

# PBCOHE

Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education



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# Pennsylvania Black Conference On Higher Education

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## Mission Statement

The mission of the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education, Inc. (PBCOHE) is to provide programs and services which help ensure that the postsecondary educational needs and aspirations of African Americans in particular are met, and to work in concert with members of other underrepresented groups in the Commonwealth.

*The Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education Journal was designed to support the mission of the PBCOHE.*

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# Pennsylvania Black Conference On Higher Education

## Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education Journal Guidelines for Submission

The Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education Journal (PBCOHEJ) is published once every two years. PBCOHEJ publishes scholarly papers, research reports, critical essays, and reviews focusing on issues related to factors affecting African Americans and other racial and ethnic populations.

The PBCOHE Journal (1) provides a forum for critical discussions on relevant issues related to blacks in higher education (these issues may include discussions of educational, social, economic, and legislative topics), (2) serves as a vehicle for exchange of scholarly works of Black faculty and administrators, and (3) disseminates knowledge about critical practice, research, and education which affects the Black community.

Each paper is accepted with the understanding that it is to be published exclusively with PBCOHE Journal. Material published in the PBCOHE Journal may not be reprinted or published without permission of the PBCOHE Journal. Please address all inquiries to the editor:

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### **Manuscript Submission:**

The journal uses a blind-review procedure. This means that all submitted manuscripts must be prepared for a blind review. Omit or mask references to specific institutions, states, or any other form of identifying information within the manuscript until your manuscript is accepted for publication and submitted in the final version. The section below describes the steps in submitting a manuscript.

Submit via email attachment to sstringe@lockhaven.edu. The editors make final decisions regarding publication. Generally, authors can expect a decision regarding a manuscript six to eight weeks after notification that their manuscript has been received. Following are guidelines for developing and submitting a manuscript. Manuscripts that do not conform to these guidelines will be returned to the author without review.

### **The Submission Cover Letter**

Manuscript submission must be accompanied by a cover letter designating the type of manuscript. Manuscript types include research papers using qualitative design, quantitative design, and innovative methods, as well as book reviews or position papers. The cover letter also must include a statement establishing that ethical procedures were employed and that all relevant human subjects' considerations were observed. In addition, the cover letter must include the full contact information of all authors. The contact information must include the following information for the corresponding author: name, academic credentials, institutional affiliation or place of employment, postal mailing address, email address, and phone number. Please include the names and email addresses for all co-authors.

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## Manuscript Requirements

1. Research manuscripts should be a minimum 16 pages and a maximum 25 pages total, including all references, tables, etc. Manuscripts must include a 125-150 word abstract. All manuscripts are to be double-spaced including references and extensive quotes. Allow 1" margins on all sides.
2. Manuscript should be submitted in Microsoft Word, or as RTF files. For resubmissions only, combine the cover letter and manuscript into one complete file, which is prepared for blind review. Please do not use "track changes" feature. Files must be submitted in a 12-point Times Roman Font.
3. Use the Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association (5th Edition) as a manual for style and manuscript format, including style for all figures, tables, and references. Figures that are not camera-ready will be returned to the author and may cause a delay in publication. Authors bear responsibility for the accuracy of references, tables, and figures.
4. Authors are encouraged to use guidelines to reduce bias in language against persons based on gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age by referring to the 5th Edition of the Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association.
5. Do not submit previously published or in-press material or a manuscript that is under consideration for publication in another periodical.
6. Lengthy quotations (300-500 words) require written permission from the copyright holder for reproduction. Adaptation of tables and figures also requires reproduction approval. It is the author's responsibility to secure such permission. A copy of the publisher's permission must be provided to the journal editor immediately on acceptance of the article for publication.
7. Submit all manuscripts via email attachment, please include your cover letter in the body of the email, and make sure a copy of the manuscript is prepared for a blind review. Send your manuscript to [sstringe@lockhaven.edu](mailto:sstringe@lockhaven.edu). All tables and figures must be included and properly formatted within the electronic file (otherwise, they will not be accepted separately).

**Submissions are accepted on a continuous schedule unless otherwise noted.**

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## Editor's Comments

Greetings and welcome to the Fall 2019 issue of the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education Journal. This journal supports the mission of PBCOHE as well as provides a forum for discussion and review about issues relevant to the sustainability and promotion of racial and ethnic diversity in higher education.

This edition commemorates the 50th anniversary of the PBCOHE by reprinting an article written by the late Terrell W. Jones. In it you'll find a look at the past, present, and the future. Jones provided an historic account of the challenges in higher education as well as offering strategies for its continued viability in his article, "Looking Back and Looking Forward." Many of his observations remain relevant today. In the article "Examining Pipelines of Women of Color in Higher Education Leadership: Establishing a Culture to Promote Growth and Resiliency," three faculty recount the challenges that women of color face as they seek professional advancement in the academy. The authors note that there are leaks in the pipeline to academic leadership positions and that women of color are more likely to experience professional exclusion with minimal recognition for their scholarship.

In the article, "Culturally Responsive Transition Practices: Beyond the Post-Secondary Education Opportunity Gap for Diverse Students," the author champions diverse students with learning disabilities and offers suggestions on how the same can be empowered to improve their own access to higher education. In "Pathways to Academic Success: A Literature Review of a Strengths-Based Approach to Support Student Success," the author takes advantage of the opportunity to share early research efforts in the dissertation process, by providing some suggestions for approaches to academic success. While most academic authors provide suggested reading for course assignments, the author of "Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: You Shouldn't Use This Anthology in Your Class" has a different agenda. He has a list of readings that he would not recommend to your students.

It is important to note that this journal owes its existence to those who had the foresight to make it a reality. The success of this publication can be attributed to the hard work and dedication of its former editors. I'd like to thank Alicia King Redfern, Jannis V. Floyd, and Shon Smith, who preceded me in the responsibility as editor. Without their diligence and commitment, this commemorative issue would not be possible. I would also like to acknowledge my co-editor, Shavonne Shorter, and the journal's review board, who are charged with reading the manuscripts submitted for publication. Much appreciation is also given to the Honorable K. Leroy Irvis, founder of the PBCOHE. Without the PBCOHE, there would be no journal.

And to you the readers, thanks. This work continues only with your help. Please continue to submit your manuscripts and ask your colleagues to consider the same. The editorial board will carefully review all submissions as they become available.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sharon B. Stringer*  
Sharon B. Stringer, Co-Editor

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## Looking Back and Thinking Forward Reprinted

W. Terrell Jones, Ed.D.

At last year's annual conference, many of us spent an enjoyable evening at a 70s party. The music, dress, and dancing made for a great time. The event got me thinking about the 70s when I started college. In 1968, I began my college experience with a welcome from the dean of academic affairs at my college. Many times, people do not remember what was said at welcomes and graduation speeches; they don't generally leave a lasting impression. However, after speaking for a few moments, the dean said something I still remember many years later. He said, "Look to your left and then to your right; one of you will not be here in four years to graduate." In the 70s, one of the ways institutions of higher education measured their value was by the number of students who were not successful. Interestingly enough many institutions of higher education have lower student graduation rates now than they did in the 70s. As we look back at the 70s and celebrate the beginnings of the Pennsylvania Black Conference of Higher Education, we should also be willing to think about our mission and the future of our organization.

Our world was much different in the 1970s. The Berlin Wall was erected, the three Americans most admired by college-aged young people – John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. – had all been assassinated. We had student protests and demonstrations at most of our institutions of higher education and shootings of college students at Kent State in Ohio and Jackson State in Mississippi. During the 70s, our national policies on higher education were shaped by the late 1960s federal policies and programs that stressed inclusion and equality of opportunity. In 1970, the census bureau reported the 378,000 African-American students (nearly 70% of the total) were attending predominantly white colleges and universities (Fleming, 1984). Busing was a highly-contested remedy to achieve desegregation in K through 12 school districts. Many institutions of higher education experimented with open-admissions policies, which set the stage for anti-affirmative action backlash and the Supreme Court Bakke decision.

In 1970, the Honorable K. Leroy Irvis, Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, convened a conference of black college presidents, vice presidents, deans, department chairs, directors, teachers, and other needed political leaders and professionals. At the beginning of our organization, the major higher education issues in Pennsylvania for African-Americans were access, affordability, and climate. In response to the needs of African American students, faculty, staff and administration, our conference was created to provide input into the formation of a master plan for higher education. Mr. Irvis is also remembered for his commitment to diversity and inclusion exemplified by the passage of legislation creating the Pennsylvania

The late **Terrell Jones** was the author or co-author of several book chapters on the subject of cultural diversity. He was an affiliate faculty member with the Division of Counseling and Educational Psychology at Penn State and taught courses on race relations and cross-cultural counseling. In addition, Dr. Jones served as president of the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education from March 2008 through February 2010.

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Human Relations Commission, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency and Equal Opportunity Program, the state's community college system, the Minority Business Development Authority, and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

As part of the master plan, the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education was formed with the mission to ensure equal education for African Americans and other minorities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The primary concern of the first conference in 1971 was the advancement of African Americans in higher education. At that first conference, community college education and its affordability and quality, developing a student loan program, and establishing an organization that would have as its primary goal the advancement of African Americans were the issues discussed.

In the 70s there appeared to be a real emphasis on access to higher education within the state. With what seemed to be an almost unlimited pipeline of K through 12 minority students, little attention was paid to our rapidly decaying and increasing minority and low-income urban school systems. Also in the 1970s, there appeared to have been more synergies between the goals of minority professionals in higher education and minority leadership in the Pennsylvania legislature.

Generally speaking in today's economy and political reality, higher education no longer enjoys its historical unquestioned priority, support, and funding from state and federal agencies. As we look to the future of PBCOHE, accountability and advocacy for policies and programs with proven track records of minority success must become the hub of the organizations' priorities and actions. According to the most recent statistics, the national graduation rate for African American students is an appallingly low rate of 45 percent (JBHE Weekly Bulletin, Dec. 10, 2009). This means that over half of Pennsylvania's 104,377 African Americans presently in college will not graduate in six years and are likely to leave college in debt without a degree (Pennsylvania Facts 2009). The low graduation rate also sounds a warning siren for the future economic health of our state and nation.

On our website, the stated purpose of PBCOHE is "to ensure that the educational needs of minorities and African American students in Pennsylvania are addressed. PBCOHE shall facilitate meeting this goal by utilizing its individual and collective resources for developing and implementing effective educational programming." The review and analysis of state and federal legislation for effect on African Americans and other minorities in higher education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is also an objective of PBCOHE. Additionally, the conference is responsible for providing a means of communication and for consulting with local, state, and federal agencies, both private and public, to encourage co-sponsorship of the conference efforts. Any future vision of our organization's mission must consider the following:

1. Large gaps in minority student graduation rates by socioeconomic indicators. Students from first generation and/or low income families are much more likely to not graduate. This gap holds constant when you control for academic ability. In summary, minority students with high academic potential and low financial resources graduate at a lesser rate than minority students with limited academic ability and adequate financial resources.

2. African American men are much less likely to graduate from college than African American women (Bowen, Chingos and McPherson, 2009). Also, African American men are less likely to



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go to college than African American women. Our organization must develop new strategies that stress early recognition of talent pools in primary school and partnership with other external stakeholders to address this crisis situation.

3. The recognition and inclusion of Hispanic students' educational concerns and Hispanic professionals. In 1970, Pennsylvania did not have a large Hispanic population (less than onepercent). However, today the Hispanic community has grown and now makes up over 4.5 percent of the state's population and nationally is the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. Our in-state Hispanics also make up a much larger share of the K through 12 population and many of our minority students identify themselves as either multiracial or multiethnic (Pennsylvania Facts, 2009). To not find more ways to include our Hispanic population into our organization weakens our mission and potentially threatens funding sources.

