

## ABSTRACT

TURNER, STEPHEN TIMOTHY. A Collective Case Study of the Experience of High-Impact Practice Participation upon Hispanic Student Transfer Success. (Under the direction of Dr. Audrey Jaeger).

This qualitative, collective case study explored the experiences of Hispanic community college students who participated in high-impact practices and the effect of participation upon their transfer success. Experiential, high-impact practices (e.g., first-year experience, learning communities, service-learning, and internships) have been noted to boost student success markers (e.g., GPA, persistence, completion) particularly for students of color (Kuh, 2008a). Yet limited literature is available that studied the effects of participating in those educational activities pre-transfer upon their transfer experience at the university. The relevance of Yosso's (2005) *community cultural wealth* theory was also investigated as it affected the lived experience of pre- and post-transfer Hispanic students. Findings from student and alumni interviews revealed themes of family support and cultural pride. The themes encapsulated students' ability to overcome systemic barriers and realize transformative life-change provided by service-learning and study abroad experiences. These experiences positively impacted their transfer experience and success at the university through decreased transfer shock, strong GPAs, persistence, and completion. As the gateway to higher education for students of color (Lanaan, 2001; Schak et al., 2019; Shugart, 2019), two-year institutions can ill-afford not to implement systemic changes if they hope to positively affect Hispanic student transfer rates.

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A Collective Case Study of the Experience of High-Impact Practice Participation  
upon Hispanic Student Transfer Success.

by  
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## DEDICATION

To my sweetheart and family, you've endured the longest and sacrificed the most. Pattie, I am forever grateful for your unending love and support in everything I do. Your patience and understanding in this journey undoubtedly demonstrates that you really were serious about the “richer...poorer...better...worse” that we promised each other over 30 years ago! Hannah and Adam, Leah, and Micah, your encouragement and belief in me motivated me to keep going when it would have been easy to stop—this project is the result of that inspiration.

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

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Steve earned both his M.A. and B.S. degrees in Psychology at Appalachian State University and is a doctoral student in Community College Leadership at NC State University. He holds membership in the Society for Teaching Psychology, American Association of Christian Counselors, National Society for Experiential Education, and the International Positive Psychology Association and has lectured in Southeast Asia. Prior to entering academia, he served as an ordained minister at churches in North Carolina and Virginia.

Steve and his wife Pattie have three adult children. They enjoy exploring the North Carolina mountains and coast and are huge Disney parks fans.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Over 78% of students who enter America's community colleges in any given year plan to transfer to another institution (Bailey et al., 2016; Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2020a; Wang, 2020). Yet only 33% ultimately do so with just 14% graduating after six years (Jenkins & Fink, 2016; Shapiro et al., 2020); for minority students, the graduation figure drops to 5.5% (Shapiro et al., 2018). Transfer success leads to degree attainment, so it is critical to increase rates of success for all students. Benefits of degree attainment include the likelihood of economic upward mobility, an increased chance to make a better life for one's family and future generations thereof (The Aspen Institute, 2016; Carnevale et al., 2011; Kuh et al., 2006), and the inherent sense of accomplishment, pride, and meaning that earning a college degree provides. Kuh et al. (2006) and Boggs and McPhail (2016) further posit that student success brings benefit even to the larger community. Sweat et al. (2013) concur:

“It is critical for the economic and social well-being of our society to create an environment in which a college degree is accessible to all people with the desire and ability to pursue it” (p. 12).

Despite the noted benefits, attainment of a bachelor's degree remains elusive for many two-year students upon transfer to a four-year college or university. Two states exemplified this: First, in North Carolina, a substantial gap in success rates continues to exist between students transferring from a community college and their “native” counterparts (those who completed their first two years at the 4-year institution) (The UNC System [UNC], 2020). Second, as found by the state of Virginia, most students in four different study cohorts left their community colleges without a degree in hand (State Council of Higher Education of Virginia [SCHEV], 2016). These findings are in disagreement with studies that confirm associate degree completion

leads to a greater likelihood of transfer and bachelor's degree completion (Anderson, 2015; Bailey et al., 2016; Jenkins & Fink, 2016). When focusing on minority student populations, the degree attainment gap widens (American Association of Colleges & Universities [AACU], 2015; Hill & Curry-Stevens, 2017; Lin et al., 2020; Shapiro et al., 2018). Shapiro et al. (2018) found that only 5.5% of minority students reach graduation. Clearly, it is paramount that colleges and universities engage students in the life of the college if there is any hope in students increasing chances of degree attainment and thereby securing a family-sustaining wage.

Scholars have described engagement as involvement (Astin, 1984), academic and social integration into the life of the college (Tinto, 1975), social integration and “psychological and physical involvement” (Pascarella, 1985b, p. 657), and a sense of belonging (Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Tinto 1975; Wang, 2020) to help convey the idea of a student's intentional commitment to their coursework and institution. McCormick et al. (2013) defined engagement as, “college students' exposure to and participation in a constellation of effective educational practices at colleges and universities” (p. 47). Student engagement research coalesces around the understanding that when college students invest time and energy with their institutions, chances of completion will increase (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2001; Kuh 2008b).

In the 1990s, Kuh (2001) began to investigate the best practices of experiential learning that appeared to have significant impact upon student engagement, success, and completion. He found that when students invested energy in certain tasks—what he termed “educationally purposeful activities” (p. 2) and “high-impact practices” (p. 2)—deeper learning and greater engagement with the institution occurred (Kuh, 2008b). High-impact practices (HIPs) have been shown to increase rates of retention, persistence, and completion for postsecondary students (Bradley et al., 2015; Kuh, 2016; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Kuh et al., 2017). In one study, Kuh et al.

(2006) positively correlated student engagement in educationally purposeful activities and an increase in GPA while later studies found HIPs participation to relate to increased Hispanic student graduation rates (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018) and Hispanic student transfer rates (Raby et al., 2014). Educationally purposeful activities appear to have a cascading effect on employment, cognitive and values development, and personal enrichment (Kuh et al., 2006) and have been noted by other researchers to correlate with higher rates of retention and transfer credit earning than non-participants (Raby et al., 2014) and relate to both cognitive and behavioral indicators of engagement (Sweat et al., 2013).

