer *The Leading for Change Racial Equity and Justice Institute Practitioner Handbook* as a contribution to the growing scholarship focused on racially equitable practices in higher education. After engaging in equity-minded inquiry, we encourage you to adapt any practice in this handbook to what will meet the needs of your campus. We also invite you to reach out if you would like to explore the possibility of your campus joining the REJI. Finally, we hope you contact us and to share about the racial equity work occurring on your campus so that we can learn from your efforts as well.

It is clear that the work for racial equity and justice in academia is necessary. The question remains as to whether higher education will meet this moment by examining and transforming our policies, practices and pedagogies to ensure that racially minoritized students can at long last be supported in the fullness of their humanity at our institutions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE REJI PRACTITIONER HANDBOOK OR TO DISCUSS INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP IN THE RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE CONTACT:

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CHARTS & GRAPHS IN TABLE FORMAT

[CCCC Fall '12 to Fall '13 Retention Rates by Subgroups](#)

CCCC Fall '12 to Fall '13 Retention Rates by Subgroups	
All Students	47.0%
New Students	44.3%
Minority	49.5%
Non-Minority	48.2%
Women	48.9%
Men	43.8%

[Fall to Fall Retention for Degree-Seeking Students](#)

Fall to Fall Retention for Degree-Seeking Students								
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Minority	53.7	51.9	52.2	51.4	51.9	54.8	52.7	51.2
Non-Minority	50.4	50.9	50.7	50.7	51.7	53.3	48.2	53.6

[Successful Course Completion \(grades of C and above\) Rate for All Students for Fall Semester](#)

Successful Course Completion (grade of C and above) Rate for ALL STUDENTS for Fall Semester									
Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
68.8	71.6	73.2	73.4	74.1	73.5	71.9	72.3	73	71.8

[Successful Course Completion \(grades of C and above\) Rate for All Students by Ethnicity for Fall Semester](#)

Successful Course Completion (grade of C and above) Rate for ALL STUDENTS by ETHNICITY for Fall Semester										
	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Hispanic or Latino	63.3	67.5	69.2	69.5	70.6	68.1	67.4	68.5	69.7	67.7
Not Hispanic or Latino	71	73.4	75.2	75.6	76.1	76.8	74.7	74.7	75.6	74.5

[Successful Course Completion \(grades of C and above\) Rate for NEW Students by Ethnicity for Fall Semester](#)

Successful Course Completion (grade of C and above) Rate for NEW STUDENTS by ETHNICITY for Fall Semester										
	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Hispanic or Latino	58.2	65.5	65	69	64.3	62	60.8	62.5	64.8	58.3
Not Hispanic or Latino	64.3	66.6	70.1	66.7	69	72.6	70.6	67.4	67.3	65.2

Successful Course Completion (grades of C and above) Rate for All Students by Ethnicity/Gender for Fall Semester

Successful Course Completion (grade of C and above) Rate for ALL STUDENTS by ETHNICITY and GENDER for Fall Semester										
	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Hispanic or Latino FEMALE	65.3	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	71.9	NR
Not Hispanic or Latino FEMALE	75.1	76.8	78.4	79.8	79.1	79.7	78.4	78.5	80.9	78.9
Hispanic or Latino MALE	59.7	64.3	64.4	64.2	65.7	62.3	59.4	60.9	62.7	58.2
Not Hispanic or Latino MALE	65.3	NR	NR	NR	NR	71.5	70	70.2	NR	69.6

Successful Course Completion (grades of C and above) Rate for New Students by Ethnicity/Gender for Fall Semester

Successful Course Completion (grade of C and above) Rate for NEW STUDENTS by ETHNICITY and GENDER for Fall Semester										
	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Hispanic or Latino FEMALE	NR	NR	NR	72.9	NR	NR	68.5	67.6	70.4	66.9
Not Hispanic or Latino FEMALE	68.2	70.9	73.8	72.5	72.3	75.7	78.6	72.6	74.3	72
Hispanic or Latino MALE	53.7	61.7	60.8	NR	58.5	55.5	51.2	55.6	57.3	47.3
Not Hispanic or Latino MALE	NR	NR	NR	61	NR	NR	63.2	62.7	62	60.5