4. Curriculum transformation and teaching reform will also need to be a priority for PBCOHE. There is a belief among many scholars and a growing number of citizens that higher education has a moral responsibility to accommodate diversity and to transform itself to more closely reflect the array of cultures represented in our society. There is now a rapidly growing body of literature in a range of areas that offer both subtle and profound educational practices that prevent discrimination and support diverse student groups. Given our history and membership we should be poised to be leaders in this area.

5. Increasing our support for students with financial need is essential to our future. Over the past ten years, our organization doubled both the number and amount of our financial scholarships. I think we should be proud of that accomplishment. However, we may also need to re-evaluate what we consider merit. Higher education institutions now give out more financial support based on merit than need. The questions we have to answer are: should our academic scholarship also consider need? Is a first generation, low income student who outperforms his or her academic predictors less meritorious than a second generation college student with a high GPA? Is a community college student working two jobs, raising a family, and doing well academically worth considering for our scholarship support?

6. Develop a K through 16 framework for improving Pennsylvania education. Institutions of higher education cannot improve college graduation rates without improving the quality of the students and the quality of primary school instruction. Identifying talented students early and providing those students with academic enhancement programs, parent support strategies, and financial planning for college insights, are strategies well worth our consideration. These are long-term sustainable strategies that influence partnerships with school districts and other external stakeholders.

7. Global and social justice should be integrated into all aspects of our organization. This includes, but is not limited to, the importance of learning different languages, understanding cultural sensitivity and diversity, and, above all, knowledge, respect and an ability to understand our connection to the lives and welfare of each other with respect for the planet on which we live.

8. Finally, we have to find ways to include young professionals into PBCOHE. I am hopeful that the recruitment of new professionals will be one of the top priorities of our next meeting of the Think Tank.

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I close with one of my favorite K. Leroy Irvis quotes: "Get to know yourself! Find out what your abilities are and keep adding new ones! Never let anyone tell you what you cannot do – unless to do it would be foolish or impossible. Be sure that you climb and help someone else to climb. Keep learning!"

W.Terrell Jones, Ed.D.  
Former PBCOHE President, 2008 to 2010

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This paper was written by the late W. Terrell Jones, who served many years as the vice provost for educational equity at The Pennsylvania State University. Jones developed and conducted numerous seminars on cultural differences, racial awareness, cross-cultural counseling, minority retention strategies, and affirmative action programs for industry, government, public schools, and universities. He authored or co-authored several book chapters on the subject of cultural diversity and taught classes on race relations and cross-cultural counseling.

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## Examining Pipelines of Women of Color in Higher Education Leadership: Establishing a Culture to Promote Growth and Resiliency

Tiffany E. Jones, Jocelyn A. Manigo, and Juanita Wooten

### Abstract

For many individuals, higher education provides access for lifelong learning, achievement, and professional success. At its inception, United States higher education was designed to provide professional training and advancement opportunities for men but excluded women and minorities (Morris, 2011; Nidiffer, 2001). Since that time, women have evolved and made significant contributions in higher education. Despite these impressive strides, the literature reveals a significantly low representation of women of color in higher education senior leadership roles. This disparity of women of color in higher education senior leadership is indicative of a pipeline issue and affects the diversity of higher education institutions (Armenti, 2004; Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011; Correa & McHatton, 2005). This paper explores the challenges associated with women of color in higher education leadership, introduces strategies for establishing a culture of growth and resiliency along the pipeline, and provides recommendations for future research and practice.

### Introduction & Background

Higher education serves as a point of access for lifelong learning and achievement. It is often correlated with a transformative power that supports the academic growth, freedom, and integration of society. When higher education institutions were founded, their common mission was to provide professional advancement opportunities for men and excluded women and minorities (Morris, 2011; Nidiffer, 2001). During these earlier periods in history, women's roles in the workplace were very limited and contained to caretaking responsibilities within the home (Webb, 2010). Women's roles in the workplace began to increase due to the Industrial Revolution and World War I (Webb, 2010). Women's enrollment in higher education also began to grow over time. At present, women are enrolled in higher education institutions and earning professional degrees at increased rates as compared to years past (Hill & Warbelow, 2008; Webb, 2010).

Whereas women have encountered many challenges navigating the workplace and higher educa-

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tion, women of color have endured unfair and insurmountable adversities along their professional journeys (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Women of color possess a plethora of unique identities that affect their experiences in higher education (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Three very salient characteristics include the intersections of gender, race, and ethnicity. Intersectionality, originated by Crenshaw (1989), studies the multiple roles that individuals possess and how they affect their experiences within certain contexts. Gender, commonly associated with the belief of femininity and masculinity, dictates the way an individual is perceived, treated in society, as well as opportunities that are available to him or her (Carvalho & de Lurdes Machado, 2010; Mollaeva, 2018). BlackChen (2015) and Priola (2007) pointed out that from its origin, society perceived higher education as a masculine culture whereas Lester (2008) noted that women are commonly associated with nurturing roles within higher education. BlackChen (2015) further explained that “women in higher education have had the daunting task of proving themselves in this so-called male dominated field, in order to be recognized as leaders” (p. 153). In addition to gender, the literature attributes race and ethnicity as salient characteristics of women of color in higher education. Strom, Lee, Trahan, Kaufman, and Pritchett (2009) operationally defined race as physical and genetic traits similar to a specific group of individuals and ethnicity as shared similar cultural traits. Luna, Medina, and Gorman (2010) stated that “the added distinction of being a woman of color contributes an additional disadvantage in the academic environment” (p. 3).

Numerous leadership roles are available at higher education institutions such as president, provost, academic dean, faculty, departmental or program chairperson, and program directors. Despite the opportunity to advance in these roles, research indicates that women and women of color are underrepresented in higher education senior level roles (Alexander, 2010; Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011; Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak, & White, 2015; Moody & Toni, 2017; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). For example, Woollen (2016) studied pathways to American higher education presidency and reported the following:

Currently, women account for 26% of all presidents, representing a three percent increase in women presidents from 2006 (as cited in ACE, 2012). The percentage of African American and Hispanic women presidents increased slightly from 2006, but women of color in presidencies are still disproportionately low and have a “rare presence” in the position. (Woollen, 2016, p. 1, as cited in Fitzgerald, 2014).

This lack of diversity in higher education leadership is indicative of a pipeline issue and negatively affects the professional trajectory of women of color, higher education institutions, and their constituents (Armenti, 2004; Correa & McHatton, 2005; Hannum et al., 2015). This paper explores sources of pipeline issues, strategies to promote the growth and resiliency, and implications for the future practice of women of color in higher education leadership.

### **Pipelines: Where is the Leak?**

Women of color face several challenges affecting their professional growth and advancement in higher education. Many of these pipeline “leaks” originate from systemic issues that require large-scale reform while other issues represent the individualized struggles that women of color confront daily in the workplace environment (U. S. Department of Education, 2018). This section explores challenges that greatly affect the professional experiences of women of color in higher education leadership.

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## **Navigating the Tenure Process**

Navigating the tenure process is an unfamiliar challenge for most new faculty; this task can be especially daunting for female minority faculty members who are isolated and underrepresented within higher education. Based on a 2016 study by the National Center for Education Statistics, women of color constitute approximately 10 percent of associate professors in postsecondary education in comparison to 35 percent of white women. Similarly, women of color represent only six percent of the full professor pool nationwide in comparison to 27 percent of white female full professors (U. S. Department of Education, 2018). The type of institution plays a role in this disparity. Research shows that women of color are less likely to become tenured at non-minority serving institutions. However, the presence of tenured female minority faculty remains higher in historically black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions (Strauss, 2015). A highly recommended strategy for successfully navigating the tenure process is to form relationships with other tenured faculty, particularly those who can serve as mentors throughout the process (Enwefa, Enwefa, & Nyarambi, 2011). For women of color who already battle isolation on college campuses, forging these relationships requires additional effort. While some institutions have adopted formal mentor programs, many schools lack this programming and, in turn, leave faculty of color uninformed and unsupported (Enwefa et al., 2011).

## **Isolation/Exclusion from Informal Networks**

'Isolation' and 'exclusion' are common themes throughout the narratives of minority women in faculty, administrative and professional roles in higher education (Caroll, 2017; Molina, 2008). Women of color, particularly those at predominantly white institutions, are at a disadvantage when forming social bonds. They tend to lack small and large-group communities and other affinity groups that offer inclusivity and support. Research by Kanter (as cited in Turner, 2002) suggests that individuals who differ from the norm are vulnerable to a "cycle of cumulative disadvantage," including invisibility and exclusion from peer networks. The degree to which an individual differs from the norm – by way of gender, race, or ethnicity, for example - indicates the extent to which the individual is marginalized from the mainstream (Turner, 2002).

## **Lack of Significant Line Exposure, Visibility, and Challenging Assignments**

With fewer opportunities to develop on-campus networks, women of color encounter difficulty obtaining line exposure, visibility, and opportunities to tackle challenging assignments in the workplace. Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson (2019) posit that invisibility is a function of power; marginalized groups who lack mainstream visibility normally lack influence within an organization. Invisibility ultimately denies minority groups "recognition, legitimacy, authority, and voice" (Settles et al., 2019, p. 63). Women of color are more likely to experience professional exclusion with minimal recognition for scholarship (Molina, 2008). Academic research contributions by women of color are often viewed as being "intellectually weak and suspect" in contrast to the seemingly more legitimate work of white men and women (Hooks, 1989 as cited in Molina, 2008, p. 14). Furthermore, women of color are commonly treated as tokens and are sought out to provide diverse perspectives (Molina, 2008). Settles et al. (2019) claim that faculty of color respond to tokenism in one of three ways: they disengage with colleagues while remaining engaged with their scholarly activities (strategic invisibility), they work harder to prove themselves, or they counter exclusion by creating more visibility.

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## **Work/Life Balance**

In addition to managing the work-related duties of higher education roles, women of color must also meet the demands of their personal responsibilities. Multiple obligations such as household duties, childcare, and spousal or parental support result in a constant tug-of-war between professional and personal environments. The common result is lower productivity, increased stress, and work absences (Powell, 2018). The work/life balance is a struggle for women of any background, but women of color tend to experience the conflict to a greater degree (Powell, 2018). In a 2018 study examining the work/life balance of faculty, Denson, Szelényi, and Bresonis discovered that faculty across four different racial groups (Asian American, African American, Latina/Latino, and White) overwhelmingly reported having a “less-than-satisfying work/life balance” (p. 239). The study concluded that faculty of color struggle to resolve work/life balance issues due to the added pressures of workplace discrimination. Faculty rank was found to have an effect on work/life satisfaction. Faculty within higher ranks, including those with tenure, exhibit a stronger work/life balance due to increased freedom and autonomy in navigating obligations (Denson et al., 2018).

## **Pay Inequity**

Another issue impeding the advancement of minority women in higher education is pay inequity. Research shows that women of color make 67 cents on every dollar paid to white men. Women of color are also paid less for professional, staff, and faculty roles than white men, white women, and men of color (Johnson, 2016; McChesney, 2018). McChesney (2018) claims that women of color are “disproportionately over-represented in lower-paid positions and underrepresented elsewhere” (p. 9). Despite strides in the number of minority women earning post-baccalaureate degrees, women of color remain at the bottom of the pay scale in higher education (Johnson, 2016; McChesney, 2018). Closing the wage gap requires systemic reform and detailed evaluation of pay equity; yet even then, progress would be slow-moving.