In their reflection of more than ten years of Kuh's HIPs research, Kuh et al. (2017) described the strength of high-impact practices as, "A potentially powerful approach to enhance student learning and persistence.... HIPs are developmentally powerful because they require applied, hands-on, integrative, and often collaborative learning experiences" (p. 9). They attributed the success of these practices to the heightened engagement by participants, the reduction of the distance between student and faculty member, and the elimination of student anonymity because they *have* to get involved. Yet, despite the power of HIPs, only a handful of states have led the way with scaled implementation which, as expected, resulted in the increases in completion rates and advancements in equity that were pushed by the Obama administration in 2011 and subsequently the Lumina Foundation and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Kezar (2014) promoted a similar direction as she relayed the cognitive science research findings that suggest the need for, among other things, student-teacher interactions. These findings support the creation of senior capstones, learning communities, experiential models, service-learning courses, and multicultural activities to synthesize student learning. These experiential learning practices (e.g., undergraduate research, study abroad, and internships) lead

to multiple student success markers such as increased GPA, greater semester-to-semester persistence and higher completion rates (Bradley et al., 2015; Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Kuh, 2001; Kuh et al., 2006; Laanan & Jain, 2016; Phillips & Horowitz, 2017; Selingo, 2017), but have been found to have the greatest impact upon minority student populations (AACU, 2015; Eynon & Iuzzini, 2020; Kuh et al., 2017; Raby et al., 2014; Sweat et al., 2013).

While scholars have replicated those compensatory findings for minority students as a result of participating in HIPs (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kilgo et al., 2015; Kuh, 2016; Kuh et al., 2017; Raby et al., 2014; Rockey & Congleton, 2016), a substantially low involvement rate by those same underrepresented students deprives them of experiencing the very success HIPs participation is purported to all-but-guarantee (Kuh et al., 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2016). The key to increasing participation numbers among minority students was found by some researchers to be faculty interaction which, ironically, has also been shown to be a strong contributor to student success (Harris, 2017; Hawkins, 2015; Laanan, 2001; O'Keefe, 2013).

Transfer success has been connected to the faculty-student relationship (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Edmunds et al., 2013; Harris, 2017; Jackson et al., 2013; Pascarella, 1985a ; Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016; Salis et al., 2016). This research rests on the assumption that transfer success, as related to high-impact practice participation, is due to the high level of faculty-student interaction (Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Finley & McNair, 2013; Kuh & Love, 2000; Luciano-Wong & Crowe, 2019; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). When students engage with faculty in conversations and activities outside the classroom, they experience benefits at the two-year college (Harris, 2017) and a more positive adjustment period at the four-year university (Jackson et al., 2013). Almon (2015) posited that faculty-student interaction can lead to gains in navigating the college environment. In her 2015 study, she found that English language learners

lack interactions with faculty other than getting assignments; this lack of interaction can contribute to poor navigational skills.

Strong faculty interaction typifies career and technical education (CTE) programs at community colleges, which have used experiential learning to bring about student success (Clark et al., 2010). As a result, co-curricular experiences such as apprenticeships and internships have become a CTE mainstay (Rodriquez et al., 2016; Stone, 2014). Yet parallel opportunities for general education/college transfer programs have been lacking. In spite of the abundance of research touting the efficacy of HIPs when implemented among university students, there has been limited investigation of HIPs in the community college context which has resulted in limited realization of the power of HIPs to increase student success.

From what has been discovered in studies at four-year institutions, certain high-impact practices have positive outcomes across student success metrics: service-learning and undergraduate research have been shown to increase retention, persistence, and completion (Kilgo et al., 2015; Hullender et al., 2015) as has study abroad (Kezar, 2014; Sweeney, 2013; Whatley & Clayton, 2020; Xu et al., 2013), learning communities (Coston et al., 2013), and internships (Fede et al., 2018; Kilgo et al., 2015). While an abundance of research has investigated the efficacy of HIPs in four-year institutions (Chen, 2008; Kilgo, et al., 2015; Hullender et al., 2015; Salis et al., 2016), further investigation is needed to determine the potential relationship between engagement in HIPs at two-year colleges and increased transfer success for minority students (AACU, 2015; Chen, 2008; Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Luciano-Wong & Crowe, 2019; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018).

## Statement of Problem

In the state of North Carolina, transfer students that entered a University of North Carolina (UNC) System school with junior-level standing in 2014 graduated at a rate of 29% within two years, 59% within three years, and 68% in four years post-transfer (UNC, 2020). “Native” students (those who entered and graduated from the 4-year UNC institution) graduated at higher rates (65% in two years—the traditional senior year; 84% in three years; 87% in four years). Without changes in community colleges in North Carolina, transfer students will continue to lag behind native students in rates of completion.

Community colleges have been a part of the United States (U.S.) higher education landscape for more than 100 years—since their early days as “junior” colleges and currently as a comprehensive colleges offering dozens of vocational training programs and university transfer pathways (Thoreson, 2017). Enrolling almost half of the nation’s undergraduates (Bailey et al., 2015), U.S. community colleges are home to some of the most diverse student populations in the country and have been characterized as the major on-ramp to higher education for minority students (Gonzalez Canche, 2014; Shugart, 2019). Despite their historical mission and promising access to underserved populations, completion rates for community colleges are disappointing at best (Belfield et al., 2019; Jenkins & Fink, 2016; Shapiro et al., 2018; Sweat et al., 2013).

Even more alarming, minority students do not transfer and complete at the rate of their white counterparts (Wang, 2020). According to Shapiro, et al. (2018), in the United States, only Asian students exceed the completion rate of white students (26.2% v. 20.8%). Hispanic student rates of transfer and bachelor’s degree attainment is 13.2%, while 9.5% of African-American students complete. Among North Carolina’s non-Asian minority students (native and transfer

combined), the 2013 cohort graduation rate was 52.9% (versus 69.9% Asian and 66.6% white) (College Completion, 2015).

