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TRANSFORMING BLACK STUDENTS' HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCES AND LIVES: A PROPOSAL FOR THE CSU

Don Lundy

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A Graduate Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Communication Studies

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ABSTRACT

For decades, a racial “achievement gap” has persisted in U.S. higher education. Specifically, White students have outperformed Black students on a number of indicators, including college admissions, standardized test scores, and graduation rates. This graduate project considers several explanations for this persistent inequity. The root of the problem, it argues, is U.S. higher education’s history of racism and exclusion and the oversaturation of whiteness in these institutions. In other words, U.S. higher education was built for and continues to serve White students at the expense of Black students. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) show us that when whiteness is diluted, Black students can thrive. However, HBCUs have not, historically, enjoyed the same resources as primarily white institutions (PWIs). This graduate project argues that the California State University and other U.S. higher education institutions must take steps to dilute whiteness in their structures, policies, and curriculum.

As assist the CSU in these efforts, the author created a “white paper” titled, *Transforming Black Students’ Higher Education Experiences and Lives: A Proposal for the CSU* (Appendix A). This white paper, which is intended for consideration by the CSU Board of Trustees, describes the history of racism and exclusion in U.S. higher education, the persistent racial achievement gap, and some of the reasons for that persistence. Then, it presents a 3-part policy proposal for transforming the experiences of the CSU’s Black students.

Specifically, it calls on the CSU Board of Trustees to elevate one of the University's minority-serving institutions – California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) – to the system's flagship campus; to charge CSUDH with operating a campus-wide learning lab for developing structures, policies, and practices for most effectively educating its minority students, particularly African Americans; and to have CSUDH disseminate that guidance for adoption or adaptation at all of the CSU's campuses. In doing so, it is argued that the CSU can transform the academic and lived experience of Black and other minority students and help them achieve their full potential.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great honor that I take some space to thank a few key individuals who were key in making this project come into fruition. The MVP for this project team must go to Dr. Thomas Corrigan. This empathetic soul was the torch that carried this project to the finish line.

Professor LaToya Green was a powerful force who was instrumental in my cognitive development into a junior scholar. To have such an intellect involve herself with my academic work and deem it worthy is incredibly solidifying.

Dr. Larry Hygh devoted his time to assisting in the overall formulation of my ideas.

My inspiration for even attempting this level of education goes to my grandmother, Dr. Tommie L. Cox, and my children, Cameron D. Lundy and Nae”Lyn Lundy. As an early childhood educator, my grandmother taught me the value of true education in collaboration with social justice. My grandmother was the foundational guiding light I would follow to this moment. My children have been the motivational force I use to ensure their light from me is as far as I can humanly shine it for them.

Lastly, my heart gives thanks to my mother, Miss Schuyler F. Dadzie. As I now have a more comprehensive understanding for what it was to grow up in the previous generations, I am so grateful and thankful for the chances and opportunities my mom obtained for me to participate in. She gave me a chance

to find what was already in me and use it for greatness. For that I am eternally grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY

The nation's first higher education institution, Harvard College was founded in 1693 and educated only White students (Morison 1963). That was, until the first historically Black college, The Institute for Colored Youth, was established in Pennsylvania in 1837 (James, 1958).

In addition to not admitting Black students, the most prestigious U.S. institutions recruited administrators from slave-owning families or families who made their fortunes from slave labor (Patton, 2016). When the College of New Jersey, which would later become Princeton University, was established in 1746, each of its first eight presidents was a slave owner. Members of the New Jersey legislative staff and authorities also used slave labor to maintain university facilities and support the institution's operations (Patton, 2016).

According to Patton (2016), the establishment of institutions of higher learning in the United States is inextricably connected to race, property, and oppression. But even after the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in 1865, academia's combination of racism, capitalism, and White male dominance ensured that racist concepts regarding Black people were (and still are) woven through America's educational system. Specifically, it perpetuated the notion that Black people belonged in subservient roles and were primed for exploitation. Such ideas rationalized the racist and discriminatory practice of "separate but equal," including in public higher education.

The 1955 *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to practice segregation in public and private facilities, and it extended certain political, civil, and legal rights to African Americans, including former slaves and their descendants (Martin, Jr., 2016). As transformative as the 13th Amendment, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and the Civil Rights Act were, racism still endured at structural level and has yet to be removed from various systems that govern our society. Put a little differently, the afterlife of slavery has maintained both physical and metaphysical sights of anti-Blackness (Martinot & Sexton, 2003).

The "achievement gap" between White and minority students – especially African American students – is an illustration of this pervasive institutional racism in U.S. higher education. This “gap” refers to the difference in academic performance between the separate demographic categories, particularly race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. This project argues that this “gap” reveals the inherent bias of whiteness since it is constructed using a White male baseline. The focus, instead, should be on students reaching their full human potential rather than maintaining the White male status quo.

HBCUs: History, Successes, and Limitations

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are institutions of higher education that were established in reaction to the exclusion and exploitation of individuals of African descent in the U.S. higher education system. The first such university was Cheyney University, which opened its doors in

1837. This number had increased by 200 by the year 1890, and there are now 105 HBCUs operating in the United States (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014). According to Section III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) is an institution that was founded before to 1964, whose primary objective was the education of African Americans, conferred bachelor's degrees, and had national accreditation (Wade 2021).

HBCUs provide Black students access to higher education possibilities that they, as a demographic of students, would not normally have at their disposal at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). HBCUs are varied in both their educational framework and their student outcomes, so it is necessary to not homogenize them. However, HBCUs can often create greater results for their students compared to PWIs (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014).

Arroyo and Gasman (2014) detailed the following as components of a successful HBCU framework: a supportive environment, relative institutional accessibility, achievement, identity formation, values cultivation & identity formation, and holistic success. HBCUs steer clear of PWIs' social and educational pitfalls by encouraging students to build relationships with faculty and peers, offering extracurricular activities, and establishing an environment conducive to learning (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014).

One reason HBCUs can foster such a supportive community is their demographic make-up, which is comprised largely of students of the same race or ethnic background. Students and teachers and administrators alike benefit

from this familiarity because it fosters a climate of trust and safety that most underrepresented minority students do not experience at PWIs. While formal institutional resources may fall short of an individual student's needs, this helps strengthen them nevertheless (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014).

Institutionally, HBCUs emphasize the cultivation of student identity at racial/ethnic, intellectual, and leadership levels, and the relationship between achievement, identity, and values (Palmer et al., 2016). HBCUs are intentionally structured to reduce the existence and perpetuation of negative stereotypes against Black students. In contrast, the Eurocentric institutional organization currently utilized by PWIs does not concern itself with academic achievement. PWIs focus on holistic success (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014).

HBCUs also prioritize accessibility of the college, itself, and the resources offered to students (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014; Palmer et al., 2016). Arroyo and Gasman (2014) show that HBCUs generally cost less than their PWI peers and have more flexible academic admissions requirements. HBCUs also offer a range of financial assistance, which around 85% of students qualify for. Some argue that this results in lower quality among HBCUs, and they point to relatively low rankings of these HBCUs. These criticisms and rankings are often decontextualized, though; the goal of HBCUs is to better educate their students – not to score highly in a White-led ranking system (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014).