## **Microaggressions in the Workplace**

Research indicates that women of color encounter microaggressions in the workplace that negatively affect their professional experiences and trajectory in higher education leadership (Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, Pratt, & Jaddo, 2011; Ong, Smith, & Ko, 2018). Microaggressions are described as verbal, nonverbal, and environmental insults that reveal implicit bias against a group (Dalton & Villagran, 2018). Presented in the form of subtle discriminatory comments or behaviors, microaggressions communicate hostile or negative messages to target persons from marginalized populations. Such behavior contributes to negative and uncomfortable working conditions (Carroll, 2017; Dalton & Villagran, 2018). As Carroll (2017) notes, faculty women of color who confront microaggressions daily “envision themselves within an oppressive environment, one that neither respects nor protects them” (p. 41). These regular encounters with microaggressions may mount up, causing women to feel defenseless in their professional environments.

## **Fixing the Leak: Establishing a Culture to Promote Growth and Resiliency**

Burton (2012) defines resilience as “the ability to bounce back from setbacks. Resilient people thrive and grow in the face of adversity, challenges and change” (p. 132). Mentoring and sponsorship, professional branding, affinity groups and campus programming initiatives, social networks, and establishing a growth mindset are some of the ways explored here for fixing the leak in the pipeline to establish a culture to promote growth and resiliency.

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## **Mentoring and Sponsorship**

Research demonstrates that mentoring and sponsorship are examples of professional coaching that can help to support women of color in the academic pipeline (Bynum & Stordy, 2017; Commodore, Freeman, Gasman, & Carter, 2016; Freeman & Kochan, 2012). In a case study of women in higher education leadership positions, 84 percent attributed their success to mentoring and strong relationships as a factor for supporting the leadership of women of color (Bynum & Stordy, 2017). Both mentoring and sponsorship offer the vital support that women need to navigate their journey through the various ranks of academia. Mentoring is strongly encouraged and can "help to fill in the theoretical and practical knowledge that is needed to succeed in the twenty-first century" (Freeman & Kochan, 2012, p.110). A report published by the American Council on Higher Education (2016) suggests that pairing with a seasoned professional or someone in a higher-ranking position increases one's chance for ascending to a leadership position. The study also suggests that although more women are receiving degrees, women of color are more likely to be employed in low-ranking faculty positions. With fewer women of color having full professorship and access to tenure track positions, finding a female mentor of color becomes much more difficult (Duran, 2016). Seeking a mentor can present its own challenges due to the potential mentor's time constraints and commitments. It would behoove one to reach out and develop formal or informal relationships with competent individuals who share an interest in one's goals and is invested in your plans to ascend to a higher-ranking position. Networking and having multiple mentors from several disciplines is encouraged to broaden outlook and perspective (Reinarz, 2002). Catalyst (2012) suggests that "diverse women with more than one mentor had higher promotion rates than those with just one" (p.4). Sponsors on the other hand, through their own vested interest in an individual, is more positioned to open doors to senior leadership opportunities and will generally be an advocate for an individual's success (Catalyst, 2011).

## **Professional Branding**

In addition to mentoring and sponsorship, professional branding is another proposed method of promoting the growth and resiliency of women of color in higher education leadership. Rubin (2017) described professional branding as an essential form of identity. Skallerup Bessette (2014) further explained that a well-crafted brand articulates a clear and cohesive statement about you, sets you apart as a thoughtful leader, and highlights your contributions. Branding can increase the visibility and impact of your work, grow and cultivate your support network, and generate new career opportunities (p. 8).

The literature identifies creating a tagline for your brand, expanding knowledge and expertise, and creating a presence in one's field as effective strategies to build or strengthen the professional brand. The literature recommends that professionals create a tagline for their brands by identifying core values, passions, and talents. This professional branding tagline highlights what others can expect from professionals.

Expanding knowledge and expertise are also noted as strategies to strengthen the professional brand. Reitman and Williams (2013) expressed the importance of upgrading skills and remaining up to date on issues and trends in one's field. Women of color leaders in higher education can attend workshops and training sessions, subscribe to reputable journals, podcasts, webinars, etc. to remain updated on professional trends.

Lastly, creating a presence in one's field is an instrumental professional branding strategy for

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women of color in higher education leadership. Professionals may establish a presence in their prospective fields by writing journal articles, blogs, commenting on others' blogs, serving on committees, and presenting at local and national conferences. In addition, social media has become an integral means of establishing and promoting one's professional brand. Social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube are all platforms for professionals to promote their brands while gaining a presence in prospective fields (Wheatman, 2016). Wheatman (2016) recommends that professionals establish a purpose for online posting, maintain a neutral position to sensitive or hot topics, create separate personal and professional profiles, showcase authenticity and expertise, and share positive and relevant information to readers.

### **Affinity Groups and Campus Programming Initiatives**

Finding or building community through groups via a common interest is another way of supporting and building relationships with women of color. Research demonstrates that having an affiliation to an affinity group improves sustainability and retention of women of color since these types of groups can help members to network with others with a common interest, boost morale, and foster a sense of empowerment and confidence (Digilov, 2018). Affinity groups not only help to improve awareness of women, but of other diverse underrepresented groups and are viewed as a way for promoting diversity and inclusion. When seeking out a group, individuals should explore their areas of interest and attempt to identify programs on or off campus that support these interests. For example, locate programs geared toward supporting women of color, and particularly their interest in career advancement and leadership. In instances where groups are not found, an opportunity is now presented for one to create them by researching support networks (on campus, professional affiliations, mentors, interest groups, community resources, etc.) to develop a group or programs.

### **Social Networks to Promote a Sense of Belonging**

Working in a supportive environment that fosters and encourages women's professional development and leadership interests improves job retention (Commodore, Freeman, Gasman, & Carter, 2016). Networking with individuals who have common interests and goals can motivate one to push beyond internal barriers (Network of Executive Women, 2018). Identifying those in one's immediate circles, social groups, professional group members and organizations, and the utilization of social media can all attribute to improving a sense of belonging in a workplace. Connecting to others who acknowledge your thoughts, interests, and goals provides validation and acceptance. By engaging with others in a broader environment, women who feel isolated or overlooked on the job can gain greater exposure and access to more professional and social opportunities.

### **Establishing a Growth Mindset**

Establishing a growth mindset regarding professional experiences is a final strategy identified for promoting the growth and resiliency of women of color in higher education leadership. Burton (2012) noted the research of Dweck (2006) which focused on the mindset of successful people regarding handling challenges and embarking on new tasks and opportunities. Dweck (2006) asserted that individuals maintain one of two mindsets regarding intelligence and ability: it is either fixed or it can grow. Dweck (2006) described the fixed mindset as limiting and often perceived as negative, whereas fostering a growth mindset brightens, expands, energizes, and adds positivity to the experiences of individuals.



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Goal setting is identified as a beneficial strategy to enhance the mindset of women of color in higher education leadership. According to Burton (2012), “happily successful women set inspired goals and move toward them. They intuitively set goals that tap into their strengths, curiosity, and purpose” (p. 112). During the goal setting process, women are encouraged to identify at least one important goal at a time in which to focus and establish a timeframe for completion (Burton, 2012). The women then identify specific action steps in which they intend to follow throughout the goal setting stage. These action steps drive the individuals’ motivations and inspirations (Burton, 2012). Burton (2012) further stated, “happily successful women do not set goals, write them down, and stuff them in a drawer. They get busy taking action that will bring the goals to pass” (p. 112). Burton (2012) also expressed the importance of not giving up when encountering setbacks and challenges along the goal pathway. Individuals should anticipate hurdles, methods of addressing them, and a plan for moving forward. To increase the effectiveness of the goal setting process, Burton (2012) also recommends that professionals align themselves with a likeminded peer or team, seek support from others, and establish a vision board to assist in maintaining focus and motivation throughout the term of the goal.

### Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

To thoroughly examine pipeline issues in higher education leadership, several recommendations for future practice are mentioned in this section. The first recommendation is to study pipeline issues associated with men and women of color in higher education leadership. Wolfinger, Goulden, and Mason (2010) noted that in addition to women, an increasing amount of men face challenges related to balancing professional and family responsibilities than in previous years. This proposed examination would provide an extensive view of how race, ethnicity, gender, and other intersecting identities affect professional experiences. As a result of this research, higher education institutions would have a greater awareness of the diverse needs of men and women of color and implement strategies to support them in their professional endeavors, while advocating and providing a welcoming and supportive professional environment for women of color (Luna, Medina, & Gorman, 2010).

Second, as women of color are increasingly earning advanced degrees and are placed in the pipeline for higher education leadership positions, it would be meaningful to study the hiring practices and measures taken by governing boards and senior administrators to promote institutional diversity. Research on the processes in which search committees select new hires, especially as they pertain to gender and ethnicity, is extremely limited (Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991; Rivera, 2017). There are a plethora of qualified women of color candidates to be considered for leadership positions in higher education, however, application and interview rates of women of color candidates at higher education institutions remains unknown (Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991; Rivera, 2017). Search committees play an integral role in enhancing institutional diversity during hiring processes. Diversity among search committee members is extremely important. Kayes (2006) further contended that in addition to diversifying search committees, institutions should also promote awareness of the cultural biases that often impede the hiring of minority faculty and staff. As a result, women of color are presented with a fair opportunity to advance in their prospective areas and have a seat at the table and serve on governing boards and lead in senior positions.

Third, pipeline issues across the various academic disciplines should be studied further to identify causal factors and implications for remedying the issue. Despite the increased number of women

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earning advanced degrees in the sciences, the literature reveals underrepresentation and extensive pipeline challenges for women and women of color in the professoriate and specifically in the areas of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health-related fields (Harsh, Maltese, & Tai, 2012; Malveaux, 1998; Rivera, 2017). According to Evans, Green, and McCloud (2004), women of color endure unfair challenges during the tenure track process that affects their ability to advance to associate and full professor roles. It is recommended that tenure track and promotion practices be evaluated to ensure that they are inclusive of all persons. In addition, research and data that supports the need for diversity and identifies the underlying barriers to the success of women of color should be utilized and implemented in the practices of all higher education institutions.

Lastly, the continuous disparity in the pay of women of color employed at higher education institutions remains an issue and should be examined further (Pennamon, 2018). Leuze and Straub (2016) reported that “even though women today constitute the majority of higher education graduates, they still earn considerably less than their male counterparts” (p. 802). Institutions are encouraged to address issues of pay inequity for women of color by evaluating “pay and representation across different job categories” (Johnson, 2016, p. 10). To ensure equitable compensation, institutions should seek comparison data from peer institutions and make necessary adjustments. Additional factors such as “employee turnover, age, and experience” are corresponding variables to consider with this approach (Johnson, 2016, p. 10). With additional research and advocacy in this area, it is hoped that this ongoing issue is remedied and made equitable for all people regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, and all other intersecting identities.

### Conclusion

Women have evolved in higher education and in the workplace since earlier periods of history in which race and/or gender prevented their access. Despite strides in degree attainment, representation of women of color in higher education leadership remains low (Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011; Hannum et al., 2015; Rivera, 2017). This low representation of women of color in higher education leadership is indicative of a pipeline issue and affects the overall diversity of higher education. Pipeline issues such as navigating the tenure process, microaggressions in the workplace, isolation and exclusion from informal networks of communication, lack of significant line exposure, visibility, challenging assignments, work/life balance, and pay inequity create negative and uncomfortable working conditions for women of color (Marbley et al., 2011; Rivera, 2017; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). As Cole (2005) pointed out, “because we are in the house does not mean that we are truly invited to the table” (p. 14). Luna et al. (2010) describes this type of campus climate as “chilly” when individuals of color “feel marginalized, underrepresented, overused, and/or discriminated against” (p. 5, as cited in Jackson, 2004; Park, 1996; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Turner, 2002; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Women of color are seeking a voice and a seat at the table in higher education leadership. In review of challenges that women of color in higher education encounter, the literature reveals strategies for them to employ in order to promote professional growth and resiliency. Further research should be conducted to explore these pipeline issues, institutional climate, and professional opportunities for women of color. As women of color continue to navigate the pipeline, it is extremely important to support, uplift, and celebrate them as essential leaders in higher education.