When they experience difficulty in transferring to four-year colleges and universities, minority students are less likely to persist and attain a baccalaureate degree and thereby fail to achieve the upward mobility that is often the capstone of a college education. Hill and Curry-Stevens (2017) heightened this sense of urgency due to persistent income gaps in U.S. society when it comes to African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. J. Fink (personal communication, September 22, 2020) was even more adamant as he stated that community colleges must propel students to the baccalaureate degree and onto the more robust job market. For instance, men of color consistently fall behind their white counterparts in success markers (Boggs & McPhail, 2016); for the state of North Carolina, this equates to almost half of minority students failing to enhance their family's economic condition or socio-economic status (College Completion, 2015). The completion and economic gaps will only widen as the minority student population in North Carolina community colleges grows.

With population growth in the U.S. expected to continue for the Hispanic demographic (Flores, 2017; Martinez & Santiago, 2020; Tippett, 2020), more Hispanic students will be enrolling in our institutions in the next several decades (Clark et al., 2013). From 2000-2016, Hispanic student undergraduate enrollment grew by 134%—the highest growth during that period—and was the only race/ethnicity demographic group to increase in enrollment since 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019c). The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC, 2021) noted that in spring semester 2020 (the last enrollment pre-COVID-19), the Hispanic student demographic was the only non-Asian demographic to have an enrollment increase. Flores (2017) also found that 40% of U.S. Hispanics ages 25-years and

older had attended college in 2015, yet a postsecondary credential is possessed by only 22.6% of the nation's Hispanics and 18.8% of the North Carolina Hispanic population (Jones & Jackson, 2019). (Recent NSCRC data, 2021, marked the percentage of Hispanics that hold an associate degree or more at 27%.) That this fastest-growing minority has the lowest graduation attainment rates does not bode well for health of the U.S. economy (Excelencia in Education, 2020a; Schak et al, 2019; Sweat et al., 2013). Lin et al. (2020) recently discovered that while probability rates of Hispanic students transferring mirror white students up to the second year of community college, the gap widens such that by year six after starting, the probability is only 20%. Therefore, a need for solutions to enhance transfer success and diminish completion rate gaps for this population is only going to grow. National degree attainment goals by *Excelencia in Education* (e.g., 6.2 million baccalaureate degrees for Hispanic students by 2030; Anguiano & Navarro, 2020) and statewide credential attainment goals by myFutureNC (e.g., two million credentials by 2030; myFutureNC Commission, 2021) draw attention to this urgency of success particularly for students of color.

North Carolina has one of the highest Hispanic populations—the 11th largest in the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2019)—having experienced 24% growth of this demographic in 2018 which was above the national average (Tippett, 2020). According to the *2019 Equity Report* (North Carolina Community College System [NCCCS], 2019), 10% of North Carolina community college students were from this underserved demographic in fall 2017 and were the only racial/ethnic demographic to increase in enrollment in North Carolina colleges 1996-2017 (D. Jenkins, personal communication, February 23, 2021) . Since the 2008 recession, Jenkins found that Hispanic enrollment had more than doubled. If community colleges are indeed the gateway to higher education for minority students (Laanan, 2001; Schak et al., 2019; Tippett,

2020), and if “higher education can be a game changer for Latino students’ mobility” (Martinez & Santiago, 2020; p. 12), then college administrators and faculty can ill-afford not to undertake systemic reforms to increase Hispanic students’ transfer rates and success. As Schak et al. challenged, “Higher education leaders must do more to advance Latino success” (2019; p. 2). Without a substantial uptick in successful transfer to a four-year institution, Hispanic students will stagnate in their journey toward economic upward mobility (Excelencia in Education, 2020a) and continue to hold mostly low-paying service jobs despite being a large portion of the workforce (Martinez & Santiago, 2020).

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of HIPs participation upon closing the gap in transfer success of minority students, especially Hispanics, in community colleges. It was my aim to engage in qualitative research, deep-dive into the use of high-impact practices of two large community colleges in the southern tier of the U.S., and explore how engagement in these experiential learning practices pre-transfer results in increased GPA, greater persistence, and higher completion rates post-transfer. This study also proposed recommendations and addressed implications for two-year institutions as they seek to close the completion gap for Hispanic students. It should be noted that transfer is the mutual responsibility of both two- and four-year institutions, but the goal of this study is to focus on community college administrators and the researcher’s domain as a practitioner.

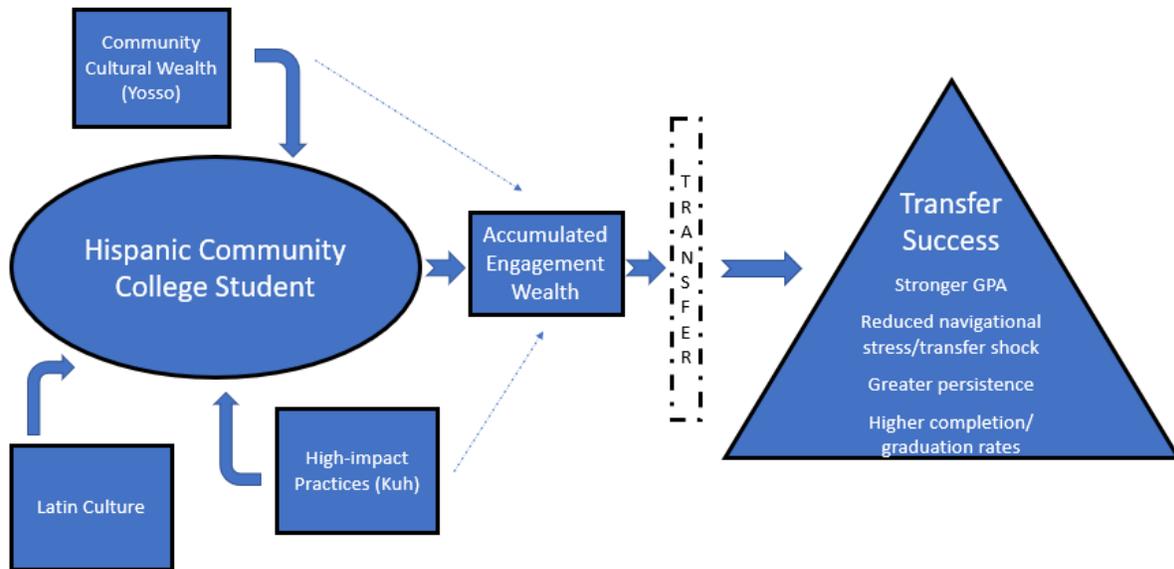
### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was framed by two theories that focus on student success: Kuh’s theory of student engagement and Yosso’s Community Cultural Wealth theory. Kuh stated that participation in experiential, high-impact practices (e.g., learning communities, service-learning,