Despite the immense good HBCUs do for students, these institutions do have limitations. For example, HBCUs can struggle to provide a supportive

environment for some students, particularly the Black LGBTQ+ population. This could be a result of the conservative culture HBCUs intentionally work to cultivate. Arroyo and Gasman (2014) describe that conservative culture as anti-sex, anti-drug, and pro-professionalism. Harper and Gasman (2008) note that HBCUs focus on teaching self-preservation and expressions regarding areas such as clothing choice. Some also misguidedly criticize HBCUs for lacking an Ivy League equivalent without considering factors such as quantity of HBCUs relative to PWIs and the implicit bias institutional ranking systems have (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014).

Despite their long history some also argue that, because of rising diversity among the student body, HBCUs will soon no longer be predominantly Black. In the 1950's, nearly 100% of the student body at HBCUs was Black, but that is no longer the case. In 2012, Black students only made up about 76% of the population. White people made up 11% of the student body (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; Palmer et al., 2016). Last, HBCUs are also chronically underfunded (Palmer et al., 2016; Arroyo et al., 2014).

CHAPTER TWO: THEORY

Theorizing the Achievement Gap

To theorize persistent minority oppression in higher education, I will focus on three logics which help illustrate why a reform of higher education is necessary to make it more inclusive and equitable as well as examine the notion of achievement gap from their perspective: 1. the logic of cultural hegemony, 2. the logic of whiteness, and 3. the logic of cultural codes. I will also show why restoring cultural agency will have a positive effect on educational equity for our higher educational African American students. Though it is important to review the history and data concerning U.S. higher education's racial "achievement gap," some of the explanations for that gap are the problematic assumptions that are built into the concept in the first place.

The Notion of the "Achievement Gap"

In higher education circles, the achievement gap describes the difference in academic performance between demographic groups, particularly different races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic positions. According to the conclusions of past researchers the achievement gap describes the performance differential between White and Black students using statistical data (Carpenter, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006). The metrics typically used to measure such gaps include admissions rates, grade point average, standardized tests, passing rates, graduation rates, and dropout rates (Jeynes, 2015).

The notion of an “achievement gap” is the product of an extensive survey commissioned by the U.S. Government in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Dickinson, 2016). This report is commonly called the Coleman Report. The Coleman Report documents the availability of equal educational opportunities in public schools for minority groups (the Report identifies these minorities as: Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, Oriental-Americans, and American Indians), as compared with the educational opportunities of the White majority. The report found that:

> For most minority groups…and most particularly the Negro, schools provide little opportunity for them to overcome this initial deficiency; in fact they fall farther behind the white majority in the development of several skills which are critical to making a living and participating fully in modern society” (Gordon, 2017, para. 4).

However, recent data on the White and Black students indicate that the achievement gap has not disappeared at either K-12 or higher education levels. In 2010, Stanford University’s Education Opportunity Monitoring Project found that, among 17-year-old students, Black students lagged behind both Hispanic

and White students on standardized math and reading tests (see Figure 1).

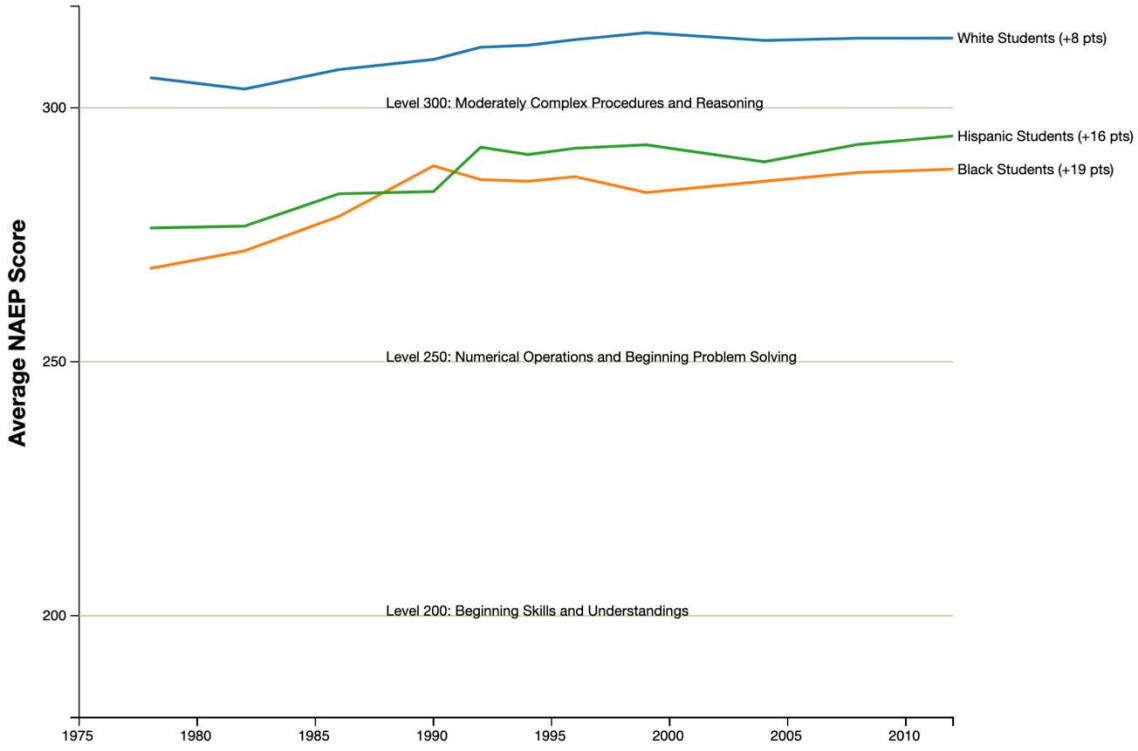

Figure 1. Racial Achievement Gap Measured as Difference in Average Standardized Test Scores in Reading and Math in 12th Grade.

Note: Figure from "The *Educational Opportunity Monitoring Project*. Center for Education Policy Analysis. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2023, from https://cepa.stanford.edu/educational-opportunity-monitoring-project/overview

This disparity is particularly obvious in enrollment in postsecondary institutions. The enrollment rates of most demographic groups have been steady over time. However, the percentage of Black student attending colleges and universities has steadily declined. From 2011 and 2016, Black student's college attendance declined 16% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

Of course, because African American students are less likely to attend colleges and universities *or* continue their studies, they graduate at lower rates

than White students. According to Barton and Coley (2010), in 2000, only 13.9% of Black men aged 25 to 36 were college graduates, compared to 30.2% of White men. Similarly, only 17.9% of Black women aged 25 to 36 were college graduates, compared to 32.8% of White women. These numbers can support the inference of the negative academic success rates for Black students and their communities.