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## Culturally Responsive Transition Practices: Beyond the Postsecondary Education Opportunity Gap for Diverse Students

York Williams, Ph.D.

### Abstract

Connecting transition planning with students' needs and goals listed in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) has become of critical importance. Transition goals are driven by the student's level of functioning and performance, and other related services under the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). The author stresses the importance of culturally appropriate transition goals that can lead to a successful college or professional school experience for students of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. Transition plans should increase students' opportunities to learn, by including personal goals and culturally responsive family collaboration beyond the students' disabilities, which is crucial to closing the opportunity gap for students with special needs, particularly those from low income and at-risk school communities. The post-high school transition to college access gap can be addressed through: (1) culturally responsive mentoring, (2) building social and cultural capital for CLD student, and (3) strengthening family and school collaboration.

**Key Words:** Culturally Responsive Mentoring, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, At-risk, Family Collaboration

### Culturally Responsive Transition Practices: Beyond the Postsecondary Education Opportunity Gap for Diverse Students

Research in the past 20 years has focused on the overrepresentation of working-class African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American students in special education (Johnson, 1991; Losen & Orfield, 2002), including issues surrounding referral and identification of these students under the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). The issues that impact students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds have continued to raise concerns in the field of special education with a focus on school reforms to address rising disparities in educational outcomes (Artiles & Harry, 2004; Salend & Garrick Duhaney, 2005). Even as the field of general education has worked to change how students are identified for special education, special educators continue to see a disproportionate number of low income and working-class African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American students on their caseloads. The issues of misidentification, under achievement, and poor school outcomes for CLD students have historically been problematic for special educators. Additionally, placement decisions in special education have been inextricably linked to a number of issues such as poor graduation rates, high drop-out rates, and limited access to postsecondary education opportunities (Chamberlain, 2005). Moreover, the overrepresentation of low income and working-class CLD students with disabilities in special education positively correlates with the issues in postsecondary education with college attendance, graduation, and low retention (Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 1999; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Research suggests that a learning disability in combination with other characteristics (e.g., race and class) has a more significant impact on educational

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attainment than any one of the aforementioned characteristics alone (Coutinho, Oswald, & Best, 2002). Through this analytical literature review, the author examines how an understanding of the intersection of race, class, and disability informs 'best practices' in special education transition practices. A diverse set of promising practices must be used with low income and at-risk and working-class African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American students with disabilities in order to increase their social and cultural capital that is also required to support their Postsecondary goals. Some of these goals may include college, career and technical school, and/or professional studies. The author argues that a three-fold approach adopted by special educators will construct a more inclusive secondary transitions framework for students who come from CLD backgrounds and will have a positive impact on their post-high school outcomes. The post-high school to college transition access gap can be addressed through: (1) culturally responsive mentoring, (2) building social and cultural capital for CLD students, and (3) strengthening family and school collaboration.

### IDEA & Secondary Transitions

Under the IDEA, special education teachers are required to provide access to a variety of post-high school opportunities and resources to assist students who have a learning disability. The transition planning should begin as early as age 14 in most states, and under IDEA, by aged 16. Secondary transitions are a series of coordinated activities that provide substantive data on measured outcomes across education, employment, and independent living domains. The student's IEP and evaluation report will identify a student's strengths and needs across these three primary areas. Schools should utilize evidenced-based transition assessment data to inform postsecondary goals noted in the student's current IEP. This is especially important when students are nearing graduation and when the school must complete a Summary of Academic and Functional Performance (SAAFP) for the student.

Overall, secondary transition is the process of preparing students for adult life after they leave high school. Transition planning typically begins at age 14, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, as students consider their goals for the time after graduation through career awareness exploration activities. The transition process continues through high school as academic instruction and community experiences help clarify and support students' goals. The entire process is based on individual student's needs, considering each student's strengths, preferences, and interests. Transition can be thought of as a bridge between school programs and the opportunities of adult life, including higher education or training, employment, independent living, and community participation.

According to the Tennessee Department of Education (Cabeza et al., 2013), as students move through school toward adulthood, they are expected to assume greater responsibility for managing their own behaviors, needs, and expectations. As such, teaching self-determination involves equipping students with the skills, attitudes, and opportunities to play an active and prominent role in their learning and planning for the future. Accordingly, this is now considered a best practice in the field of special education (IDEA, 2004). During the spring of 2012, the authors surveyed administrators across the state of Tennessee to (a) learn how schools across Tennessee are currently addressing self-determination within the curriculum, and (b) find out what schools might want—in terms of training, information, or other resources. The authors received surveys back from 333 schools (37.8 percent of all invited schools). Next, administrators were asked to rate the importance of the seven component skills associated with self-determination, and then which of the seven were taught to identified students with disabilities in specific curricular areas.

Following this data collection, administrators were asked to rate how likely their school staff would be



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to draw upon the resources and trainings in order to support students with self-determination skills: (1) choice making, (2) decision making (3) problem solving (4) goal setting and attainment (5) self-advocacy and leadership (6) self-management and self-regulation and (7) self-awareness and self-knowledge (p. 2). Overall, the school responded favorably to professional development supporting students with self-determination skills through a variety of school and curricula related options. One of the most favored appeared to be a professional development workshop during school hours (92 percent). Relatedly, in another study on self-determination, Wehmeyer et al., recommended including family and community so as to enhance self-determination skill building in youth with special education needs.

According to Test et al. (2009) when looking at all individuals with disabilities of all working ages, only 35 percent reported having a full-time or part-time job versus 78 percent of those without disabilities (National Organization on Disability, 2004). National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2; 2007) Wave 3 data indicated that 72.6 percent of youth with disabilities continued to live with their parents after high school, 9.9 percent lived alone, and 0.5 percent lived in a group home or assisted living facility. Post-school education data indicated that only 7.7 percent were attending a four-year college or university, and 12.8 percent were attending a two-year community college. However, the authors contend that one of the most interesting challenges facing educators who wish to develop and implement transition programs that improve the post-school outcomes for students is to determine what practices lead to improved post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Test et al. identified the need for a review of correlational research in secondary transition to identify evidence-based predictors that are correlated with improved post-school outcomes in education, employment, and/or independent living.

As a result of the systematic review, 16 predictor categories correlated with improved post-school outcomes in the areas of education, employment, and/or independent living were identified. Of the 16 predictor categories identified in this review, 11 significantly correlated with post-school education, five with post-school independent living, and all 16 predictor categories significantly correlated with post-school employment (p. 170), career awareness, community experiences, exit exam requirements/high school diploma status, inclusion in general education, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, paid work experience, parental involvement, program of study, self-advocacy/self-determination, self-care/independent living, social skills, student support, transition program, vocational education, and work study. Of primary interest for this MPP, community experiences had a potential level of evidence for employment based on one exploratory study, and interagency collaboration was a predictor of education, with a potential level of evidence based on one a priori and one exploratory study (p. 171). Lastly, based on one a priori study, parental involvement had a potential level of evidence for employment with a small effect size of .03 (p. 177). The results of this study provide further support for these same variables, the list is now extended to additional predictors and each predictor is now correlated with a specific type of post-school outcome that can lead to potential postsecondary success for identified students receiving special education and transition planning services.

According to Noonan, Morningstar, and Erickson (2008), interagency collaboration has emerged as a major area of difficulty and a critical area of need for improvement for school districts throughout the US. In the authors study, based on the input of research participants from 29 high-performing districts and state-level transition coordinators from five diverse states, 11 key strategies are identified to enhance interagency collaboration. For the purposes of this study, interagency collaboration was defined as a broad concept that encompasses formal and informal relationships between schools and

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adult agencies in which resources are shared to achieve common transition goals. The study involved a two-phase process that consisted of first, analyzing an extant database to identify high performing states and school districts. Next, the authors used focus groups conducted within five states to examine effective interagency strategy practices. The report that the Transition Outcomes Project (TOP) database was used to identify high-performing districts from five states (Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, New Mexico, Pennsylvania), with a pilot study in Kansas. Six one-hour telephone focus groups were conducted with high-performing districts and seven individual interviews were held with the SEA Transition Coordinators by two researchers. The focus groups reportedly consisted of open-ended questions and probes, with some questions designed to receive feedback from all participants (p. 7). The authors identified eleven key strategies as critical for interagency collaboration. Of the ten noted in the study (pp. 10-23), for this MPP, two were most salient: Strategy Eight: Training Students and Families Meetings with Agency Staff and Strategy 10: Transition Councils.

High performing districts valued providing information and training to students and families regarding adult agency services, employment, and postsecondary education. All six focus groups discussed the importance of training students and families as a strategy for interagency collaboration. Information for students was provided primarily through school-based classes, agency presentations, and community-based programs. High-performing districts also often had regularly scheduled meetings between the LEA and adult agency staff which varied from weekly to quarterly meetings. A variety of agencies, such as vocational rehabilitation, mental health, and developmental disability organizations were involved in such meetings. Often, the purpose of these meetings was to ensure ongoing collaboration by sharing information and individualized student planning.

Based on data from the PACER (2017) resource guide for educators, being culturally competent and collaborative includes: (a) being transparent and authentic about student risk, and help families prepare for and advocate for their son or daughter's safety, (b) identifying and taking necessary steps to ensure that families have knowledge of school policies, practices, and procedures related to transition, as well as concerns regarding immigration, bias, and student safety, and (c) scheduling with him and the family meetings in a place and at a time that is convenient for the family's attendance. Additional recommendations include finding a culturally responsive mentor for the colleague who can model best practices and someone who he would respect. Another strategy is role play and reversal which allows him to be in the shoes of the family in order to build on these diverse perspectives and experiences. Teachers can also make sure that he had good contact time in order to learn more about what the family experiences, how they view school and to begin to see the resilience in their efforts to keep sending their kids and to keep coming, when other variables could have forced them to quit a long time ago. These narratives are important since it becomes critical for building rapport and cultural reciprocity in a time of turbulent difference.

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, at the postsecondary level, students must self-identify with the ADA office on a college campus. Additionally, students are responsible for providing documentation verifying their need for accommodations by making specific requests. These students are then provided a level playing field at meeting the same academic requirements of all other students. Part of the transition process is to make sure that students understand the difference between K-12 and college. Namely, in K-12 institutions, it is the responsibility of the institution to reach out and identify students in need of special education, pay for the documentation to evaluate these students, and provide specialized programming. Under the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA, 2008) and ADA, it is the student's responsibility to docu-

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ment needs, make the appointments with the respective school's office of disability services, and work with individual faculty to make the transition to college effective.

When schools and special educators fail to work with students, particularly low income CLD students, the students are more likely to find the transition to college and professional school as problematic and discouraging, and are more likely to avoid pursuing a higher education altogether. Further, many CLD students who have a learning disability are more likely to be first-generation college students. Failure to assist students and their families in identifying these fundamental differences and nuances between postsecondary and K-12 services can leave students and their families frustrated and may result in their developing feelings of racial and social isolation once they arrive at the college campus. Additionally, the IDEA attempts to safeguard against students being left without any level of support and to provide an opportunity for all students with disabilities to secure accommodations that they require in order to meet the academic standards of postsecondary education institutions.