undergraduate research) leads to increased student engagement as demonstrated by higher GPA and higher retention and completion rates (Kuh, 2001). Community Cultural Wealth theory changes the narrative about minority students from one of deficits in the classroom to one of strengths based on their cultural capital (Sáenz et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). These theories supplied lenses with which to understand successful transfer experiences of Hispanic students and discover policies and practices of institutions that lead to degree attainment.

### **Conceptual Framework**

By inserting culture, the strengths/asset construct of Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth theory, and Kuh's engagement theory into the student experience, Hispanic community college students who participate in HIPs as part of an accumulation of engagement activities should experience increased transfer success (stronger GPAs, reduced navigational stress/transfer shock, greater persistence, and higher completion rates) at their four-year institutions compared to their counterparts that did not participate in HIPs (see Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1***Conceptual Framework*

*Note.* Conceptual framework of inserting culture, Yosso’s community cultural wealth theory, and Kuh’s engagement theory into the student experience. Adapted from “What Matters to Student Success: A Review of the Literature,” by G. Kuh, J. Kinzie, J. Buckley, B. Bridges and J. Hayek, 2006, *National Postsecondary Education Cooperative*.

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**Research Questions**

Two research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of HIPs participation by Hispanic students pre-transfer? Post-transfer?
2. What does an exploration of HIPs participation by Hispanic students reveal about supports that institutions should consider putting in place?

## Significance of Study

Research has confirmed the efficacy of HIPs in increasing student success at colleges and universities (Bradley et al., 2013; Chen, 2008; Kilgo et al., 2015; Kuh, 2016). However, empirical evidence is scant on the impact on transfer success of students who engaged in HIPs at their 2-year school. Even more so is the lack of literature on the transfer success of vulnerable and/or minority student populations. This study is essential if engaging in high-impact practices is as impactful for minority students as the research indicates; community college administrators can ill-afford to short-sell these opportunities if they hope to reduce student success gaps and increase successful transfer for students of color. If the community college is indeed the gateway (Gonzalez Canche, 2014; Laanan, 2001; Schak et al., 2019) and the “dominant mode of access” (Shugart, 2019, 5:02) to higher education for minority and other underserved students, then the hope of any upward economic mobility for these populations rests on their successful transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions (Love, 2020; Shugart, 2019). Furthermore, as increasing numbers of technical fields begin to require bachelor’s degrees, seamless transfer must be attained if families and communities are going to break the cycle of generational poverty and restore the middle class (Shugart, 2019).

Additionally, practice does not align with existing research (however limited): too few two-year colleges implement and scale these experiential practices despite the preponderance of studies showing their effectiveness in increased GPA, retention, and completion rates for university students (Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010; Kuh et al., 2006). Scant literature demonstrating efficacy of HIPs among community college students corroborated the four-year findings (Riley et al., 2016; Willis, 2012; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). This is particularly true in the substantially positive impact of HIPs upon the engagement of Hispanic

students, yet Hispanic students are considerably less likely to participate in high-impact experiences than their white counterparts (AACU, 2015; Finley & McNair, 2013; Kuh, 2008a; Sweat et al., 2013).

I aim to add to the transfer literature and assist faculty and administrators to prioritize HIPs at their institutions as a means to promote student engagement and increase transfer success, particularly of Hispanic students. Most literature focuses on the success of HIPs at 4-year or affluent institutions—this study will look at the impact of HIPs experiences at the 2-year college upon successful transfer (reduced transfer shock, higher GPA, greater engagement) to the 4-year school.

I hope to inform institutional leadership of the value of prioritizing HIPs and creating a culture of engagement that will translate into greater transfer success and degree completion for Hispanic students. By increasing student success and completion rates, these students and other underrepresented student populations will solidify their chances of enhanced economic mobility and create a more favorable future for their families and North Carolina communities.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of this study is the number of students interviewed at each institution. My aim is not to interview all Hispanic students but to gain a snapshot of voices that is representative of perspectives of the Hispanic student transfer experience.

Also, this study is limited by the participation of Hispanic students in certain HIPs. Not all HIPs could be studied and not all Hispanics progress equally with all HIPs: certain HIPs resonate more with various underserved populations or certain HIPs are less practical for Hispanic student participation in some institutions.

## **Delimitations**

Delimitations for this study include the choice of community college/university pairs: Hamlin College and Riverside View University, Tuttle Community College and Riverside View University (all pseudonyms). These institutions were chosen because of their respective statewide reputations for student engagement through high-impact practices and their work to reduce achievement gaps. Additionally, both colleges have been nationally recognized for exceptional accomplishments in their sector.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

*Completion* – certificate or degree attainment (e.g., associate degree for a community college, bachelor’s degree for a university; Kuh, 2016).

*Engagement* –students’ intentional and invested effort, thinking, and time to certain tasks (Kuh, 2008b), particularly educationally purposeful activities; a sense of belonging (Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Tinto, 1975), involvement (Astin, 1984), and academic and social integration with the institution (Pascarella, 1985b; Tinto, 1975).