Variation in Course Completion Rates for Each Course by Section

College Level Courses with 6 or More Sections																
C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	C13	C14	C15	C16	C17
18	22	24	26	27	29	30	35	40	44	49	49	53	56	68	69	75

Difference in Course Completion Rates between Hispanic Students and Non-Hispanic Students for C 13 by Section

Difference in Course Completion Rate for Hispanic Students																
Hispanic CCR -											Hispanic CCR +					
-70%	-50%	-41%	-38%	-32%	-29%	-27%	-27%	-20%	-17%	-10%	-	-	7%	7%	19%	24%

How the metric for People of Color (POC) increased or decreased from Fall 2017 to Fall 2019

		Difference	Change in Gap
Fall Enrollment Overall	Total Students	2.8%	-1.0%
Fall Enrollment by Level	UG Day Program	3.0%	-2.0%
	UG University College	5.4%	-3.7%
	Graduate Level	1.3%	0.1%
	School of Law	-.1%	-1.0%

CHARTS & GRAPHS IN TABLE FORMAT

First Year Retention examined using an intersectionality lens

	Students of Color		White Students		Overall
	Pell Recipient	Not a Pell Recipient	Pell Recipient	Not a Pell Recipient	
Female First Generation	95%	75%	79%	83%	83%
	18/19	9/12	27/34	70/85	128/154
Female Not First Generation	100%	83%	93%	87%	87%
	9/9	24/29	39/42	220/254	308/353
Male First Generation	82%	100%	75%	85%	83%
	23/28	11/11	15/20	46/54	97/117
Male Not First Generation	75%	78%	95%	84%	84%
	6/8	32/41	35/37	262/313	351/416
Overall	88%	82%	87%	85%	85%
	56/64	76/93	116/133	598/706	884/1,040

Measures of success for students of color

Institution Name		
Northeastern University	Private	0.0%
Babson College	Private	0.1%
Boston University	Private	0.3%
Providence College	Private	0.7%
Suffolk University	Private	1.8%
Bowdoin College	Private	2.6%
University of Massachusetts - Amherst	Public	2.9%
Endicott College	Private	3.0%
University of Vermont	Public	3.1%
American University	Private	4.0%
Syracuse University	Private	4.2%
Quinnipiac University	Private	4.9%
Bentley University	Private	5.1%
Assumption College	Private	5.4%
Roger Williams University	RWU	5.9%
Wentworth Institute of Technology	Private	6.9%
Johnson & Wales University - Providence	Private	7.0%

Retention and Graduation Rate Part 1 - Freshman

Fall Cohort Year	Cohort	1 Year Retention & Graduation Rate	2 Years Retention & Graduation Rate	3 Years Retention & Graduation Rate	4 Years Graduation Rate	5 Years Graduation Rate	6 Years Graduation Rate
2008	74	83.78%	71.62%	63.51%	18.92%	43.24%	51.53%
2009	54	85.19%	66.67%	55.56%	12.96%	37.04%	42.59%
2010	25	88.00%	64.00%	64.00%	16.00%	48.00%	64.00%
2011	37	81.08%	72.97%	67.57%	32.43%	56.76%	59.46%
2012	53	90.57%	77.36%	64.15%	41.51%	58.49%	64.15%
2013	34	88.24%	70.59%	70.59%	44.12%	55.88%	64.71%
2014	46	82.61%	71.74%	60.87%	39.13%	50.00%	
2015	60	81.67%	63.33%	60.00%	48.33%		
2016	67	77.61%	67.16%	64.18%			
2017	68	75.53%	51.47%				
2018	85	80.00%					
2019	50						

1 Year Retention Rate										
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
83.78%	85.19%	88.00%	81.08%	90.57%	88.24%	82.61%	81.67%	77.61%	73.53%	80.00%