## The Post-High School Access Gap

A transformative goal for schools, in partnership with special educators, is at increasing opportunities for educational access to college for underserved populations, including students who are first generation, working-class, and underrepresented CLD students who have a learning disability. However, educators in public schools often have large caseloads, must manage student behaviors, and struggle with implementing culturally responsive practices. As a result, these educators tend to shift their focus and best practices away from students' post-school outcomes, and instead focus more narrowly on those students' high school graduation. However, the demographic shift in the national college freshman population highlights the growing numbers of students with disabilities.

In 1999-2000, six percent of full-time, first-time freshmen who were enrolled in four-year public and private institutions had disabilities (Henderson, 2001). Although this statistic represents an increase of postsecondary students reporting a disability, it blurs the link between the race and class of students with disabilities in high school and their transition to college. The largest percentage of students with disabilities attending college is of those who comprise the disability category known as specific learning disability (SLD) which is typically characterized by deficits in reading, mathematics, and writing (Table 1). These students have increased from 16.1 percent to 40.4 percent of college students with disabilities in the past 12 years (Henderson, 2001). Notably, this increase represents a Caucasian, upper-middle class increase in postsecondary attendance and attainment, not CLD students, where the data on these groups is sparse and not readily available (Henderson, 2001). See table below:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specific learning disabilities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deaf-Blindness</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emotional disturbance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Orthopedic impairments</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intellectual Disability (ID)Mental retardation (High functioning)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Traumatic brain injury</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other Health Impairment (ADHD)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple Disabilities</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speech or Language Impairments</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hearing impairments</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Autism Spectrum Disorder (Severe to</li></ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autism (High Functioning) Bridging)</li> </ul>	<p>Profound)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual Disability (Severe – Profound)</li> <li>• Visual impairments</li> </ul>
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Table 1 represents the learning disability categories under the IDEA.

low income, CLD students with an SLD. Additionally, students who come from CLD backgrounds who also have more severe disabilities within special education often come from families who have not attended postsecondary education. These students often do not have an opportunity to attend postsecondary education, and are usually highly underrepresented in high school college preparation courses, such as advanced placement and honors courses. Unfortunately, even under the new Common Core, the practice of HS course placement is often based on students' SES, race, and learning disability or ability (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higuera, 2005). Relatedly, low income CLD students cannot afford and do not have access to private tutoring and other out-of-school services such as SAT preparation, professional tutoring and college preparation programs (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). These discrepancies in access to quality education resources limit CLD students' acquisition of social and cultural capital that can assist them in developing college-going identities.

## Culturally Responsive Mentoring

Culturally responsive mentoring is defined as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning and achievement more relevant and effective for them (Williams, 2010; 2012). The relationship is established based on a model of ethics and culturally competent care (Illustration 1). The mentor establishes an ethic of care model in which to understand the background of the student, their beliefs, assumptions, and practices which may and/or may not be directly linked to the student's predicted success as a college student. The mentor understands dispositions and beliefs and connects or disconnects these assumptions through their modeling of the habits and skills required to become a successful college student. Coupled with culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy, culturally responsive mentoring becomes a successful tool used to close the achievement and access gaps found in higher education today (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Harry, 2008; Hoge & Coladarc, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1994). See Ethic of Care Model Illustration below (Williams, 2008).

Figure 2 illustrates the role care and culturally responsive practices plays in the lives of students. In a study by Glaser & Ross (1970), the authors identify characteristics that separate successful and

### Ethic of Care Model



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unsuccessful adults in developing long range goals, most notably, ones that include a positive vision of one's future. Most of these long-range goals are obtained by planning, preparation, and consistent efforts born through a strong commitment to work towards one's future in small obtainable steps. Glaser and Ross suggest that less successful students believe that their future stems from an external locus of control. According to Howard (1990), the driving forces behind a formal mentoring program with economically disadvantaged youths include: teaching students efficacy regarding effective self-motivation, and providing exposure to the values, resources, and programs available to assist in the development of their visionary future while encouraging motivation to become a successful adult. Markus, Cross, and Worth (1990) maintain that higher aspirations help students to receive greater meaning through their academics because they can envision success in school that relates in a positive way that is interconnected to the attainment of their future goals and accomplishments. Hence, academic achievement is improved when students are mentored to actualize these goals (Blum & Jones, 1993; Bush, 1994; McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Russ, 1993; Slicker & Palmer, 1993).

Data on mentoring shows that mentors do not take control of a student's educational direction, but assists the student in developing and improving his or her own direction in life. The cliché used many times that fits so well is "you can lead a horse to the water, but you can't make them drink it." It is up to the student to use the mentoring process to their advantage. As a mentor, a trusted teacher, or guide, the position must not be taken lightly as it strongly affects the student's future educational outcome. The culturally responsive mentoring relationship creates a framework through which the CLD student can grow and develop the tools to use while making progress along their pre-college journey. Although the field of education is sparse on the topic of mentoring, let alone how it can be culturally responsive to the needs of CLD students, new studies will bring with them new ideas, solutions, and better opportunities for the success and guidance by mentors for students of low socioeconomic status. Culturally responsive mentoring is a key concept here that can aid in the retention and graduation of students who come from CLD backgrounds, and who possess a learning disability; and who are also interested in or who currently attend postsecondary education.

### **Social and Cultural Capital**

Students' social and cultural capital creates differences in college-going identities (McDonough, 1997). Social capital for students with disabilities in relation to college includes the availability of information-sharing networks about college. Cultural capital is the value placed on obtaining a college education and the information available about acquiring one. Special educators' ability to influence how low income and working-class African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American students with disabilities form college-going identities and achieve their subsequent success in college is directly related to nurturing social and cultural capital in relation to college. This includes addressing social and economic stratification that exists in society in relation to race, class, and disability; understanding the law, and facilitating the selection of a college with resources and demographics that match students' diverse social, economic, and emotional needs.

Students who come from low income and at-risk backgrounds typically yield non-traditional forms of social capital. Social networks such as churches, boys and girls clubs, cultural and community centers, museums, and local mom & pop establishments can support school efforts to enforce education and culturally responsive and competent transition practices (Williams, 2013). Additionally, in low income communities, educators and schools can partner with public welfare agencies and local adults with disabilities organizations, such as the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) and the Social Security Administration

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and the employment office. Social networks can be located in any one of these institutions and can form what Granovetter calls thick social networks with strong ties. These networks are renewable and transferable for successive generations of low income CLD students with disabilities (1982).

According to Bordieu and Coleman (1991), cultural capital entails, amongst other salient themes, the norms, beliefs, assumptions, and ideas of a particular group that translates into practice and takes on a form of its own life. Bordieu and Colman maintain that culturally relevant practices provide meaning for the actor. Here, inner-city and residentially segregated schools can harvest the cultural capital embedded within their neighborhoods, that transcends the oftentimes negative images reported by the media. Such vestiges of cultural capital include community church groups, folk club organizations, music and dance ensembles such as drill teams and African dance schools, theatre, spoken word, and more. The capital that exists within these localized organizations can be coupled with school transition practices that promote sustainability with rich transcendental meaning around the transition practices used for CLD students. College trips may be a means to an end, but a more familiar starting point for schools might be to look within their local community by way of sponsored service learning and/or related activities that can be used to move students beyond the parameters of the school community.

### **Culturally Responsive Family Collaboration**

Some policy revisions found in the amended IDEA (2004) address issues around school and home collaboration. In the new requirements, schools are responsible for creating practices that ensure that caregivers understand the IEP for their child. Schools are also responsible for making sure the caregivers are pleased with their level of collaboration. Therefore, the system of special education has moved away from a focus on narrow school practices to a focus on families and students. With such requirements, issues are bound to arise. These issues are noted in experiences of CLD families.

Kalyanpur (1998) examines how the discourse between parents and professionals, based on blindness of cultural differences through cultural assumptions, impacted special education services provided for CLD families. These services essentially left parents without adequate resources to assist in making decisions for their child's special education needs. Kalyanpur recommends the need for communicative competence, as well as the acknowledgement by educators of cultural assumptions they may possess, which may be embedded in the services provided by them and other professionals for families from diverse communities. Kalyanpur notes the discrepancies in the dialogue between school teachers and school leaders who fail to understand CLD families and who view the child's school experience as a collective. The author highlights the cultural assumptions that abound when special educators believe that postsecondary education is an individual student choice, when in fact, this decision typically impacts the entire extended CLD family. Kalyanpur concludes that the structure and expectations of support groups are often incompatible with the norms and values of minority cultures. The latter oftentimes leads to gaps of misunderstandings.

Tekin-Iftar (2008) emphasizes the importance of parent participation in the education of children, especially those with more severe disabilities. Tekin-Iftar maintains that parent participation results in greater continuity, maintenance of skills, and increased parent satisfaction. Tekin-Iftar suggests that parents can effectively teach their children with developmental disabilities a variety of skills, including language and communication skills, as well as daily living skills. Tekin-Iftar investigates the effectiveness of parent-delivered community-based instruction using simultaneous prompting. More importantly, in Tekin-Iftar's seminal study, the caregivers did not have high levels of edu-

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cation. Two parents had high school diplomas, and two only completed elementary school. The strength of these data reveal that there are a variety of ways to develop culturally responsive and respectful family collaboration that focus on the whole child, beyond his or her disability.

For students who come from low income CLD families and who have disabilities, the family typically becomes the primary source of capital and support that can further assist the student in the secondary transition process. The earlier the involvement, the stronger the impact on post-school outcomes for these students with learning and other disabilities. Additionally, educators should become familiar with the changing roles of the African American and Latino family. In some demographics, foster care, grandmother, and even second or third generation caregivers are raising children in their extended families. There is no such thing as the 'one best' familial system in a post-industrial society. The ever-evolving American public school system truly does reflect the old African proverb that notes, "it takes a village."

### Summary & Recommendations

Given the nexus of issues that result in poor post-high school to college transition outcomes, poor college performance and cultural deficit theories of CLD students and their families, there is a need for K-college educators to adopt a framework that supports teaching beyond the disability. This framework envisions pedagogy and practices that look at the student and his or her community/family and constructs culturally responsive practices through instruction, transition plans, and services. The aforementioned framework considers the needs of the 'whole' student (Hughes, Valle-Riestra, & Arguelles, 2002; Lo, 2010; Salas, 2004). Students who come from CLD backgrounds, low income, at-risk urban school communities, and more, and who may also possess disabilities, will benefit from the inclusion of culturally responsive transition planning (CRTP) coupled with an individual education transition plan that includes a special lens on diversity. The author makes the following special education reform recommendations concerning transition planning for post high school to college:

1. Engage in site-based, school, and teacher leadership critical reflection that explores one's own attitudes and perceptions concerning cultural and linguistic diversity, and the influence of these attitudes and perceptions on students with special needs and others who come from (CLD) backgrounds across all school programs.
2. Acquire accurate information about (CLD) groups and their families (e.g., histories, cultural styles, values, customs and traditions, child rearing practices, etc.) and group identity development, and how this impacts adolescent students with disabilities and their outcomes using culturally responsive transition practices to plan for beyond postsecondary education.
3. Participate in formal and ongoing multicultural professional development in order to maximize an understanding of (CLD) students and develop skills that can address the academic, cognitive, social, psychological, and cultural needs of (CLD) students;
4. Participate in professional development that allows a special focus on the complex issues that serve as obstacles for specific high needs diverse groups, such as African American and Latino/Hispanic males' experiences across achievement and opportunity gaps in special education.
5. Examine the framework used to address family collaboration and the roles of practitioners,

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paraprofessionals, administrators, and others, so as to create a learning community for families and caretakers of (CLD) students that extends beyond the boundaries of the IEP and quarterly progress notes and meetings.