*High-impact practices (HIPs)* – experiential opportunities that typically feature interactive, hands-on behavior, high faculty-student interaction, or high student-student interaction. Examples include first-year experiences, learning communities, undergraduate research, study abroad, service-learning, and internships (Kuh et al., 2017).

*Native student* – a student who began their post-secondary education at a four-year university and continues to be enrolled at the same institution (Bailey et al., 2016; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018).

*Persistence* – semester-to-semester progress that a student makes at their institution up to completion (Tinto, 1975).

*Retention* – a student stays at their institution for a subsequent semester; continuing in their academic objectives, finishing what they started (Kuh, 2016).

*Student success* – markers of student progress and outcome mastery for course, program, or major (often demonstrated by high or increasing GPA, semester-to-semester persistence, transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution, or graduation); degree attainment (Kuh et al., 2006).

*Transfer student* – a student who began their post-secondary education at a two-year community college and transfers to a four-year university (Bailey et al., 2016; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018).

## **Summary**

This study explored the effect of HIPs participation on closing the gap in transfer success of Hispanic community college students. By inserting Yosso's (2005) *community cultural wealth* theory, Kuh's (2001) student engagement theory and the concept of HIPs, and Latin culture into the Hispanic student experience, this study investigated the outcome of an accumulation of engagement experiences upon the student's transition to a 4-year institution.

The following chapters review the literature and detail the methods used in this study. Chapter four includes composite participant profiles which are interviews combined into a unified story; they are useful in interpreting qualitative data and allow the student voice to be highlighted while at the same time ensuring anonymity (Willis, 2019). The final two chapters feature the findings of the study in the context of a journal article and my recommendations for decision-makers in two impact briefs. This format allowed me to prepare my work for dissemination: the article is a comprehensive reporting of my study and aimed at the scholarly reader while impact briefs are shorter, more concise, and are written for a practitioner audience.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review summarizes the current research on the effect of high-impact practices (HIPs) on transfer success of Hispanic students. In this chapter, I review foundational theories that explain student engagement in higher education and the discovery of HIPs as a means to increase engagement. After presenting a deeper review of several HIPs, I address the effect of those practices on historically underrepresented student populations and their transfer success and completion rates. I conclude with literature that uncovers institutional processes that reinforce student success.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Transfer success and completion rates of Hispanic students remain low when compared to their white and Asian counterparts (The Aspen Institute, 2016; Kuh, 2008a; Kuh et al., 2017). While high-impact practices (HIPs) have been found to increase success in all students, these same HIPs have resulted in a compounding effect upon the success of minority students (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Harper, 2009; Kuh, 2017; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Rockey & Congleton, 2016). Yet, few colleges have engaged minority students in these experiential activities and even fewer community colleges have scaled high-impact practices institution-wide despite two-year public colleges enrolling large numbers of minority students in postsecondary education (The Aspen Institute, 2016; Glynn, 2019; Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016). Additionally, Hispanic students bring a wealth of cultural capital with them to college (Sáenz et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). Therefore, scaling HIPs at community colleges and engaging in institutional processes that affirm Hispanic students' cultural strengths should increase the HIPs participation of Hispanic students pre-transfer and result in increased GPA, greater persistence, and higher completion rates of Hispanic students post-transfer.

### *Student Engagement*

Student engagement has been studied extensively as academics have sought to identify student characteristics or institutional practices that integrate students into an institution on their way to degree attainment (Edmunds et al., 2013; Johnson, 2016; Kuh, 2008b; Salis, et al., 2016; Sweat et al., 2013). Research is replete concerning characteristics of the student (Astin, 1984; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Holland, 1966; Tinto, 1975) or attributes of the college or university (Pascarella, 1985a; Smart et al., 2006), yet little has been written about tying student and institutional characteristics together with engagement best practices.

While engagement has been demonstrated to occur as a result of student integration and alignment with the institutional environment (Ishitani & McKittrick, 2010; Kuh et al., 2006; Laanan, 2001), it appears that deeper integration results when faculty members and students interact in educationally purposeful activities (Kuh, 2001; Kuh, 2008b; Kuh, 2016; Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh et al., 2008). Social engagement through involvement, particularly with faculty, in co- and extra-curricular activities seems to bring about a deeper level of commitment as exhibited in metrics of student success such as retention, persistence, and completion (Sáenz et al., 2018).

Since the 1990s, the concepts of faculty-student interaction and social engagement have coalesced in Kuh's student engagement theory (Kuh, 2001). Kuh proposed that students engaging in high-impact practices (HIPs)—such as first-year experiences, internships, study abroad—persisted with strong GPAs, reenrolled in subsequent semesters, and graduated at higher rates than those who did not participate in HIPs (Kuh, 2008a; Kuh, 2016; Kuh, 2017; Kuh et al., 2008; Kuh et al., 2017). When minority students participated in HIPs, the effect was compounded in that minority students were successful and exceeded the success rates of their white counterparts (Kuh, 2008a; Kuh, 2017; Kuh et al., 2008). Though GPA growth was small in

a university study by Kuh et al. (2008), it was significantly impacted by HIPs participation (0.03 higher for white students, 0.11 higher for Hispanic students). In a recent study, Kuh and Kinzie (2018) found that Hispanic university students participating in a single high-impact practice were 10% more likely to graduate in six years than their peers who did not participate in any HIPs.

More recent attempts to investigate the engagement and success of minority students has resulted in a movement away from students of color being at an educational deficit toward students of color bringing assets and a wealth of experiences and backgrounds from which to enhance and deepen their integration into the culture of their institution (Guiffrida, 2006; Hill & Curry-Stevens, 2017; Kuh & Love, 2000; Kuh et al., 2006; Pérez, 2017, Sáenz et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). Hispanic students, in particular, bring the asset of a strong family support structure with them to college and when academically and socially engaged and supported by their families, increased the likelihood of finding success at the community college and transferring successfully to the university (Phillips & Horowitz, 2017; Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016; Schak et al., 2019).