6 Year Retention Rate					
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
51.35%	42.59%	64.00%	59.46%	64.15	64.71

Retention and Graduation Rate Part 2 - Freshman

Fall Cohort Year	Cohort	1 Year Retention & Graduation Rate	2 Years Retention & Graduation Rate	3 Years Retention & Graduation Rate	4 Years Graduation Rate	5 Years Graduation Rate	6 Years Graduation Rate
2008	504	76.98%	64.29%	57.14%	28.37%	45.63%	50.79%
2009	450	81.33%	68.67%	62.00%	32.22%	52.00%	55.56%
2010	436	75.69%	63.53%	60.55%	32.80%	49.54%	56.88%
2011	479	72.65%	63.88%	59.29%	31.94%	50.94%	54.70%
2012	508	75.98%	67.52%	64.76%	42.72%	58.86%	60.63%
2013	480	81.25%	70.21%	66.46%	47.29%	59.58%	61.67%
2014	495	80.40%	71.31%	68.48%	50.10%	62.83%	
2015	480	81.04%	71.88%	68.33%	47.92%		
2016	457	77.90%	68.27%	64.33%			
2017	439	76.54%	69.93%				
2018	381	76.38%					
2019	366						

1 Year Retention Rate										
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
70.98%	81.33%	75.69%	72.65%	75.98%	81.25%	80.40%	81.04%	77.90%	76.54%	76.38%

6 Year Retention Rate					
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
50.79%	55.56%	56.88%	54.70%	60.63%	61.67%

First Time Full Time Student Retention to Second Year

Year	Retention Rate
2006	74.3%
2007	79.6%
2008	81.8%
2009	81.0%
2010	80.9%
2011	80.6%
2012	81.4%
2013	81.3%
2014	79.2%
2015	79.8%
2016	76.0%
2017	78.1%
2018	76.6%

CHARTS & GRAPHS IN TABLE FORMAT

Educational Equity Gap

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Students of Color	73.5%	77.4%	72.3%	69.8%	73.1%
White Students	81.2%	80.7%	77.4%	81.4%	77.9%

Table B (Student by Student Listing)

Student Name & Contact Information	PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF RETAINING	DROPOUT RISK DECILE (10=high, 1=low)	SEX	HSW GPA	HON-ORS	SOC	FIRST GEN	LOW INC.	SUBMIT FAFSA	AGE 19+	REMED MATH	TAR-GET ENG.	DECLARE MAJ.	LIVE ON CAMPUS	CREDS	TOOK CIRP
	60%	10	F	2.48	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	12.00	N
	75%	10	M	3.04	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	12.00	Y
	84%	9	F	3.19	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	16.00	Y
	84%	9	M	2.85	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	15.00	Y
	86%	8	F	2.58	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	15.00	Y
	87%	8	M	2.77	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	13.00	Y
	88%	7	M	2.66	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	14.00	N
	89%	7	F	2.89	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	15.00	Y
	89%	6	F	2.91	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	13.00	Y
	90%	6	F	2.76	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	15.00	Y
	90%	5	M	3.32	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	15.00	Y
	92%	5	M	3.21	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	15.00	Y
	92%	4	F	3.06	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	16.00	Y
	93%	4	F	4.11	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	15.00	Y
	93%	3	M	2.43	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	17.00	N
	93%	3	M	3.67	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	15.00	Y
	94%	2	F	3.01	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	16.00	Y
	95%	2	F	3.35	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	16.00	Y
	96%	1	M	3.44	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	16.00	Y
	98%	1	F	4.54	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	16.00	Y

CHARTS & GRAPHS IN TABLE FORMAT

2018 Cohort Predicted vs Actual First Second Semester Retention by Decile

Group (Decile)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total Cohort
Predicted Retention Rate to Spring	96%	95%	94%	92%	91%	90%	88%	86%	83%	75%	89%
Actual Retention Rate to Spring	95%	97%	95%	91%	90%	95%	89%	93%	82%	75%	90%

SOC Cumulative GPA Comparison by Program

SOC Cumulative Comparison					
ILA SOC	Non-ILA SOC	SOAR	Non-SOAR SOC	Black LLC	Non-LLC SOC
3.3	2.7	2.5	2.8	3	2.8