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## Pathways to Academic Success:

### A Literature Review of a Strengths-Based Approach to Support Student Success

Joseph Webb

#### Introduction

According to Garza and Bowden (2014), “virtually every institution of higher education in the United States is faced with the issue of student retention and success” (p. 402). Recently, Appreciative Inquiry has been the focus of discussions and research using the strengths-based approach to support student success. “Unfortunately, most institutions have not yet been able to translate what we know about student retention into forms of action that have led to substantial gains in student persistence and graduation” (Tinto, 2007, p. 5). Furthermore, with recent changes to the financial aid satisfactory academic progress (FASAP) guidelines, students are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of above a 2.0 or better and pass an average of 12 credits per semester to remain eligible to receive financial aid. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 30 percent of students who entered college in the fall of 2014 did not return in the second year. In an effort to support disadvantaged students, the intent of this study will explore the effects of using Appreciative Inquiry to support first-year at-risk student success in higher education.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strengths-based approach to positive change through structured, positively framed inquiry. In essence, AI is an approach to development that discovers the best of ‘what is’ in order to imagine ‘what can be’ and then design ‘what will be’ (Philips, 2004, p. 31). Most recently, Appreciative Inquiry has been applied in a wide variety of educational contexts and settings such as an appreciative approach to diversity training (Bloom, Weiser, & Buonocore, 2012), appreciative education (Bloom, Hudson, He, & Konkle, 2013), appreciative advising (Bloom, Hudson, & He, 2008; Howell, 2010; Truschel, 2007), and appreciative coaching (Maritz, & Roets, 2013; Roberts, 2013; Herr 2017). Proceeding from the results on previous studies, this study will further explore the application of Appreciative Inquiry and the AI derivatives used to support student success. Thus, decades of research literature on Appreciative Inquiry support the strengths-based approach in identifying what works with individuals, team, and whole organizations and how to build on those elements to create a positive future. Furthermore, few studies have attempted to implement the strengths-based approach of AI in regards to supporting at-risk students in higher education, and no prior studies have addressed the influence Appreciative Inquiry has on supporting at-risk student success. According to Hammond and Royal (2001), “AI deliberately seeks to discover people’s exceptionality – their unique gifts, strengths, and qualities. It actively searches and recognizes people for their specialties – their essential contributions and achievements” (p. 12). In addition, Truschel (2007) suggested, “Appreciative Inquiry may be a valuable method for engaging at-risk students, helping them to modify their behaviors, and assisting them to achieve academic success” (p. 2).

Therefore, this study is to explore the current literature on Appreciative Inquiry and the impact

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AI has on student academic success. In addition, this study will examine the different contexts in which AI has been applied, research methods, and findings from previous studies. This article contains the following sections: (a) search strategy and inclusion criteria, (b) organization of review, (c) definitions of Appreciative Inquiry, (d) practical application of Appreciative Inquiry, (e) a case for Appreciative Inquiry to support student success, (f) literature critique and recommended research, and (g) conclusion.

## Search Strategy and Inclusion Criteria

With the goal of identifying pertinent empirical literature on the topic of Appreciative Inquiry and its impact on college student success, searches were conducted between October 2017 and March 2018. Research was conducted using multiple databases accessible through EBSCO Host, Google Scholar, and ProQuest. In addition, several book chapters were examined to support the literature on Appreciative Inquiry and student success. Furthermore, the following databases offered the most useful, applicable, and relevant results for this literature review: Sage Journals Online, and Wiley Online Library. For the purposes of this study, the following keywords were used in the search: Appreciative Inquiry, Appreciative Inquiry in higher education, and Appreciative Inquiry to support student success.

The initial search of "Appreciative Inquiry" resulted in over 17,700 results from scholarly articles, peer-reviews, and books. However, to narrow the search results, the terms "Appreciative Inquiry" in "Higher Education" were used, which resulted in over 5,770 results from scholarly articles, peer-reviews, and books. In order to refine the search results, a new search using the terms "Appreciative Inquiry" to "support student success" was used, which resulted in 74 results from scholarly articles, peer-reviews, and books. The searches for this review produced a wealth of results – many of which were not applicable for the intent of this literature review. However, 18 scholarly articles and peer-reviews were used to support this literature review, as well as five books. Once relevant articles were identified, each article was synthesized to identify themes to better support this literature. In addition, several other relevant articles were identified from the reference pages of those articles.

## Organization of Review

This literature review focuses on themes across multiple research studies that used Appreciative Inquiry to support student success in higher education. It begins with providing a definition of Appreciative Inquiry and the different contexts in which AI has been used. It then delves into practical applications of Appreciative Inquiry used to support student success in higher education. Most specifically, how Appreciative Inquiry has been used to support at-risk student in higher education. Next, there is a focus on student success and retention and the need for foundational theory's such as Appreciative Inquiry to help promote student success and retention in higher education. The review concludes with discussions and implications regarding the use of Appreciative Inquiry-derived positive change models used to support student success in higher education.

## Definitions of Appreciative Inquiry

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) originally developed Appreciative Inquiry as an action-research methodology in organizational and community development fields. Appreciative Inquiry uses a strengths-based approach for promoting positive change. Through storytelling and reflection,

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individuals and organizations are able to identify the best of “what is” and imagine a positive future that they desire, and dream to systematic inquiry. According to Cooperrider et al. (2008),

Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves the discovery of what gives “life” to a living system when it is most effective, alive, and constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a systems capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. The inquiry is mobilized through the crafting of the “unconditional positive question,” often involving hundreds or thousands of people. AI interventions focus on the speed of imagination and innovation instead of the negative, critical, and spiraling diagnoses commonly used in organizations. The discovery, dream, design, and destiny model links the energy of the positive core to changes never thought possible (p. 3).

From the time when Cooperrider and Srivastva developed Appreciative Inquiry in 1987, many researchers have used this philosophy in different contexts other than organizational development. In addition, the term Appreciative Inquiry (AI) has also been changed to support the contexts in which it is now being used. According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010), “Appreciative Inquiry is the study of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best. This approach to personal change is based on the assumption that questions and dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes, and dreams are themselves transformational. In short, Appreciative Inquiry suggests that human organizing and change at its best is a relational process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation” (p. 1).

Appreciative Inquiry is best used in the process of identifying strengths, and building on those strengths to create a positive future. Furthermore, AI differs from the problem-solving approach which is typically used in change management. The process of facilitating AI consist of implementing the 4-D cycle, which includes: (1) discovery, (2) dream, (3) design, and (4) destiny. However, as AI has been used in different contexts, various typologies have been developed to support the different usage of AI. For example, Bloom et al., (2013), provide the 6-D model of Appreciative Education, which includes: (1) disarm, (2) discovery, (3) dream, (4) design, (5) deliver, and (6) don't settle. Appreciative Advising emerged when Bloom and Martin (2002) incorporated Appreciative Inquiry into Academic Advising. Hutson and Amundsen from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) later coined the term “Appreciative Advising.” Bloom, Hutson, and He later expanded on the AI 4-D model and developed the six phases of Appreciative Advising – Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver, and Don't Settle. In 2008, Hudson, Bloom, and He (2008) wrote the first book on the topic of Appreciative Advising.

### Appreciative Advising Phases

- Disarm – Recognizing the importance of first impressions, create a safe, welcoming environment for students.
- Discover - Utilize positive open-ended questions to draw out what they enjoy doing, their strengths, and their passions. Listen to each answer carefully before asking the next positive question.
- Dream - Help students formulate a vision of what they might become, and then assist them in developing their life and career goals.
- Design – Help students devise concrete, incremental, and achievable goals
- Deliver – The students follows through on their plans. The advisor is there for them when they

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stumble, believing in them every step of the way, and helping them continue to update and refine their dreams as they go.

- Don't Settle – The advisor challenges the student to proactively raise the student's internal bar of self-expectations (Bloom et al., 2008)

In the past decade, researchers have used the strengths-based approach of AI and applied this methodology to support student success in higher education. Most recently, Appreciative Advising, Appreciative Education, and Appreciative College Instruction have been used to support student success in higher education. Although there are other applications of AI used in higher education, these particular applications have focused their methods on support student interactions, engagement, and academic success. Definitions of each of the AI derivatives are provided below to gain a better understanding of these positive change models and how they're used in an educational setting.

Appreciative Advising (AA) was first introduced by Bloom and Martin (2002), who conducted studies on how the AI 4-D model could be used by academic advisors to better support their interactions with students. Based on the literature provided from Bloom and Martin (2002), Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008), proposed the addition of adding two phases to Cooperrider's initial 4-D model (Disarm and Don't Settle) to better support the interactions advisors have with their students. According to Bloom et al., (2008), Appreciative Advising is a "social constructivist advising philosophy that provides a framework for optimizing adviser interactions with students" (p. 11).

Appreciative Education was developed based on the positive psychology theories and Appreciative Inquiry principles. Appreciative Education (AE) is a positive approach to identifying what is working well and seeks to enhance and/or do more of it. According to Bloom, Hutson, He, and Konkle (2013), "Appreciative Education is a framework for delivering high-quality education on both an individual and organizational level. It provides an intentional and positive approach to bettering educational enterprises by focusing on the strengths and potential of individuals and organizations to accomplish co-created goals" (pp.5-6). Appreciative Education provides a flexible framework, which can be used to support many areas of the institution. This framework consists of six innovative practices such as (1) positive interactions, (2) reciprocal learning, (3) holistic engagement, (4) strategic design, (5) appreciative leadership, and (6) intentional change. Positive interactions, reciprocal learning, and holistic engagement are innovative practices better suited for supporting student success. Positive interactions are critical for students to establish meaningful relationships with faculty and staff. In addition, reciprocal learning allows the teaching and learning process to be shared by both the student and professor. This approach allows both the student and professor to ask questions and become engaged in the learning and teaching process. Similar to the reciprocal learning practice, holistic engagement focuses on helping students make the most of their higher education experience at the institution. This approach encourages curricular and co-curricular involvement. Thus, helping students identify their strengths and apply these strengths to both in – and –out of class experiences. Appreciative Education focuses on other areas besides individual and organizational development. According to Bloom et al., (2013), "Appreciative Education celebrates the development of a framework that is interactive, transformational, adaptable, and can be used to guide both individual interactions and organizational efforts" (p.8).

Lastly, Appreciative College Instruction (ACI) uses the foundational theory of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Appreciative Advising (AA), and Appreciative Mindset (AM) for use in student success courses. Appreciative Mindset focuses on identifying the positive attributes in students and using these attributes to

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support learning outcomes in the classroom. According to Bloom, Hutson, He, and Robinson (2011), "The heart-and-soul of ACI is the Appreciative Mindset. Rooted in the positive psychology theories and the organizational development theory of Appreciative Inquiry, the Appreciative Mindset is predicate on an acknowledgment of instructor choices in his/her approach to students as well as teaching style" (p. 3). Similar to the other AI derivatives, ACI seeks to identify the best in students and how they can be taught. With the constant changes in student demographics and teaching pedagogies, this approach can be effective in supporting all students and the learning challenges they face.

### Practical Applications

As previously discussed, AI has been used in many different context to apply the strengths-based approach to achieve positive change within organizations and individuals. This segment will focus on previous studies using AI in the educational context to support student success. Each study has been synthesized to include the methodology, research participants, and research results using the foundational theory of AI and its derivatives. In addition, key themes have been identified from each study to report the effects AI has on student success.