Explanations for the Achievement Gap

Family and Community Explanations

Several explanations for the racial achievement gap have been proposed. One explanation focuses on parental cultural capital (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014). Parental cultural capital can be understood as the information parents can give to their children who are entering an institution such as college for the first time. If a parent has experience in higher education, they are able to pass down wisdom from that experience to their children. For instance, a parent could warn a student of potential dangers or missteps to avoid. Students' ability to work through these outside-the-classroom issues is crucial to their academic success. Students without this cultural capital are susceptible to imposter syndrome which can negatively affect their academic success (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014).

When it comes to student well-being, community matters, too. Barton and Coley (2010) show how infrastructure construction and public transportation in the 1970s and 1980s provided for travel into, rather than out of, cities. This allowed the creation of mostly White, suburban neighborhoods with easy access

to city schools – part of the phenomenon known as “White flight.” Redlining also determined where Black families were able to buy homes and property. When Black families achieved some social mobility, they often left the areas of “concentrated deprivation.” This meant that Black communities in the cities were left without the resources needed for healthy family development—specifically for children. Libraries, adequate schooling, community centers, and other resources necessary for successful lives, including academic lives, became available according to the color line. For example, the increased criminalization of Black people ensured that successive generations within Black communities remained “concentrated deprivation” areas, which contributed to the achievement gap’s persistence (Barton & Coley, 2010).

Institutional and Psychological Explanations

Explanations of the achievement gap cannot and should not ignore the role of educational institutions. First, many PWIs engage in “institutional negligence,” leaving students to navigate the educational institution themselves and ignoring the disparities among the student body. Rather than work proactively, these institutions use a “diagnose and react” model in which they wait for perceived flaws or lacks in the students to surface, and then ‘prescribe’ a remedy (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014). This sick patient metaphor reveals another problem. PWIs tend to attribute performance disparity among groups of students to flaws in the students rather than flaws in the institution’s educational model or practices. Because of this, PWIs view the Black students’ performance as a

problem in need of change – a dynamic that reinforces stereotypes associated with inferiority or failure among Black college students (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014).

For students of lower socio-economic status (SES), these stereotypes negatively influence psychological functioning in terms of emotions and cognition in the college context (Jury et. al., 2017). Low SES students face implicit "rules" while attending the university which they may not be aware of due to cultural or material differences (Ramirez & Severn, 2006). This perceived lack of preparedness among minority students can negatively impact a student's, "…(1) emotional experiences (e.g., emotional distress, well-being); (2) identity management (e.g., sense of belonging); (3) self-perception (e.g., self-efficacy, perceived threat); and (4) motivation (e.g., achievement goals, fear of failure)," (Jury et al., 2017, pp. 18-19).

In John-Henderson et al.'s (2014) research, which sought to reproduce traditional college contexts in a laboratory environment, low-SES students demonstrated higher levels of physiological stress markers than did high-SES students. One specific manifestation of these stress markers is the imposter syndrome (Harackiewicz et al., 2014). Imposter syndrome is a condition in which an individual feels as though they are in a position that they do not have the right to be in and that their success is undeservingly attained. (Jury et. al., 2017).

To illustrate how imposter syndrome impacts Black/African American students, here is a personal story. During my first semester of my transfer

admittance into Cal State Fullerton, I walked around the campus waiting for a phone call or e-mail to tell me that I was mistakenly admitted. As I navigated the new rules and financial challenges that came with this higher educational experience, I began to panic that I did not belong. The systematic obstacles were enough to make a reasonable person consider quitting while they are “behind.” While also struggling with difficult family obligations, students who observe norms that are perceived to affirm or promote stereotypes about failure easily internalize these theories thus increasing their risk of dropping out (Jury et al., 2017).

Moreover, the stress and emotional weight students may feel to prevent the confirmation of unfavorable stereotypes projected onto their own culture may negatively influence their academic performance (Jury et al.). al., 2017). In one study, 66 percent of African American students reported experiencing racism on campus, and 85 percent saw their school as being unwelcoming to people of other races (Beamon, 2014). The negative preconceptions about Black males, higher levels of surveillance, and campus and social microaggressions contribute to high levels of stress, frustration, rage, despair, and fear among African American men (Beamon, 2014).

Troubling the Achievement Gap

To highlight the gravity of the achievement gap and obtain a more holistic understanding of the problem, researchers, politicians and various groups have examined K-12 education. However, much of the attention has been focused on

“static differences” – the sociological factors contributing to the achievement gap (Orellana & Bowman, 2003). More, this research largely understands the achievement gap as a White/non-White binary. This binary thinking causes all minorities to be grouped together as a shared oppressed group. The cause of this “shared oppression” is explained through sociological factors that are primarily understood and articulated by White researchers. So, this research often leaves out underexamined factors between in-groups within demographics (Carpenter, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006; Karatas & Oral, 2015).

Anderson, Medrich and Fowler (2007) explain that conventional understandings of the achievement gap imply baseline test score results and “yearly improvement,” The measurement of a student’s success on yearly improvement is called Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). According to the authors, evaluations of a school’s AYP occurs over state lines, which erases context and differences between student populations. The main issue with using the AYP to measure the achievement gap is that AYP conflates White students doing less well with closing the achievement gap. Moreover, this conceptualization of the achievement gap ignores differences of cultural capital and life experiences between different minorities, or within group differences. And it has the effect of positing whiteness as the normative standard from which other cultures deviate (Carpenter, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006).

The harms of this normative view become clear when we examine the types of tests students undertake in school. Carpenter, Ramirez, and Severn

(2006) examined two different yet related tests which affect a student's learning. Students are faced with explicit tests in the classroom on course material, but they also face implicit tests which influence a student's success. In the former type, students are faced with tests on the values of one's own culture relative to the value they have in their university work. According to Stephens et al. (2012), universities promote and implicitly reward students who come from "independent cultures" which reward individualism and the assumption that people have the knowledge to effectively be the authors of their own fates. In contrast, students from interdependent cultures, which are cultures that value relationships with other people, are less likely to have their interdependent values supported (Jury et. al., 2017).

Critically Theorizing the Achievement Gap

Critical Race Theory, Cultural Codes, and Oppression in the Classroom

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that is used to deconstruct oppressive policies and practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). According to CRT, whiteness refers to the entitlement held by White people, and their emphasis on property as it relates to their power status in American society (Savas, 2014). Historically, we have seen this through the "Middle Passage" being enacted and the laws that were created to take African Americans' property (Parker, 2003). Lawmakers even went as far as to make African Americans 1/3 of a person, solidifying their whiteness (Hiraldo, 2010). Aside from the 300 hundred years of African American's direct submission to White people,

there was also the over 156 years (from the emancipation proclamation to present) of social subjugation, and higher educational ostracism (Hughes & Giles, 2010).

In relation to the so-called achievement gap, CRT can be utilized to uncover how the achievement gap operates and how it came to exist through a historical analysis of racial oppression. To adequately theorize the experiences of Black students in U.S. higher education, as well as the conceptualization of the achievement gap in relation to those experiences, it is necessary to engage with both as products of the culture of whiteness in academia – a culture that discounts students' and teachers' cultural grounding.