### ***Community Cultural Wealth***

Community cultural wealth theory views engagement of minority students from a critical race theory lens and addresses the assets brought by students of color to educational arenas (Yosso, 2005). This theory offers an alternative to dominant narratives that qualify minority student populations by what they lack—their disadvantage or deficit (Pérez, 2017, Sáenz et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). *Community cultural wealth* is composed of “aspirational, linguistic, familial (‘familismo’), social, navigational, and resistance capital.” (Yosso, 2005, p. 46). *Aspirational capital* is the dreams minorities have for themselves and their kids, their high expectations even in difficulty, and their strong resilience. The bilingual skills of most students of color and the

social skills they learn while serving as translators for their parents typifies *linguistic capital* (Almon, 2015). *Familismo* (which can be family, kinship, or community) aided, rather than hurt, their ability to persist. Students understand they do not struggle alone, and isolation is minimized (Wang, 2020). Differing somewhat, *social capital* is the valued know-how gained from peers or networks, especially in the educational arena. *Navigational capital* (the skill of navigating through society or an educational system), however, is typically low (internalization leads Hispanic males to not ask for help). Mentoring was suggested to overcome any navigational deficit (Sáenz et al., 2018), yet Pérez (2017) argued that Hispanic males did not rely on student-faculty interactions for institutional navigation as much as they relied upon their peers. The same skillset that comes from *navigational capital*—of being highly motivated and determined—can also bring about post-transfer success (Glynn, 2019). *Resistance capital* disrupts the status quo, such as when parents send their daughters to college instead of staying home to care for younger siblings. Compounded, these forms of capital form an accumulation of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005).

Hill and Curry-Stevens (2017) further advocated:

Using a racial equity lens is defined as the ongoing process and practice of increasing capacity to see, understand, and relate to other racial and cultural realities, worldviews, values, and norms that are different from one's own and to be willing to work to create equity and justice. (p. 25)

Kuh et al. (2006) recognized this as they pointed out that African American and Hispanic students lag behind white and Asian students in student success metrics. The authors further asserted,

[We recognize] that students do not come to postsecondary education *tabula rasa*.

Rather, they are the products of many years of complex interactions with their family of origin and cultural, social, political, and educational environments. (p. 3)

Rendón et al. (2014) resounded this recognition and extended Yosso's theory to include four *ventajas* (assets): perseverance, ethnic consciousness (cultural pride), spirituality/faith, and *pluralversality* ("both/and" thinking; being able to move in and out of multiple worlds simultaneously).

Yosso (2005) continued to posit that culture has been widely ignored in most institutional environments as schools most often promote and operate out of a deficit model. She theorized that culture is a result of "funds of communal knowledge" (p. 76) (i.e., community cultural wealth). Cultural knowledge can be vast, but unless it is valued in the educational experience, it is seen as a deficit for the student. Value is placed on a narrow set of knowledge points that often devalues cultural knowledge. Looking with a broader lens, assets of students of color (as well as their cultural resources) are prevalent in their past and present lived experiences (Finley & McNair, 2016). Collectively, these forms of cultural capital can empower students of color (SOC) to enter institutions full of strengths and tools for success rather than disadvantaged for not possessing majority-dominant "insider" knowledge (Pérez, 2017; Yosso, 2005). Clark et al. (2013), Ponjuán and Hernández (2016), and Sáenz et al. (2018) echoed such a proposition as they recommended that focus should shift away from a deficit mindset and towards a strengths-based model that highlights the assets Hispanic males bring to community colleges. A deficit mindset is thinking that is based on the assumption that the student is lacking in some sort of knowledge or skillset or that the student is the reason for the inequity as opposed to the structure or institution while a strengths-based model or an equity mindset (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012)

highlights the attributes and capital that the student possesses and brings to the classroom (Sáenz et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). As an equity mindset becomes more common, SOC are understood to enter institutions with social and cultural capital (Finley & McNair, 2013)—requisite assets if minority students are to experience success at the two-year college and progress into successful transfer to the four-year university. In 2019, Shugart proposed the diversifying of the professions; for that to come to fruition, baccalaureate degree attainment must be diversified as well. Shugart continued to proposition that underserved students graduating with a four-year credential is predicated on their degree completion at the community college and a positive transition to the university. If Yosso (2005), Clark et al. (2013), and Sáenz et al. (2018) are correct, that underserved students possess the assets and capital to succeed at the postsecondary level, without a successful transfer experience, however, Shugart’s proposal stagnates.

### **Transfer Success**

Of the approximately 80% of students that plan to transfer to another institution, only 33% do so with 14% earning their bachelor’s degree within six years (Bailey et al., 2016; Jenkins & Fink, 2016). Boggs and McPhail (2016), Juskiewicz (2019), and Shugart (2019) echoed this concern as they recognized that too few students are completing credentials or transferring to four-year colleges and universities. Around 5.5% of minority students complete (Shapiro et al., 2018). A State Council of Higher Education for Virginia report (SCHEV, 2016) of Virginia’s community colleges found 29% of four student cohorts transferred to a four-year institution with most students (62%) leaving the community college without first completing an associate degree.

A joint Community College Research Center, National Student Clearinghouse, and Aspen Institute study defined “success” by the percentage of students that transferred, percentage that transferred with an award (associate degree), and percentage that completed the bachelor’s

degree (Xu et al., 2018). Semester to semester persistence and degree completion can also be markers of “success” (Hawkins, 2015; NCCCS, 2019). Ishitani and McKittrick (2010) intentionally moved beyond the use of GPA, retention, and completion rates as measures of transfer engagement: they chose to gauge transfer students’ level of HIPs participation. Shugart (2019) advocated for universities incentivizing associate degree completion in that transfers who leave the community college with degree in hand are more likely to graduate with the baccalaureate degree. Regardless of definition of “success,” certain elements appear to have a sequential or compounding impact: high (or solid) GPA leads to retention and semester-to-semester persistence which leads to completion and graduation.