### Appreciative Advising

In a study to determine whether Appreciative Advising could be used as a student retention model to support at-risk students in higher education, Truschel, (2008) examined the effects of AA on 112 at-risk students at a Comprehensive Public Regional University. Students who had less than 30 credit hours and obtained less than a 2.0 cumulative GPA were identified as at-risk. The study consisted of three advising meetings during the first five weeks of the semester. The first meeting consisted of incorporating the Discovery phase of the AI 4-D model. The second meeting included the Dream and Design phases. Moreover, the third and final meeting included the Destiny phase. In order to assess the effectiveness of AA, a survey instrument was developed to measure the student's perception of traits such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, motivation, and commitment to the positive process. From the survey data collected, the Appreciative Advising approach demonstrated positive results in increasing student's self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, and commitment to the positive process. Truschel (2008) indicated the advisors participating in this research study, "felt uplifted and more positive as a result of the affirming interactions with the students. At the end of a busy day, there was a sense of accomplishment and positive self-worth with more available energy than there had been when advising students in a negative (deficit) manner. The appreciative advising process placed the burden and positive experience on the students who ultimately have control and responsibility of their academic experience" (p. 14).

### Appreciative Inquiry

In a study to identify how at-risk high school students in an alternative school describe how they best learn and extrapolate their preferred learning to improve teacher pedagogical practices, San Martin and Calabrese (2010) used a qualitative case study design as their research method for this study (p. 10). Eight students (four males and four females) were identified by faculty and staff to participate in this study. Data was collected from recorded transcriptions of focus groups, semi-structured paired interviews, and group discussions. This study focused on the first two D's in the AI 4 D cycle – discovery and dream. Data was analyzed using content analysis, open coding, axial coding, text analysis software, and pattern matching. Multiple methods of collecting and analyzing data was used to provide additional validation of results for this study.

Four key themes were identified through the results of this study: (a) relevant experiences were im-



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portant for learning, (b) a cooperative and respectful learning environment is a core value, (c) learning should be enjoyable, and (d) the concept of family became an important metaphor for the learning environment. The strengths-based approach of the AI process allowed these at-risk students to gain a better understanding of their unique strengths, and participate in a study to identify best practices and benchmarking to increase student engagement and learning outcomes in the classroom. Using the AI process with at-risk students, the results from this study showed how beneficial it is to work with these students, instead of working on them. Furthermore, San Martin and Calabrese (2010) indicated, "The AI process can be beneficial to administrators and teachers concerned with creating an optimal learning environment. The AI process offers an alternative to the traditional, deficit-based problem-solving view often taken of at-risk students who seemingly fail in traditional high school classroom settings and are placed in alternative high schools as a last resort" (p. 119).

### **Appreciative Education**

In a study to explore the strengths of Chinese international students and to identify areas where support is needed during their transition to U.S. higher education settings, He and Hutson (2018) conducted a convergent mixed methods study to identify, what are Chinese international student's perceptions of their transition experiences? As well as, what are the strengths they use to support their transition? This study used Appreciative Education as a strengths-based framework to explore the acculturation process of international students from China (He & Hutson, 2018, p. 88). The study consisted of 61 first-year Chinese students enrolled in a mid-sized public university in the Southeast United States. Surveys, focus groups, and interviews were used to collect data throughout the study. Using a convergent mixed methods approach, He and Hutson (2018) used the Appreciative Advising Inventory to collect quantitative data, and the Appreciative Education framework to collect qualitative data. This study focused on the data collection and analysis on Chinese students' strengths.

According to He and Hutson (2018), findings from the research indicated a commitment and motivation as well as network and community are two areas of strength participants not only reported possessing, but that they leveraged to support their transition in the United States (p. 99). Furthermore, He and Hutson (2018) indicated, "Applying the AE framework with Chinese international students, we were able to uncover strengths students can leverage to not only ease their transition to the U.S. higher education system, but also maximize their learning while pursuing their degrees. The process also revealed the need for higher education professionals and students to shift their mindsets from filling the language and cultural gaps to uncovering and leveraging their strengths" (p. 101).

As a result, He and Hutson concluded that using the Appreciative Education framework to help international students discover their strengths. As a result, higher education professionals will be able to design innovative programs that not only support international students with their transition to the institution, but also capitalize on their strengths to support their growth and development and enrich the educational experiences for all students.

### **Using a Strengths-Based Approach to Support Student Success**

Student success and retention is an on-going concern for many higher education institutions throughout the United States. Many students who enroll in a postsecondary institution with the goal to earn a college degree fail to persist until graduation. Furthermore, with recent changes to the financial aid satisfactory academic progress (FASAP) guidelines, students are required to maintain a cumulative

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GPA of above a 2.0 or better and pass an average of 12 credits per semester to remain eligible to receive financial aid. Thus, providing first-year students two semester to maintain above a 2.0 cumulative GPA to remain eligible for financial aid. Tinto (1999) reported that over half of all students who depart a university do so prior to their second year of college and that only 60 percent of students who are enrolled at a four-year college actually earn a degree (Morrow, et al. 2012, p. 483). Research has shown that the first few weeks of a student's experience on a college campus is critical towards persisting and obtaining a college degree. According to Tinto (2007), two areas, among many, that are ripe for exploration are the effects of classroom practice upon student learning and persistence and the impact of institutional investment in faculty and staff development programs on those outcomes (p. 7).

So how can institutions move from focusing on the problems of retention, to implementing possibilities to promote student success? Appreciative Inquiry at its core is one of the most fundamental processes to help individuals and organizations shift their views from focusing on the problems to seeing the possibilities. Problem solving previously began with 1) identifying the problem or the missing item, 2) analyzing the reasons, 3) analyzing solutions, and 4) developing plans for practice. On the contrary, AI attempts to step away from conventional methods with a tendency to focus on improving areas that already yield good results. This method activates changes by emphasizing the key outstanding features of an organization or a community, and uses those outstanding features as the starting point in changing a society or an organization (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2003; Mohr, Smith & Whitney, 2001 cited in Tosati, Lawthong & Suwanmonkha, 2015). Furthermore, when focusing on the positive attributes that support student success, the results from a study conducted by Morrow & Ackermann (2012) demonstrated the impact non-cognitive factors have on predicting intention to persist in college and retention of students from their first to second year. In addition, Van Den Bergh et al., (2014) conducted a study to determine the affective values of students' learning experiences using the foundational theory of Appreciative Inquiry. The results from this study identified many key themes that determine the affective value of student learning experience. The application of AI proved to produce valuable student experiences. These experiences increased student engagement in learning and resulted in change and development on emotional, cognitive, and behavioral levels. Thus, the results indicate when students feel secure and supported in their learning environment, they are more open and willing to involve themselves in the learning process.

Student success and retention is based primarily on a student's cumulative GPA and their ability to persist from semester to semester. A student's GPA is determined by their academic performance in the classroom. Appreciative College Instruction (ACI) provides a learning-centered classroom environment that allows the student and professor to share in the learning and teaching process. According to Tinto (2007) "regarding faculty and staff development, it is increasingly clear that faculty actions, especially in the classroom, are critical to institutional efforts to increase student retention, but it is also clear that the faculty of our universities and colleges are, as matter of practice, the only faculty from kindergarten through universities who are literally not trained to teach their students" (p. 7).

Appreciative College Instruction includes the foundational theory of Appreciative Mindset, and uses the six stages parallel to the Appreciative Advising 6-D model: Disarm, Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny, and Don't Settle. According to Bloom et al., (2011) the "Appreciative Mindset basis of ACI allows instructors to be themselves. That is, the instructors can incorporate the principles into lesson plans in the most individualized and meaningful way because ACI is not a lock-step, cookie-cutter approach in which teachers must contort their style to fit into the model or one misstep results in disaster" (p. 6).

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Over the past three decades, most literature and research focusing on student success and retention address the effects of programs and initiatives to support student success, such as learning centers, tutoring, mentoring programs, summer bridge programs, academic advising, writing centers, student support services, etc. However, there is a dismal amount of literature and research focusing on what higher education faculty are doing to support student retention within the classroom setting. Student success and retention is an institutional commitment. Successful student retention initiatives require support and collaboration with all constituents within the institution. Tinto (2007) stated: "Unfortunately too many of our conversations with faculty are not about student education but student retention and focus instead on the ways their actions can enhance student education. If faculty attend to that task, increased student retention will follow of its own accord. It is for this reason that we must bring to the study of student retention the extensive body of research on student learning and demonstrate the multiple connections between faculty efforts to improve student learning to that of improved student retention" (p. 9).

### Literature Critique and Recommended Research

Since the foundational theory of Appreciative Inquiry is a new concept to the field of higher education, there is a plethora of opportunities for additional research to study the effects of AI on supporting student success and retention in postsecondary education. Most recently, Appreciative Advising (AA), Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Appreciative College Instruction (ACI), and Appreciative Education (AE) have been implemented into the higher education context to support student success. However, the results from these studies demonstrate positive outcomes using the strengths-based approach when working with students. Furthermore, little research has proven whether AI has an effect on increasing student graduation rates and the overall college experience for students. In addition, when facilitating AI using the different AI derivatives, no current research indicates specific competencies needed by the AI facilitator to effectively implement the foundational theory of AI. Although researchers have demonstrated this approach to be effective on supporting student success, the greatest shortcoming of this research is identifying competencies needed to successfully implement AI in a higher education context.

Another area for future research when working with at-risk students in postsecondary education is what are some ways that at-risk students perceive that Appreciative Inquiry enhances their academic performance? This could be done by conducting a qualitative study on at-risk students who participated in a program, which used AI as the foundational theory for supporting student success. Interviews and observations can be the main source of collecting data. Data analysis can be accomplished by following a standard format for coding. This approach can provide rich and valid data to identify key components of the AI methodology that have the greatest impact on helping student achieve their full potential in higher education.

### Conclusion

While there is an increasing need to enhance student success and retention, most student success and retention programs focus on solving the student issue or concern. Appreciative Inquiry provides a framework that promotes positive change in individuals and organizations by identifying the best of "what is" and creating a vision of the best of "what can be." Given the findings from the previous studies using the different AI derives in an educational setting, there is evidence in support of the impact the strengths-based approach of AI can have on supporting student success and retention in postsecondary education. In addition, research has identified successful

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implementation of AI to enhance student learning through curricular and co-curricular instruction.

What is noticeable is that the strengths-based approach of Appreciative Inquiry is being incorporated in the higher education context to support student success and retention. The results have proven successful, thus providing many opportunities for researchers to continue building on the literature of Appreciative Inquiry and student success. In contrast, as higher education institutions continue to experience changes in technology, student demographics, financial aid, teaching pedagogies, and learning strategies, Appreciative Inquiry creates a framework to support positive change initiatives, by helping students identify their strengths and use those strengths to develop action plans for academic success. This strengths-based approach stimulates the growth and development of students through an increase in positive emotions, confidence, relationship building, curricular, and co-curricular engagement. Furthermore, Appreciative Inquiry has the ability to improve student success, innovation, and well-being.

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# Pennsylvania Black Conference On Higher Education

## Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: You Shouldn't Use this Anthology in Your Class

Jean Paul Kondantusi

It was the end of fall semester 2013, and we were getting ready for spring 2014. I was ABD and a second-year part-time temporary instructor at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, a university with a predominantly white student population. I was assigned to a new mentor, and as a mentee, I was supposed to discuss my syllabi and textbook choices with my mentor before making them official. It is a custom at IUP that all mentees work closely with their mentors. For my third semester as a graduate student instructor, I ordered *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice* (2013), edited by Maurianne Adams, Warren J. Blumenfeld, Carmelita (Rosie) Castaneda, Heather W. Hackman, Madeline L. Peters, and Ximena Zuniga, for my composition II class. When I showed this anthology to my mentor to get his opinion, he advised me to forget it, saying: "You shouldn't use this anthology because of who you are." I feigned not to understand and asked him what he meant. He replied, "Let me be blunt. If you use this book, white students will resist you because you are black." He feared that white students would not be ready to discuss diversity and social justice; rather, they would choose to remain silent.