Culture is important because, as Vygotsky (1987) argued, the cognitive development of students happens within their cultural grounding. Vygotsky explains that for people to have healthy cognitive development, they need to have socio-cultural grounding when interacting with others (Karatas & Oral, 2015). This socio-cultural grounding helps to inform their actions and give them meaning. This socio-cultural grounding becomes the framework by which the person processes meaning. For example, when a teacher brings their own socio-cultural viewpoint to a classroom setting, their actions and abilities are informed by that viewpoint.

In the classroom, differing cultural codes can produce communicative barriers. This is because, as Suk-Hyon Kim (2003) notes, communication and culture are intrinsically tied. Culture works as a base from which people learn

how to communicate. When people grow up within a culture certain messages or ideas gain social relevance through that culture’s shared understanding. Through the process of communication and engagement, a shared culture emerges and takes shape. Cultural codes are at the base of communication because they inform the very references and meanings which messages carry with them.

Consequently, the texts selected for study in a literature course may be questioned by a CRT analysis. Students mostly read books published by White writers, with a few novels written by authors of other races and ethnicities being considered an exception. For example, as noted by Lori Patton, the content of school curriculum often mirrors Eurocentric experiences and worldviews (Patton, 2016). Having easy access to this Eurocentric "canon" of information will give students a leg up on the competition. Since so much of this canon is made up of material that has been passed down via White people's families and communities, White privilege is still deeply embedded in the academy. This curriculum, as argued by Patton (2016), gives White academics the spotlight while relegating the work of persons of color to the margins.

Anyone outside the White majority will feel marginalized and oppressed if teachers continue to use white cultural standards in the classroom. It can be inferred from the aforementioned that if educators do not adopt culturally sensitive practices, they risk conveying to students the message that discrimination and exclusion are tolerated on campus. In certain cases, teachers may be reluctant to take part in culturally sensitive activities. Educators' fears

about using culturally responsive strategies in the classroom usually stem from a lack of preparation or from doubts about their own abilities in this area.

The material history of American universities is, as has been argued, entangled with anti-Black racism and slavery. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) note that many institutions that have reaped the greatest rewards from racism and exclusion fail to recognize the extent to which these practices have contributed to their own success. For example, Harvard University has the highest endowment of any university but has not addressed the reality that the university's prosperity is inextricably linked to the slavery of Black people. This is a major problem considering the incredibly low number of Black students admitted to Harvard College each year (Patton, 2016). As students of color learn about and understand the ways in which people of their culture or ethnicity have been historically and currently excluded from the university, they may begin to accept views that they do not belong there (Patton, 2016).

Consider Clemson University as an example. To ensure that all staff, students, and administrators at Clemson University are aware that the institution was established on a slave plantation, the university mandates that all students take a course on the university's history (Reel 2011). While there is a tradition of recognizing the contributions of White slave owners by establishing buildings or erecting monuments, the situation that has emerged at Clemson University is not unprecedented. To this day, Clemson University continues to exclude people of

color from higher education by honoring slave owners and using their names in university-related contexts (Hiraldo, 2010).

Lastly, the diversity and prestige perceived by students amongst teachers and scholars within the academy is another means by which racism and exclusion are coded. This can be understood as an issue of elitism within the academy (Patton, 2016). In U.S. higher education, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) departments are prioritized in messaging by Universities (Patton, 2016). Universities encourage students to enter the STEM fields by explaining to students the high pay they would receive in doing so. Furthermore, STEM programs are presented as the most challenging and legitimate fields of education (Patton, 2016). This presents individuals within the STEM fields as more valuable than students in non-STEM fields like the humanities. What is uniquely bad about all of this, is that there is a historical and contemporary absence of people of color within STEM programs (Patton, 2016). People of color often occupy departments such as education, which receive much less funding than STEM departments. Students of color attending universities observe the status and perceived success of their professors, which informs their understanding of themselves within the academy. When students of color see professors of color in positions perceived to be below their White professors, students normalize White people as elite and, by extension, non-White people as nonelite (Patton, 2016).

Cultural Hegemony, the Subaltern, and the Achievement Gap

Cultural hegemony is a form of domination by which ruling the ruling class's normative cultural view appears natural and taken for granted (Spivak, 1998). In the case of the achievement gap, the taken-for-grantedness of whiteness in the form of the White male baseline functions to reproduce racial hierarchies of dominance and subordination.

Gokhan Savas (2014) explains that whiteness refers to the entitlement held by White people, and their emphasis on property as it relates to their power status in American society, or, we could add, globally. This emphasis on the interest of 'nonhumans as property' (property of humans) - organizes and informs the global racial hierarchy. Joel Olson (2004) explains whiteness as a material difference in society. He states that, "Whiteness is the dominant category in the racial order" (Olson, 2004, p. 80). This means that the role of dominator makes up what whiteness is. To abolish the position of White as dominance is to "abolish the identity itself" (Olson, 2004, p. 80). Whiteness is not an identity category which exists as a contingent or temporary antagonism against Black people/non-Whites. Instead, it is the relational system which necessitates antagonism as we know it.

The concept of the "subaltern" illustrates the sort of expertise that is said to be required to diagnose the achievement gap. The subaltern is a post-colonial concept describing the condition in which a group cannot represent themselves or enact their own agency (Spivak, 1988). Agency can be understood as a

group's ability to perform daily action which allows them to both understand themselves and how to effect change toward a particular goal or improvement. (Dutta, 2007) The groups who do have socio-cultural representation and agency silence oppressed groups into the subaltern position. These dominant groups silence the subaltern through institutional means and through the threat and use of violence (Spivak, 1998).

The notion of "achievement gap" belongs to this logic of dominance. As Dutta (2007) explains, the othering of cultures becomes naturalized, as does the subaltern position for the members of these otherized cultures. The expert seeks to know the subject well enough to identify an issue which they posit requires the expert's intervention. The expert must categorize the subjects, separating themselves from subjects. Furthermore, Dutta (2007) argues that knowledge of these cultures is accumulated and understood through objective categorization. This objective categorization places the expert as mutually exclusive from the subject – as 'outside' the subject. From this 'outside' position, the expert is justified in their minimal engagement with the subaltern on the subaltern's terms (Dutta, 2007). Instead, the expert only knows the subaltern through their colorblind framework and knowledge. The expert understands and defines the subaltern through static conceptualizations and definitions. The practices, shortcomings, and strength of the subaltern cultures are contextualized under the framework of the expert. The narrative of the subaltern is understood entirely on the terms of the expert and their institutions, thus producing representations that

reproduce a point of view not native to those defined by those representations.