### ***Grade Point Average (GPA)***

Grades are a strong predictor of student success. Kuh et al. (2006), in an analysis of the 2005 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), found that minority students at two-year schools earn an A or B 58% of the time compared to 72% of the time for white students. Laanan (2001) surmised that experiences at a community college impact cognitive (academic, grade-related) and affective (social, emotional) adjustment at the four-year transfer institution. Many interpret this experience of adjustment or “transfer shock” (a decrease in GPA in the first semester post-transfer; disorientation in navigating, often, a larger, more imposing and impersonal environment; reduced student engagement) as the reason behind low success rates for transfer students (Jackson et. al., 2013; Laanan, 2001; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). Rendón et al. (2014) further described transfer shock as students navigating multiple worlds: their own (family, work, religion, community, culture) and the institution’s (engagements, navigating, biased structure, financial). Their struggle (and culture shock) was the toggling back and forth between the worlds.

However, Laanan (2001), in a review of transfer success studies, found that of those who experienced transfer shock (here, a drop in GPA), 67% recovered—they saw their GPAs rise usually within one year. He explained this bounce-back as a variation of transfer shock—“transfer ecstasy,” which is an elevation of GPA post-transfer. This recovery is critical to student success in that transfer shock usually consumes “time and social capital” (Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018, p. 382). This impact is often greatest in students of color, as demonstrated by the CCSSE equity gap (Kuh et al., 2006).

### ***Persistence and Completion***

Persistence (or retention) is another strong indicator of student success. Kuh (2016) preferred the term “persistence” to “retention” and identified eight threats to students continuing in their enrollment: Unpreparedness (academic skills), first-generation, “gap-year” or more post-high school, work more than 30 hours/week, part-time student, single parent, financially independent, and children at home. The more of these threats that apply to the student, the greater the likelihood of not completing. These threats to student success mirror the earlier findings of Kuh et al. (2006) regarding major success themes: quality of high school preparation, family education background, socio-economic status, financial aid, and enrollment patterns/status.

Helmer (2013) identified low-income and non-native English speakers as “[s]tudents with weak educational foundations” (p.5) and are particularly at-risk for stopping out when they hit a barrier. According to Helmer, barriers to persistence include remedial work that takes additional time, limited confidence and/or motivation, and managing work, family, and school. Students face a myriad of real-life issues such as child care, transportation, and unexpected financial emergencies that lack support and resources from the college or local non-profit agencies

(Helmer, 2013; Wang, 2020). In North Carolina, a recent inquiry revealed Hispanic community college students increased first year retention (the largest of any demographic, including whites) from 60% to 63% from 2007-2016 but trailed Hispanic students in the UNC System (retention increased from 83% to 87% in the same period; Tippett & Sanford, 2019). Yet when barriers are mitigated, Glynn (2019) discovered that transfer students persist fall-to-fall at a rate relatively equal to that of native students (75% for transfers, 73% for natives) at all but the most highly selective four-year institutions thereby negating any first semester effects of transfer shock.

Another marker of student success is completion (or degree attainment). Transfers are less likely than natives to be engaged in the four-year institution. If enrolled full-time, however, transfers' levels of engagement improve significantly (Ishitani & McKittrick, 2010) and, with 30-hours earned pre-transfer, momentum toward completion is gained (Bailey et al., 2016; Belfield et al., 2019). Similarly, an increase in the number of hours attempted each semester by Virginia community college students saw an increase in their likelihood of transfer and degree attainment (SCHEV, 2016); students who were full-time were twice as likely to complete as part-time (Juszkiewicz, 2019). Students who completed courses and earned applicable credit (credits that meet major requirements) were more likely to transfer leading to completion (Romano & Palmer, 2016). This effect was reinforced in a recent study by Glynn (2019) in which transfer students completed at a higher rate than native students at both less-selective and highly-selective universities (53.3% versus 35.1% and 76% versus 75.5%, respectively). In fact, being admitted to a highly-selective institution increased the transfer student's likelihood of degree attainment. Though completion rates are on the increase, not all students experience completion the same: gender, race, and age gaps remain (Juszkiewicz, 2019; Wang, 2020).

Romano and Palmer (2016) discovered a correlation between a student completing their program and their level of income: Those with less means are less likely to complete; African American students are 20% less likely to complete than their white counterparts (Juszkiewicz, 2019). This is problematic for the average community college student in that they are more likely to be financially challenged (Glynn, 2019; The Aspen Institute, 2016), to be a racial minority (Shugart, 2019), or to be first generation (The Aspen Institute, 2016) than their four-year counterparts. In contrast, Jackson et al. (2013) discovered that female minority students perceived negative attitudes toward their academic preparedness coming through the community college pipeline. Research shows that they, in fact, stand a good chance of completing at higher rates than their native counterparts (more than 50% of 4-year graduates started at a community college; J. Fink, personal communication, October 14, 2020) and that, "...community colleges are situated to positively position students to be successful upon transferring into the university environment" (Jackson et al., 2013, p. 72; see also Juszkiewicz, 2019).

If minority students are to enjoy transfer success and experience less transfer shock, it is critical, then, for community colleges to eliminate barriers to maintaining a solid GPA, persisting semester-to-semester, and graduating/attaining a degree (Romano & Palmer, 2016). To increase persistence and graduation rates, changes in the student experience (beyond admissions and entry efficiencies) need to occur (Bailey et al., 2016). Tinto (1975) put forward that if a student's experience at the 2-year level has been positive—they have deepened their involvement with/commitment to the institution—they are likelier to transfer to a 4-year institution. The Aspen Institute (2016) similarly advocated for university and community college partners to develop pathways and out-of-class activities that ensure transfer with junior standing and graduation. This prepares them to enter the 4-year institution with equal standing (number of

hours, types of courses *and experiences*). Further, participation in experiential activities has been positively related to student success markers (Kuh et al., 2006; Sáenz et al., 2018), which in turn increase the likelihood that transfers will persist and successfully move on to four-year universities. Transferring successfully from two- to four-year institutions is paramount to students, especially those historically underserved students, experiencing upward economic mobility (The Aspen Institute, 2016).