Program Participation in Student Engagement and Leadership Programs

Participation Percentage						
	Overall Involvement	Leadership	RA	Peer Mentor	Tutor	ADB or Other Admission
Black LLC	100%	60%	50%	0%	20%	50%
ILA	100%	40%	33%	0%	40%	40%
SOAR	81%	25%	19%	13%	6%	25%

Fall 2018 Cohort Retention Rate

Fall 2018 Cohort Retention Rate	
	Retention Percentage
Black LLC	100%
SOAR	100%
ILA	100%
SOC Overall Retention	84.10%

Graduation Rate Comparison 2018 & 2019

Graduation Rate Comparison 2018 & 2019		
	Graduation Percentage	
	2018	2019
ILA Cohort 4-6 Year Graduation	89%	100%
Students of Color 4 Year Graduation	55.20%	59.80%
Student of Color 6 Year Graduation	66.30%	62%

CHARTS & GRAPHS IN TABLE FORMAT

First-Time Full-Time Retention by High School GPA

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
3.5 and higher	83.7%	89.1%	84.1%	86.2%	87.8%
3.01 to 3.50	79.9%	80.5%	78.3%	79.1%	74.8%
2.51 to 3.00	77.2%	76.9%	71.5%	73.6%	74.5%
Lower than 2.5	72.9%	69.0%	67.8%	72.2%	65.7%

First to Second Year Retention for FTFT Students by High School GPA Group, Race and Bears Participation

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
3.0 and higher (white)	83%	83%	82%	83%	80%
3.0 and higher (SOC)	76%	84%	75%	76%	76%
2.0-3.0 (white, Not Bears)	78%	78%	71%	79%	73%
2.0-3.0 (white, Bears)				82%	79%
2.0-3.0 (SOC, Not Bears)	71%	71%	69%	59%	67%
2.0-3.0 (SOC, Bears)				86%	93%

M.A.L.E.S. Summer Bridge Program Data

Year	Completed Program	Enhanced in Math Placement	Applicant to enrolled conversion rate
Summer 2018	93%	64%	85%
Summer 2019	100%	77%	100%

Retention of M.A.L.E.S. Students 2018

	Retention Rate	Credit Completion Rate	Full-Time Status
Participants	63%	81%	58%
Non-Participants	61%	75%	41%

Retention of M.A.L.E.S. Students 2019

	Retention Rate	Credit Completion Rate	Full-Time Status
Participants	82%	79%	68%
Non-Participants	69%	69%	36%

Number of First-Year Students in Fall 2016 - Fall 2019

	FY Honors Students	FY BSU Students
2016	80	1381
2017	105	1476
2018	151	1439
2019	186	1465

CHARTS & GRAPHS IN TABLE FORMAT

Percent of Students of Color in First-Year Cohorts, Fall 2016 - Fall 2019

	BSU Honors Program	BSU Overall
2016	9%	25%
2017	16%	26%
2018	22%	29%
2019	23%	30%

Spring 2019 Suspension

Spring 2019 Suspensions	
Black	65
Asian	24
Hispanic	211
Two or More Races	26
White	274

Difficulties Identified by MCC's Asian American students (N=240)

Difficulties Identified by MCC's Asian American students (N=240)	
Confidence	33%
Emotional Stress	32%
Language Skills	22%
Not Enough Financial Aid	20%
Work Too Many Hours	20%
Transportation	20%
Caring for Family Member	19%
Discomfort with Financial Aid	16%
Difficulty Finding Work	12%
Health Problems	11%
Pressure not to go to college	6%
Affording the Basics	5%

1st-2nd Year Retention Rate

	Fall 2018	Fall 2017	Fall 2016	Fall 2015	Fall 2014
Black	74%	79%	90%	79%	66%
Hispanic	71%	84%	70%	71%	72%
White	86%	81%	85%	87%	86%

4 Year Graduation Rate

	Fall 2015	Fall 2014	Fall 2013	Fall 2012	Fall 2011
Black	38%	36%	37%	37%	50%
Hispanic	45%	34%	35%	38%	41%
White	62%	57%	62%	51%	55%



BRIDGEWATER

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