Systemic

This situation could be further understood through what Murtadha and Stoughton (2004) refer to as the “medical model.” Within the medical model, school personnel view students on a scale of healthy-to-pathology. The school personnel think of themselves as doctors among sick patients in need of help. Their job is to uncover what is currently “wrong” with some students, so that they can be given a cure. Students exist to be acted upon by the teacher. The teacher is the subject who acts upon the object. The medical model contributes to what Dutta (2007) calls an “othering process” or a “lack” model which attributes deficiencies to groups of students identified through their ethnic, racial, or socio-economic attributes. As Dutta (2007) argues, power emerges from the one-way flow of information and communication from the dominant knower onto the dominated known. This creates narratives of lack about subordinate cultures for the stated goal of improving their student members and making them more compliant (Dutta, 2007).

In an ideal world, we would teach our students how to think instead of what to think. As the CSU system, we would be arrogant to believe that we were already in a perfect world and are already holistically teaching our students how to think. This is illustrated if we consider the protections for our students against the biases of our faculty. The protections that are for our faculty prevent any holding of accountability for those faculty who impose their views on the students

and even lowers their grades as a result. This is not an uncommon practice from the students' perspective. But even to play devil's advocate by saying "how do we know this is happening?" "Where is your data?" The fact that we have no protections for the students against this, combined with the fact of the achievement gap data, one can assert that something egregious is afoot. But rather than help interrogate the biases or negative effects, the teacher-centric framework becomes naturalized.

In short, the White male baseline that is baked into conventional notions of the achievement gap must be understood as the root of the issues surrounding the "academic success" of our Black students. Because the very notion of academic success incorporates this baseline, it is measured from a context of pure whiteness. An larger problem is the actual lack of acknowledgement that this type of problem even exists, because not acknowledging one has a problem to solve makes it near impossible to remedy it.

Put another way, if the material advantages given to White people such as the achievement gap were to disappear, whiteness, "… possesses little cultural content independent of its position of privilege, meaning it could potentially disappear as a socially significant identity even if other racial identities persist" (Olson 2004, p. 81). Whiteness is also the processes by which racial inequities are trivialized with the narrative of it simply being "natural outcome" of people choosing the aggregation of individual choices (Olson, 2004). When this analysis is applied to the achievement gap, we understand the achievement gap

as the material manifestation of whiteness. So, addressing the achievement gap requires addressing whiteness.

CHAPTER THREE:

PROJECT RATIONALE, ARTIFACT, AND APPROACH

The preceding chapters reviewed U.S. higher education's history of racism and exclusion, the strengths and limitations of the HBCU model, the concept of the "achievement gap," and some explanations for why that gap persists. Based on that history and theory, this chapter argues that it is the oversaturation of whiteness in U.S. higher education that undermines Black and other minority students' academic success and life experiences. HBCUs show us that when whiteness is diluted, Black students can thrive. But HBCUs have not, historically, enjoyed the same resources as PWIs. So, to transform the academic and lived experience of Black and other minority students, this chapter argues that higher education institutions like the CSU need to take steps to dilute whiteness in their institutions and curriculum.

To these ends, I have created a white paper titled, *Transforming Black Students' Higher Education Experiences and Lives: A Proposal for the CSU* (Appendix A). This white paper, which is intended for consideration by the CSU Board of Trustees, describes the history of racism and exclusion in U.S. higher education, the racial achievement gap, and some of the reasons for its persistence. Then, it presents a 3-part policy proposal for transforming the experiences of the CSU's Black students. Specifically, it calls on the California State University Board of Trustees to elevate one of the University's Minority-

Serving Institutions – CSU, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) – to the system's flagship campus; to charge CSUDH with running a campus-wide developing structures, policies, and practices for most effectively educating its minority students, particularly African Americans; and to disseminate that guidance to all the CSU campuses for adoption or adaptation. This chapter explains why such a policy is necessary, and it describes how I have used the white paper genre to advocate for this policy implementation.

How to Realize Black Students' Full Human Potential

This project seeks to transform the academic experiences and lives of the CSU's Black and minority students. These students need an educational experience that validates them, supports their academic success, and that helps them achieve their full potential. But they require more than a handshake as they walk in; they need a community and mentorship that can prepare them for the expected and unexpected. Rather than continue with the "medical model" of only diagnosing problems after they arise, institutions must be proactive and vigilant to the needs of their students – particularly students from historically marginalized and oppressed groups.

How can we create this sort of educational experience, particularly for the CSU's African American students? The first step is understanding the nature of the problem. The preceding history and literature review demonstrated that the fundamental flaw in U.S. higher education is that it developed as a racist enterprise, and it continues to operate under the cultural norms of whiteness. As

a result, it serves White students at the expense of racial and ethnic minorities, especially African American students. With these combination of factors in existence, any efforts to address the so-called “achievement gap” that do not rectify historic inequities and dilute the oversaturation of whiteness from these institutional arrangements are bound to fail.

The second step is recognizing that superior approaches are not only possible but already exist and have a track record of success. Specifically, HBCUs offer models and examples of how to better engage with and educate Black students, and how to help them achieve their full potential. Importantly, the success of HBCUs is not just a function of their demographic make-up, but also that they provide Black students with the resources, services, and learning environment that is conducive to their success – specifically one that is not steeped in whiteness. HBCUs are not perfect. They have faced chronic underfunding, and, with their conservative environments, they have struggled to serve sexual and gender minorities (Johnson, 2021). Still, the HBCU model shows that when whiteness is diluted, Black students can thrive.

Third, it is important to consider how existing structures and resources could be used to produce experiences and outcomes for Black students more along the lines of those provided at successful HBCUs. The CSU system presents such opportunities. For one, the CSU is already more accessible to marginalized students due to lower tuition costs and more flexible admissions policies. More, campuses like California State University, Dominguez Hills

(CSUDH) are already Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) with rich histories of educating underserved populations, including African American and Latino students.

CSUDH was founded as South Bay State College in 1960, and it held its first classes in the affluent suburb of Palos Verdes, California in 1965. However, in response to social tragedies such as the 1965 Watts rebellion, CSUDH was relocated to Carson, California, to serve the community's minority population (CSUDH, 2016). Currently, African American students make up roughly 11% of the total student body, and Hispanic students make up roughly 68% (CSUDH 2023).

This project proposes that the CSU system turn to CSUDH for guidance on the structures, policies, and practices necessary to ensure the system's minority students – particularly African American students – achieve academically and realize their full human potential. To do so, this project proposes a three-part plan for transforming Black students' educational experiences and lives. Specifically, it calls on the CSU Board of Trustees to:

1. elevate CSUDH to the level of a flagship institution in the CSU system, which will afford it greater attention and resources, overall;
2. charge CSUDH with operating as a campus-wide holistic education-transformation laboratory for developing structures, policies, and practices for most effectively educating the university's minority population; and

3. disseminate those insights for adoption or adaptation at all of the California State University campuses.