Was he right? Yes, he was. Did he have my best interest in mind and want me to have a successful semester? Absolutely! I knew he meant well, and I grudgingly told him that I will take his advice. However, while I was pondering our conversation, I remembered that earlier, when I defended my dissertation proposal, one of the members of my dissertation committee tagged me, saying that my project was political. Now, this incident (on our diverging opinions on a textbook choice with my mentor) caused me to consider his reaction as a way of reminding me that my white students were entitled to a treatment of privilege and I had no right to change that. I remembered James Baldwin's "A Talk to Teachers," in which he stated that "[w]hat societies really, ideally, want, is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight—at no matter what risk. . . . This is the only way societies change" (326). While I grudgingly agreed with my mentor to drop my textbook choice, Baldwin's words kept bugging me. I wondered about the kind of teacher I am and always wanted to be. I asked myself, although my mentor means well, isn't he unconsciously asking me to accept status quo and live with it? Do I want to be a teacher who should let the society continue to be the way it is without questioning some of its practices and customs?

In a racialized society, answering "yes" to my questions would mean adhering to what educator Joyce E. King calls "dysconscious racism," which she defines as "a form of racism that tacitly ac-

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cepts dominant White norms and privileges" (135). I always consider that one of the roles of a teacher of humanities is that of an activist for social change. As long as social injustice continues to prevail, it is my duty as a teacher to do whatever I can to fight for a better society. One way of fulfilling that mission is in trying to use texts that challenge my [white] students' deep-seated beliefs; texts that push them out of their comfort zone in order to look at society from the perspective of the oppressed or the underprivileged. While I attempted to follow my mentor's advice, it was out of the question for me to abandon my original plan and objective of using socially significant texts.

After abandoning *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice* that semester, I chose another textbook with a friendly title. I selected Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa, and Virginia Clark's *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers* (2013). However, from that moment, I became preoccupied with the idea of finding ways of avoiding to fall in the trap of "inappropriate" book selection. My question was, how could I use the "inappropriate" or "politically sensitive" texts without drawing unnecessary negative attention on myself? The answer to this question would help me serve my students in reshaping the way they look at society. My goal was to help my white students see that many things they consider to be okay are not necessarily so—that their expected entitlement to a treatment of privilege is detrimental to those whose skin color is different from theirs. Education does not really benefit the learners if it does not have a transformative power. It should incite the learners to fight for a better society rather than a recycling of the same ideologies. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire points out that education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes 'the practice of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (34). Put differently, Freire believes that real education does not limit itself to helping the younger generation to become a member of its society in adhering to its practices. Real education must help the younger generation to become free thinkers who can rebel against the established order of society, especially if it does not treat its individual members equally.

One of the common teaching objectives for a teacher is to help students become critical thinkers. Teachers of writing and literature put a special emphasis on this critical thinking. In his book *Engaging Ideas* (2011), John C. Bean points out that "[p]art of the difficulty of teaching critical thinking . . . is awakening students to the existence of problems all around them" (3). For me, one of these problems is racial and social injustice. How do I make sure that my students do not view racial and social injustice as past issues but rather as current problems in this country? What kinds of texts and class activities can I design to help them consider these issues critically without falling in what Alice McIntyre calls "white talk" (45)? For McIntyre, white talk constitutes "the different ways that white people "talk themselves out" of being responsible for racism. White talk is a "talk that insulates white people from examining their/our individual/collective role(s) for the perpetuation of racism. It is the result of white talking uncritically with/to other whites, all the while, resisting critique, massaging each other's racist attitudes, beliefs, and actions" (45). In other words, white talk is a stratagem that individual white folks use to exempt themselves from being responsible for any racist acts. In a classroom situation, this is one aspect where critical thinking is needed. Ken Bain helps us [teachers] in telling us what we need to do to encourage critical thinking when he writes, "highly effective teachers confront students with 'intriguing,

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beautiful, or important problems, authentic tasks that would challenge them to grapple with ideas, and examine their mental models of reality" (qtd in Bean 3). Bain has a point. One way of helping students to become critical thinkers is in using texts that push them out of their comfort zone, causing them to doubt their traditions and what they consider as reality. Texts written from the perspective of minorities confront most white students with unusual ideas, with a different form of reality, especially in matters related to racial and social injustice.

However, my years of education as a graduate student and my modest experience as an instructor in American classrooms have taught me that many of my white students stop being critical thinkers once a class discussion hits the danger zone: race. Any discussion on race and social justice causes many students to become emotional. Oftentimes, they react with a deafening silence. Most of them look like they are overwhelmed by a feeling of guilt or discomfort that they cannot explain. This is the main reason why I agreed with my mentor because I remember that any time I use a text on racial issues, many students look at me as if I am accusing them of wrongdoing. Sometimes, their facial expressions imply that I am torturing them. My goal, however, is to help them see that it is okay to talk about race. It is not a taboo subject; to realize that race continues to be a problem in this country because of the lack of an honest conversation about it.

Given the fear of discussions on race, diversity, and social justice, I decided to forego the use of anthologies in favor of course packets. I did not want to have to explain myself over the use of a given anthology because it has a title that sounds controversial to certain ears. In *The Rise and Fall of English* (1998), Robert Scholes names political agendas as one of the reasons for the fall of English as a discipline when he writes, Literature, which seemed to be an end in itself because it led directly to transcendental virtues ("the kingdom of light"), is now seen, both positively, and negatively, as politically interested. That is, literature, which once represented universal values, is now seen as representing values that are more local, historical, connected to particular times and places, to particular interests. Its universality has given way to the interests of particular groups, time, and places. Individuals—both faculty and students—who identify themselves as members of oppressed minorities - are drawn to texts that adequately represent them and their struggles. (21-22)

Scholes is right that literature went from representing universal values to represent local, historical, and particular interests. It is also true that members of minority groups are more inclined to reading books that symbolize their struggles. However, political moves are not a new strategy in American literature. The beginning of typically American literature was a political move in itself. While early American writers had to emulate their European precursors, a strong feeling of national identity developed in early nineteenth century to such extent that writers needed to do their very best to create literary works that were really American with no trace of European influence. In his book *Nationalism in Europe and America: Politics, Cultures, and Identities* since 1775, Lloyd S. Kramer writes, "American managed to construct a national identity and nationalist ideology quite rapidly in the decades between their break from Britain (1776) and their painful, bloody Civil War (1861-1865), so their early national history shows how a diverse, scattered population could be 'narrated' into a nation in political institutions, schools . . . literature, and history books" (126). It is obvious that the creation of an identity that would be reflected in all aspects of American life is nothing more and nothing less than a political move. If one would not consider it as a political move, then I will be curious to know what it is.



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Moreover, the American Renaissance writers were also fighting to free themselves from the influence of Elizabethan writers. In the words of the American historian and literary critic David S. Reynolds, while there was a noticeable struggle on the part of American writers to break free from the strong influence of classic writers, “[I]t has not been recognized that one of the main weapons wielded by the American writers against oppressive literary influence was a native idiom learned from their own popular culture” (5). Note that Reynolds uses the adjective “oppressive” to refer to classic writers’ influences on their American imitators. In other words, the classic writers’ influences were domineering or tyrannical. Therefore, American writers needed to liberate themselves in producing a “truly indigenous American literary texts” (4). Whether these decisions were deliberate or not, the literary production shows a very strong and undeniable sense of national identity. By the same token, members of minority groups whose struggles are often overlooked by the mainstream, find literature as one of the venues to voice their preoccupations and to resist the overwhelming mainstream cultural influence.

Being conscious of the cultural oppression that members of minority groups are subjected to in institutions of higher education, my mentor’s advice sounded like a call to silence dissenting voices. In other words, I needed to follow the norm and teach texts that would tickle my white students’ ears. I figured that I could achieve the goal of challenging my white students with using a course packet with selected texts rather than having a reader with a strong or unfriendly title. My course packet has the advantages of not including a title that would put people on the edge; an eclectic selection of the texts I want my students to read rather than conforming to an imposed anthology; a number of mainstream texts that are directly followed by the study of texts from minority groups to offer a counter perspective to the ideas of the people of the center, or to give information on the forgotten experiences of individuals in the margins. As an illustration, when I teach Walt Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing,” which celebrates American life in mentioning the different activities of the common American, it is directly followed by Langston Hughes’s “I, Too, Sing America!” I begin with a free-writing activity in asking my students to explain what they consider to be the most important word in the title of that poem. When the students read their free-writing and I notice that they did not choose “too,” I use some follow-up questions to help them see why it is so. Then, we contextualize and historicize the poem in order to help them make sense of it. From that point, we can discuss race without making it feel like a confrontation between oppressors and oppressed.

We also watch a 2006 movie titled *Something New*, directed by Saana Hamri and starring African American actress Saana Lathan as Kenya McQueen, and white American Simon Baker as Brian Kelly. The movie portrays interracial romance at odds with African American family customs. The couple’s first encounter is a blind date. Kenya is a successful young woman and a certified public accountant, while Brian is a landscaping architect. Kenya is disappointed to see that her date is a white man, but she keeps an open mind and decides to give Brian a chance. The scene that I like to analyze with my students is the one in which Kenya and Brian are shopping, and as always, Kenya brings race in their conversation. Brian is frustrated and replies that he wants a break from that topic tonight, especially in public. Kenya is so mad that she rebukes Brian saying that if he will be in a relationship with her, race will always be there—because “that’s what being black is, not having a night off.” Then, I let the students comment on Brian’s reaction. I ask them to explain why Brian feels uncomfortable. The vicarious experience they get from this scene enables them to discuss race in a relaxed way. Later, I ask my students to think about their own experiences—to

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think about awkward moments when they were obliged to discuss race and how they felt. In spring 2016, I taught ENG 101 and covered a few texts with race as a subject matter. Later during the semester, we viewed *Something New* and had a great discussion on it. Two days later, one of my students came to see me during my office hours. I asked him, "How may I help you?" He replied, "No, I don't need help, but I came to thank you because, for the first time in my life, I feel comfortable to talk about race." I was so happy to hear my student say that. I didn't have two students or half of the class come to my office and talk to me; however, I was pleased that I changed the life of one single student. In *A Colonel's Dream*, Charles Chesnutt reminds us what the invention of race has caused and what it would take to change people's perception when he writes, "The very standards of right and wrong had been confused by the race issue, and must be set right by a patient appeal to reason and humanity" (146). Yes, we should not sit on the sideline and see things continue to be the way they are. Race has twisted the meaning of what it means to be "human." In another class that I am teaching this fall at the Community College of Allegheny County (Boyce Campus), one of my white students confessed in front of the entire class that she has a very racist father and she wouldn't like to be anything like him. This revelation came after our discussion of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail." When I told them about its historical context, I mentioned how racism can affect even people who call themselves "God's servants." The religious leaders who wrote a public statement against Dr. King's activism were people who should normally defend the truth and reject any form of injustice. However, their statement proved that their whiteness was more important than their being "God's servants." These very few instances where my white students can openly talk about race without feeling that they need to justify themselves are very rewarding for me. It is not a moment for celebration because a lot of work still needs to be done in this regard.

All in all, my adoption of course packets, instead of traditional anthologies, is work in progress because as an adjunct, I still work with textbooks, the selection of which I have no say. However, I will still have an eclectic selection of reading texts that I supplement to the institutional textbook. My objective is to continue to include texts that discuss race in order to demystify it. I want my students to believe that they can discuss racial issues without feeling that they are justifying themselves, but rather, to realize that race is still a big problem in this country, and that we have the obligation to do whatever it takes to make life better for everyone. It is our responsibility as teachers to work toward changing a mindset that tacitly condones injustice. It is a difficult task because it often results in letters of rejections when applying for full time positions, but it may be the price to pay for the hope of a better society.

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