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From the Guest Editors

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Introduction to the Special Issue: Equity-Based Career Development and Postsecondary Readiness

Educational attainment is needed to achieve economic stability, enjoy better health outcomes, and the ability to be more civically involved (Ma et al., 2019). Moreover, individuals can make well over one million dollars over a lifetime with postsecondary training, especially a college degree (Carnevale et al., 2015). Former First Lady Michelle Obama's Reach Higher Initiative and Better Make Room organization emphasize the need for individuals to pursue a postsecondary education to compete in the current economy (Better Make Room, n.d.). Moreover, current First Lady, Jill Biden has advocated for access to various postsecondary pathways, specifically free community college and other vocational training programs (Superville, 2021). Also, it is important to not only get students to college and other postsecondary institutions, but to also ensure they are retained and graduate from these institutions.

For students to persist at the postsecondary level, especially those from vulnerable populations, equitable programming and interventions should be a part of the equation for producing a diverse and inclusive

graduation class. Pre-college programs along with programs that support postsecondary readiness must be accessible to ALL students if the U.S. is to produce the next generation of talent and an inclusive workforce. Hines and colleagues (2021a) noted how bridge and academic support programs assisted a group of Black males in pursuing and getting into college. Moreover, high impact practices such as study abroad and learning communities have been shown to retain and graduate students from college (Kuh, 2008).

Although we know the various programming and interventions can successfully prepare students for postsecondary opportunities, we must ensure K-12 educators as well as faculty and staff at postsecondary institutions know how to work with students of color, first generation college students, and students from vulnerable populations to create access, opportunity, and sustained pathways to and out of postsecondary institutions. We must address the barriers and obstacles that hinder students from achieving the American dream of pursuing a postsecondary education, a good career, and a great quality of life. Some of these challenges include stereotyping and



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bias, anti-Black racism, lack of access to rigorous coursework (e.g., Honors, Advanced Placement courses), lack of college and career readiness, lack of cultural competence in understanding students who have been historically marginalized and discouraged from pursuing a postsecondary education, and lack of information about financial aid packages (Hines et al., 2021b).

A continuation of the latest research and best practices from an antiracist, culturally sustaining lens is needed to provide educators the solutions needed to ensure every student has an opportunity to get a postsecondary education. Thus, we present eight theoretical, qualitative, and quantitative articles that provide research on implementing equity based career development and postsecondary readiness for students in the K-16 educational system.

The first article titled, *Brown Bag to Lunch Buffet: A Case Study of a Low-Income African American Academy's Vision of Promoting College and Career Readiness in the United States*, co-authors Edward C. Fletcher, Jr., Erik M. Hines, Donna Y. Ford, and James L. Moore, III discuss the unique leadership behaviors and initiatives that facilitate college and career readiness of African American students. They

specifically highlight the role that urban school leaders can play in preparing students through career academies.

Article two, *"I Was Going to Work Full-Time at Roses Department Store": The Need for College Readiness with Black and Latinx Students*, by Dana Griffin and Nicole Birkenstock discuss creating equitable college readiness practices in K-12 schools, particularly for Black and Latinx students who are at risk for not receiving college readiness knowledge and skills.

In article three, *Structured Pathways, Reinforced Plans: Exploring the Impact of a Dual Enrollment Program on the College Choice and Career Interests of Future Teachers of Color*, Jennifer M. Johnson, Joseph H. Paris, and Juliet D. Curci explain how to promote postsecondary access and teacher diversity through a dual enrollment

program with a Grow Your Own emphasis using a case study analysis.

Article four, *Breaking Down Barriers: A Culturally Responsive Career Development Intervention with Racially Minoritized Girls of Color*, co-authors Marsha L. Rutledge and Philip B. Gnilka detail the challenges and opportunities related to the career development experiences for girls of color. Authors go on to discuss the impact of a



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fifteen week culturally responsive after-school program tailored specifically to the needs of girls of color. In particular, authors discuss the impact of the career intervention on participants' career exploration, leadership, and career decision making self-efficacy.

Article five, *Study Abroad: Perspectives from Historically Underrepresented Student Populations*, authored by Meaghan E. Ecker-Lyster and Nazedyia Kardash discuss improving access to study abroad for historically underrepresented students and through a qualitative research study, sought to understand how and abbreviated study abroad influence their decision to pursue this program.

In article six, *Over the Rainbow: A Career Development Group for LGBTQ+ Teens*, co-authors Anita A. Neuer Colburn and Isabella M. Herrera discuss the unique career development experiences of LGBTQ+ students. Authors build on the work of Pyle and Hayden (2015), to propose a six-session model for career group counseling which is intentionally collaborative with LGBTQ+ identified community members.

Article 7, *Campus Visits as Predictors of Postsecondary Enrollment in Low-Income, Rural School Districts*, co-authors by M. Corrine Smith, Ross Gosky, and Jui-Teng Li examine

the relationship between visits to college campuses by middle school and high school students and postsecondary enrollment rates where campus visits are classified as both formal college visits and also informal campus visits, through GEAR UP. They found that both informal (Educational Campus Field Trip) and formal (Traditional College Visit) campus visits had an association with postsecondary enrollment rates, with formal campus visits collectively having a stronger impact than informal campus visits.

Last, article eight, *He Needs to be in a Learning Community - Learning Community*, a place of Respite and Brotherhood while Persisting in College, author Ngozi Taffe uses Community Cultural Wealth theory to discuss the impact of living and learning communities on the

persistence of Black males in college. The author unpacks various components of one living learning community and provides specific recommendations for Black students and the college administrators who serve them. Specifically, the author stresses the importance of a holistic learning experience for Black males where their academic, social, emotional, and cultural development are attended to.

Our hope is that this special issue serves as a gate opener rather than a gatekeeper to



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improving access to education and ultimately career opportunities for minoritized and marginalized student populations. The prolific, late Dr. Benjamin E. Mays said, “Every man and woman is born into the world to do something unique and something distinctive and if he or she does not do it, it will never be done.” With increased opportunities to receive postsecondary education and training, our students will be the next generation of doctors, electricians, entrepreneurs, beauticians, barbers, engineers, and lawyers. Lastly, as a tandem to this special issue, Drs. Erik Hines and Laura Owen have an edited volume titled, *Equity-Based Career Development and Postsecondary Transitions: An American Imperative*, slated to be released late Spring 2022.

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EDITOR NOTES

We have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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