While this proposal draws inspiration from the HBCU model, the plan does not seek to fundamentally change the CSUDH's demographic profile, mission, or culture. Rather, it turns to CSUDH – a campus where whiteness is *already* diluted – for guidance on how it and other CSU campuses can best support their minority students. Thus, this project further aims to create the space for the development of structures, policies, and practices that are conducive to students' flourishing within the CSU system as a whole. Further, the goal is not the closing of an educational gap between African American students and the White male baseline, but the closing of a gap between those students' real experiences and their full human potential. And it sees diminishment of the oversaturation of whiteness in U.S. higher education as the key barrier impeding to realizing that goal.

To finally close the achievement gap, we need to help faculty, administrators, and other higher education leaders understand that it is the oversaturation of whiteness in American higher education institutions that produces the racial achievement gap – not black students. Then, we need to dilute whiteness in higher education so that Black and other minority students have opportunities to succeed in college and realize its individual and community benefits. If we can do that, we have a chance to transform the higher education and whole life experiences of black and other minority students. The following

section describes the white paper that I have created to try to bring about this change in understandings and practice.

White Papers: Rationale, Structure, and Strategies

In the preceding section, I argued that the whiteness of U.S. higher education institutions produces the racial achievement gap – not Black students. I also described a policy change that could transform the academic experiences and lives of the CSU's Black students. But how to get the CSU Board of Trustees to implement this policy? For this graduate project, I developed a white paper to effectively communicate this policy proposal and its need to these key stakeholders. The following explains how I have adopted this form of strategic communication for the purposes of transforming the academic experiences and lives of the CSU's Black student populous.

Structure and Approach to This White Paper

As a form of persuasive communication, white papers need to speak to the needs and sensibilities of their audiences. The primary audience for this white paper is the CSU Board of Trustees for their consideration and implementation. Additional audiences include CSU administrators, California legislators and California's African American and minority communities. These are the people and groups best positioned to advocate for and act on the recommendations in this proposal.

This white paper is structured and written to speak to this audience of higher education and governmental decision-makers, as well as affected

communities. Compared to academic writing, which tends to be more long-winded and jargon-heavy, most white papers are short – roughly ten to twenty pages – and they use clear and concise language without dumbing down the issues. My four years in student government at Fullerton Junior College and more specifically my role as a Student Trustee taught me the code switching required to move from the citation-heavy style of academic writing to the types of language that are clearer and more persuasive to administrators and community members.

Organizationally, this white paper takes a “problem-cause-solution” approach. This approach focuses on walking an audience through the nature of a problem, its underlying cause, and a recommended solution. It starts by outlining the relevant history of racism and exclusion in U.S. higher education, which administrators need to understand to grasp the root causes of the achievement gap. Then, it explores the history of the racial achievement gap and some of the reasons for its persistence, including the institutional negligence of PWIs and the Eurocentric curriculum. Based on this history and literature, the white paper argues the culture of whiteness is the root cause of U.S. higher education’s racial injustice and inequities. And it argues that whiteness must be diluted to create a just and equitable education system and society.

Finally, the white paper then lays out the three-part plan for transforming the academic experiences and lives of the CSU’s Black students. Specifically, this 3-part plan calls for California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) –

an institution where whiteness is *already* diluted – to be elevated as the CSU system's flagship institution. As the system's flagship, CSUDH will operate as a campus-wide learning laboratory. This lab's primary function will be to study and develop policies, practices, and procedures meant to eliminate common institutional hurdles that plague Black and minority students. And it will disseminate those recommendations to the whole CSU system for other campuses to adopt or adapt. Importantly, this white paper is in pre-publication, draft form. Before being presented to university administrators, professional design and printing will be required.

APPENDIX A:

TRANSFORMING BLACK STUDENTS' HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCES AND LIVES: A PROPOSAL FOR THE CSU

Transforming Black Students' Higher Education Experiences and Lives: A Proposal for the CSU

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Executive Summary

The #BlackLivesMatter movement has raised awareness of America's deeply inequitable and unjust institutions. African Americans – who Whites have assigned the status of being a "nigger" – face a particularly uphill battle in American higher education. This is evident in the racial achievement gap – a set of measures of academic participation and success, such as admissions and graduation rates, GPA, and standardized test scores. Educational leaders widely acknowledge the racial achievement gap, and they have worked for decades to address it. However, it persists.

Typically, when we, higher education institutions, discuss the achievement gap there is a context of how to get the African American students to catchup instead of taking a deeper look at the educational system itself. – This contextual view is parallel to what is known as the "Medical Model" (Wolfgang 1988). But Black students are not inadequate or incapable of educational success. Rather, America's higher education institutions were built by and for White people. And long after those institutions were integrated, lingering structural inequities pose real hurdles for Black and other minority students, and they support White students' success.

So, this proposal takes a different approach than the medical model. It identifies the oversaturation of whiteness in American higher education as the root problem of the racial achievement gap. And it argues that approaches for overcoming the impediments Black students face must be developed by people who have intimately experienced and suffered from those inequities.

This proposal lays out a three-part plan to transform the whole-life educational experiences of most at-risk students in the California State University system – its Black and minority students. Specifically, it calls for California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) – an institution where whiteness is *already* diluted – to be elevated to be the CSU system's flagship institution and operate as a campus-wide learning lab. This lab's primary function will be to study, develop, and disseminate policies and practices that can help the whole CSU system to educate Black and other minority students so that they may transform their lives and those of their communities.

This proposal doesn't aim to create a new system of privileges for marginalized groups. It's finishing the work of the civil rights movement by ensuring that the privileges which have always been afforded to some groups – specifically White, upper-middle class students – are now afforded to everyone seeking higher education. The remainder of this white paper will elaborate on the achievement gap, its racist origins, why it persists, and how this three-part plan can meaningfully address it.

U.S. Higher Education's Racist Origins and Their Perpetuation

[INCLUDE PHOTO HERE OF SAMUEL FINDLEY, 5TH PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY AND OWNERS OF AT LEAST 7 SLAVES]

Patton (2016) explains that, "The convergence of race, property, and oppression is intricately linked to the formation of U.S. higher education" (p. 320). Specifically, America's first higher education institutions, such as Harvard and Princeton, excluded Black students, were led by slave-owners, and run with slave labor.

Black people challenged this exclusion and exploitation by creating what we know today as HBCUs in the mid- to-late 1800s. This is due to particular modes of institutional organization that emphasize accessibility and affordability, relationship-building, and the cultivation of student identity at racial, intellectual, and leadership levels. And, in doing so, they have delivered significant value for Black students and communities. (Palmer, Arroyo & Maramba, 2016). But most HBCUs were developed during the Jim Crow era under the flawed and racist ideology of "separate but equal," and they have always been starved of the resources needed to thrive.

The Civil Rights movement dismantled "separate but equal" in American education and society. Now, Black students were given the legal right to the same education as White students. This was a significant development for Black students, communities, and American society. However, the Civil Rights Act left white institutional structures in place as the standard in American higher education. The problem (one of many) is that those institutional structures were built by and for White students, who continue to benefit from them. And, as we'll see, those structures continue to throw up impediments towards the success of Black students.

The Racial Achievement Gap and its Persistence

As part of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Congress called for the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study – an evaluation of American students' academic achievement. The study, conducted by Dr. James Coleman, included 4,000 schools, 66,000 teachers, and approximately 600,000 first, third, sixth, ninth and 12th graders. Though it didn't look at higher education, specifically, the Coleman Report was important in identifying America's racial disparities in educational outcomes. And in doing so, it established the concept of the "achievement gap" as a preeminent concern in American education.

Since the Coleman Report, the achievement gap has come to be defined as a set of measures of academic participation and success, such as admissions & graduation rates, GPA, and standardized test scores. Education leaders widely acknowledge the racial achievement gap, and they have worked for decades to address it. However, significant gaps among demographic groups persist. These disparities are particularly acute for Black students compared to their White counterparts (Beamon, 2014). These disparities have enormous implications for African American students and communities. Neal (2005) concludes that:

> Results based on convergence rates that represent best case scenarios for Black youth suggest that even approximate Black-White skill parity is not possible before 2050, and equally plausible scenarios imply that the Black-White skill gap will remain quite significant throughout the 21st century. (p. 2)

Why does the Achievement Gap Persist?

A racial achievement gap exists and persists in U.S. higher education. The following asks why the achievement gap persists in order to address its root causes and make steps towards a more equitable education system and society.

The "medical model" and institutional negligence.

When it comes to student performance, U.S. higher education institutions practice a "diagnose and react" approach. They wait for perceived flaws or lacks in student performance to surface. Then, they "prescribe" a remedy (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014). Also referred to as the "medical model" (Murtadha and Stoughton, 2004), this reactive approach constitutes "institutional negligence." Moreover, when students from particular racial, ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds consistently underperform relative to their affluent White peers, the medical model has the sinister effect of suggesting that entire peoples and communities are lacking (Dutta, 2007).

There's no data to support the idea that Black students are incapable of achieving the same academic success as their White counterparts, though. The problem is U.S. higher education institutions, being rooted in racism and exclusion, present hurdles for Black students. In other words, *it's the institution stupid.* To understand why, consider the experience of a Black student in an exclusionary, Eurocentric classroom.

The exclusionary, Eurocentric classroom experience

In the U.S., college classrooms have a reputation as liberal, if not progressive spaces. But for Black students and other underrepresented minorities, the college curriculum and the way it is taught can be elitist and exclusionary.

University curriculum tends to align with Eurocentric experiences and perspectives (Patton, 2016). Knowing that a majority of professors in the Cal State system are non-Black, this props up Whites scholars and creates a Eurocentric "canon" – a set of seminal works that have been passed on intergenerationally, embedding whiteness in the curriculum. Students who have direct access to and intimate familiarity with this Eurocentric "canon" find themselves advantaged, and those who don't, don't.

Pedagogically, differing cultural codes can also produce communicative barriers (Kim, 2003). For instance, the expectation that "proper" English -- and proper English alone -- be used in class assignments and discussions can disadvantage students who were not raised to possess this particular linguistic skill set. It is the enforcement of such Eurocentric classroom codes, rather than the acknowledgement and validation of various existing codes that pose communicative barriers for Black and other minority students.

These exclusionary curricular and pedagogical approaches leave our Black students as afterthoughts (Patton, 2016). Increasing the diversity of faculty is important. But there are more hurdles facing Black students than just who is teaching what and how they are teaching in the classroom. What do we see when we look outside the classroom for a more holistic view of the "achievement gap?"

Outside the classroom: The hidden curriculum & bureaucratic complexity

Higher education institutions and their personnel employ implicit "rules" for how students should participate in university life. For instance, office hours are typically optional for students, but they may be silently expected by professors (Hirschman, 2018). Such rules are known as the "Hidden Curriculum," and they pervade the educational experience. (Gofton & Regehr, 2006)

Some students – particularly affluent White students – are effectively socialized to know and navigate these rules. However, poor and minority students may not be aware of these rules due to cultural or material differences (Ramirez & Severn, 2006). This perpetuates two classes of students, those who are "in the know" about the expectations of university life, and those in the dark, which Black students often are. This contributes to common issues, such as imposter syndrome or the pausing – or the ultimate ending – of the academic journey.

Contemporary universities are also large bureaucracies composed of multiple, complex operational units, such as admissions, housing, financial aid, and academic affairs. Much like the DMV or the court system, navigating university bureaucracies can be time- and resource-intensive, and some people are better prepared to do so than others.

Poor and minority students, in particular, find themselves stymied as they work to secure these needed university services. These students often lack the substantial time necessary to navigate university bureaucracies. They are working to make ends meet, caring for ailing parents or siblings, or searching for childcare for their own children. In many cases, simply obtaining food and stable housing is a daily struggle. And unlike their more affluent, White classmates, this demographic typically doesn't enjoy the social support networks to take care of these matters for them. Expecting students to thrive in their classes while navigating complex educational bureaucracies and hidden curricula is irresponsible, harmful, and unjust. This creates a self-fulfilling prophecy that perpetuates the achievement gap today.

Negative stereotypes & imposter syndrome

As we've seen, poor and minority students – particularly African American students – face a number of material and cultural hurdles as they pursue a college education. However, using the medical model, U.S. higher education attributes that "gap" to Black students, rather than the institution. This reinforces negative stereotypes associated with

Black college students, including inferiority and failure (Arroyo and Gasman, 2014). So, professors tend to interpret poor classroom performance by Black students, as laziness, disinterest, or incompetence. However, such performance is a function of the factors just discussed – Eurocentric classrooms and curriculum, the hidden curriculum, and bureaucratic impediments – not their true academic capacity.

Moreover, this perceived lack of preparedness among minority students can negatively impact students' own psychological functioning, including their emotional well-being, sense of belonging, self-perceptions, and motivation (Jury et al., 2017). One specific manifestation of these stress markers is "imposter syndrome" (Harackiewicz et al., 2014). When an affluent White student applies and goes to college, they enter a space that they and others expected them to occupy. Black students, on the other hand, must navigate an academic space that had to ask for permission to attend, that they are not expected to be in, and where they are not culturally and socially appreciated. And because of the material and cultural hurdles mentioned, they find themselves underperforming through no fault of their own. This gives students the impression that they do not belong, are wanted, or and do not deserve to be in that academic space despite possessing the capacities required to be there and succeed. This is imposter syndrome.

What's needed: The dilution of whiteness

The common thread in the above challenges facing minority students in U.S. higher education is the institution's oversaturation of whiteness. But if the goal of public higher education is to see that all students realize their full human potential, then whiteness must be diluted. This creates an avenue allowing us to build institutional structures that reflect the material and cultural realities of all students – not just White ones.

A Three-Part Plan for Transforming Black Students' Experiences

The culture of whiteness is fundamental to the racial injustice and inequities in American higher education. Transforming that culture in a manner that dilutes whiteness is key to a just and equitable education system and society.

As such, this proposal calls for the CSU Board of Trustees to charge California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), in its mission, with the following:

1. operating CSUDH as the flagship institution for the California State University system.

2. creating a campus-wide Holistic Education-Transformation Laboratory to develop and test best practices for educating minority students so they and their communities may realize their full human potential.

3. disseminating those recommendations to the other CSUs for adaptation and adoption consistent with those campus's local needs and circumstances.

Description and Rationale for the plan

What would this Education-Transformation Learning Lab do?

This campus-wide laboratory will study the comprehensive educational and whole life challenges that whiteness creates for minority students, particularly African Americans. More, this laboratory will develop and implement structures and practices aimed at diluting the whiteness embedded in campus practices at CSUDH and removing the obstacles whiteness produces for those students.

Unlike previous approaches, which treated minority students as the problem, this learning laboratory assumes that the cultural context of students' educational experiences matters. So, in order to develop more just, sound, and effective campus practices, the problems minority students face need to be studied and developed in a context where whiteness undoubtedly operates (as it does in all CSUs), but where the minority community and a culture of social and racial justice are robust enough to challenge and transform those structures and practices.

Why CSUDH?

The CSU system and the Dominguez Hills campus, more specifically, provide an ideal context for this Learning Laboratory. The CSU system is more accessible to marginalized students due to lower tuition costs and more flexible admissions policies. Moreover, as a large public university system, the CSU can bring resources and support to this project that smaller, resource-strapped HBCUs cannot.

CSUDH, itself, has a rich history of educating underserved populations, including African American and Latino students (CSUDH, 2018). The campus was founded as South Bay State College in 1960 and held its first classes in the affluent suburb of Palos Verdes, California in 1965. In response to social tragedies such as the 1965 Watts rebellion, CSUDH was relocated to Carson, California, in 1966, to serve the community's minority population (CSUDH, 2018). This project can be understood as an evolution and expansion of this campus history and culture. As such, this is an ideal context for the development of a campus-wide learning laboratory at CSUDH.

What Scope Will This Learning Lab Have?

This learning laboratory will not be some stand-alone center buried deep within the CSUDH infrastructure. Rather the entire institution itself will constitute this laboratory. It will encompass all the university's various divisions (e.g., financial aid, counseling, admissions, academic affairs, etc.). The heads of these divisions will be responsible for executing the new campus mission of studying and developing practical solutions for removing the obstacles whiteness produces for minority students, particularly African American students. This will require the real and honest self-reflection and participation

of all parties -- from Vice Presidents to janitorial staff and from full professors to adjuncts.

What kinds of recommendations will CSUDH produce for other CSUs?

CSUDH is uniquely positioned for creating and running such a learning lab. However, achievement gaps and whiteness are problems that persist across the CSU system. Other CSUs will have much to gain from the insights CSUDH is able to provide regarding education of minority students. CSUDH will produce best practice recommendations and assessable outcomes in a range of campus operations, including financial aid, admissions, human resources, food & housing security, and curriculum & instruction.

Why does CSUDH need to be elevated to flagship status?

CSUDH must be elevated to the level of flagship institution because addressing higher education's racial inequities and injustice is essential to achieving the CSU's promise of providing excellent education to *all* California's residents, regardless of race or ethnicity. The CSU needs a campus that is recognized as a leader in this crucial area. Elevating CSUDH to the level of the CSU's flagship institution will afford it with greater attention and resources overall. This is the CSU putting its money where its mouth is.

Prospective target areas

This plan charges CSUDH, in its mission, with the creating and operating a permanent learning laboratory for developing guidance on how best to educate minority students so that they may realize their full human potential. This proposal does not intend to be prescriptive in identifying which particular aspects of student life demand prioritization, or what changes are required. Rather the plan assumes that, with the resources and leadership of a flagship campus, CSUDH's faculty, staff, students, and community can identify challenges facing minority students and produce sound recommendations for addressing them.

Still, based on the literature reviewed above, the following identifies a few prospective target areas that are rich for intervention, and that CSUDH may be well-served to produce recommendations concerning.

Inter-office coordination

Complex bureaucratic structures create real impediments for Black and minority students. With this in mind, CSUDH can develop structures and practices that reduce the sweat-equity unjustly required to navigate university life and obtain a college degree. One reason university bureaucracies are so maddening is that the left hand is rarely aware of what the right hand is doing (and digital platforms have not made enough progress in solving this). So, CSUDH can look for ways to transform how its various divisions communicate so that all students – regardless of their material or cultural resources – quickly get the information and services they need without complication.

Admissions

University admissions processes should focus on enrolling a diverse student population by seeking out students who have experienced historical and contemporary oppression and valuing their life experiences during the admissions processes. The focus needs to be less solely on grades and more on the student's ability to add cognitive diversity to the campus and institution.

Financial Aid

Financial Aid opportunities must be more robust and accessible for minority students. Students need to be made aware of the availability of specific financial aid opportunities. This means that administrators and instructors need clear communication on due dates, requirements, as well as an intimate knowledge of the various processes in said system.

Housing & food security

Housing and food security are vital to students' mental, emotional, and physical well-being and academic success. Proactively designating a well-resourced office to support students in securing stable housing and food is one way to ensure students have their basic needs met and can succeed academically.

Curriculum & Instruction

Curriculum and instruction must reject the 'medical model' of prescribing students a solution and must be wary of perpetuating whiteness throughout the course. This means a focus on helping students achieve their educational goals, as well as being wary of cultural codes within the classroom

Seven-year Implementation Plan

Creating and implementing a major university initiative like this is high-stakes and resource-intensive. The following steps will help CSUDH and the CSU system more broadly to reach these ambitious goals.

Year One: Found learning lab; Elevate CSUDH to flagship status

Board of Trustees votes to grant CSUDH flagship status and approves a committee to oversee the creation of a learning lab at CSUDH's campus. That committee will include (but is not limit to) the CSUDH college president, Dir. Financial Aid, Dir. of Admin. & Records, Associate Student Body President, at least one Student Body Senator, at least two Board of Trustees members, and one faculty senate representative from each college across campus.

Years 2-3: Open learning lab; Research CSUDH students' experiences & institutional needs

CSUDH formally opens its campus-wide Holistic Education-Transformation Laboratory. That lab's leadership committee works with CSUF Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership to conduct a qualitative study of CSUDH students' lived experiences, including both struggles and successes, during their academic journeys. Areas of need (both curricularly and institutionally) will be identified, and a report on proposed changes to campus structures, policies, and practices will be created.

Years 4-5: Implementation

Preliminary results of study are used to enhance Student Social Services Hub that by this point should include the coordination of faculty for classroom instruction modification and a preliminary faculty-created instruction manual made of from the culmination of collected data seen through the lens of this consortium.

Years 6-7: Disseminate Guidance to other CSUs

The entire year would be used by all committees, to-date, to review the academic success regarding the Achievement Gap using 2022 measurement standards for African American students.

A set of new success practices will be generated from the data and submitted to the CSU Board of Trustees for review, as well as approval to disseminate to all CSU campuses for the purposes of enacting their own adaptation of the practices organically into their campus(s) culture.

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