### **High-Impact Practices**

In the 1990s, Kuh (2001) found that the best practices of experiential learning had significant impact upon student success and completion. High-impact practices (HIPs) have been shown to relate to increased rates of retention, persistence, and completion for postsecondary students (Bonet & Walters, 2016; Bradley et al., 2015; Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Eynon & Iuzzini, 2020; Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Finely & McNair, 2013; Ho & Sanchez, 2018; Jackson et al., 2013; Kezar, 2014; Kuh, 2008a; Kuh, 2016; Kuh, 2017; LaViolet et al., 2018; Perez, 2016; Salis et al., 2016; Selingo, 2017; Sweat et al., 2013; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). In a later study, Kuh et al. (2006) positively correlated student engagement in educationally purposeful activities and an increase in GPA, though Johnson (2016) found little or no impact of HIPs on student success. HIPs include first-year experience, internships, learning communities, service-learning, study abroad, and undergraduate research.

Termed *high-impact practices*, when practiced, they create a high impact and a highly engaging experience with course content, with peers and faculty, and in class preparation when compared to their non-participating peers. Kuh even discovered that HIPs participants invested in their study and class preparation 20% more than non-participating students (Elon University,

2017). The effectiveness of these practices was associated with the following factors (Kuh, 2008a):

- Time and effort: participation deepens student investment (to a task) and student commitment (to the institution).
- Increased interaction with faculty and other students: shared areas of interest combined with someone who wants to see the student succeed.
- Increased opportunities to interact with diverse others, cultures, and viewpoints.
- Immediate feedback (both formal and informal): from peers, faculty and self-reflection.
- Application of classroom learning in a variety of on- and off-campus settings. Students witnessed how experts dealt with messy, not-easy-to-solve problems in real life.
- “It can be life changing!” (Kuh, 2008b, p. 28)

A key concept in the effectiveness of HIPs is that of faculty-student interaction. Kuh (2008b, 2017) discovered that daily mental investment increased the student’s commitment to the educationally purposeful activity as well as to their individual educational pursuits. He found that HIPs participation inherently required students to delve into more robust content with classmates and faculty—there is a built-in connection with another person on campus who is pursuing intellectual tasks in a mutually rewarding exchange. Others concur with Kuh’s findings that faculty-student interaction provided mentoring, connections between classroom content and real-world problems were established, and support for the student’s ultimate success was experienced (Luciano-Wong & Crowe, 2019; Pérez, 2017; Selingo, 2017; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). These findings were particularly noted in faculty interactions with Hispanic students

(Phillips & Horowitz, 2017; Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016). In these interactions, students saw firsthand how mentors dealt with difficult, hard-to-solve issues in a variety of settings: on-campus, off-campus, in the field, abroad, in the community (Kuh, 2008b). Yet Pérez (2017) found that only one-fourth of Hispanic male college students had a meaningful relationship with faculty. Furthermore, a lack of these purposeful interactions—beyond merely receiving assignments in class—contributed to students’ poor navigational skills (Almon, 2015). Hispanic male students avoided faculty interaction due to perceived stereotyping, yet responded very positively (their sense of belonging was stronger) when faculty initiated the interactions and showed they are concerned about the students’ success (Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016). Pérez (2017) echoed that Latinos’ sense of belonging and community holds great sway.

### *Efficacy of HIPs at Community Colleges*

Most literature focuses on the success of HIPs at 4-year institutions (Chen, 2008; Kilgo et al., 2015; Hullender et al., 2015; Kezar, 2014; Salis et al., 2016; Schock, 2017; Whatley, 2019b, 2021) while a paucity of literature addresses the efficacy of HIPs at community colleges, much less its impact upon students post-transfer (Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010). Multiple experiential learning opportunities exist for native students, yet community college transfers are navigating their way in establishing friends, getting acquainted with a new institution and new faculty, and may not easily transition into HIPs-type experiences. Preparing transfers for this challenge might bring greater success in engaging in those experiences (Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010) in that they interact with faculty and pursue educationally purposeful activities less often than their four-year counterparts (Kuh et al., 2006).

Regarding the need for two-year and commuter/part-time college students to experience HIPs participation, Kuh et al. (2008) stated:

“It seems that *all students* attending institutions that employ a comprehensive system of complementary initiatives based on effective educational practices are more likely to perform better academically, to be more satisfied, and to persist and graduate” (p. 556).

The authors continued to suggest that most community college students are only going to interact in the classroom—it is the location where engagement *must* happen. Jenkins et al. (2020) concurred with this proposition in their recent white paper. Faculty and staff who have daily contact with students must push, even “induce” student involvement if they hope to increase participation and be academically successful (Kuh et al., 2008), yet few faculty require those experiential learning activities in their classes (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2012). Years earlier, Tinto (2000) said, “If students, especially those who commute, do not get engaged within the classroom, they are unlikely to get engaged beyond the classroom” (p. 82). Students are highly unlikely to participate in HIPs if they are not connected inside the walls of the classroom. This is especially true for commuting students with multiple external responsibilities (Tinto, 2000). Riley et al. (2016) echoed the challenge of engaging community college students due to work obligations of most students. Therefore, they continued, it is critical to make the most of in-class experiences, such as bringing cultures to campus and designing service-learning projects (see also Martinez & Santiago, 2020).

One stand-out exception to this literature gap for community college-focused research is Queensborough College in New York. This institution is noted for its high transfer rate (70+%) and majority minority population. Salis et al. (2016) found that college leadership aligned their college’s vision “to increase student equity and access to high quality HIPs” (p. 15) and they have been nationally recognized for their elevation of HIPs as a community college. Queensborough College’s successful example illustrates Johnson’s (2016) proposition that if

interactions can take place outside the classroom, they carry even more strength/weight in leading the student to complete (CCCSE, 2012).

When Kuh et al. (2006) investigated community college HIPs efficacy, they discovered through the 2004 CCSSE data that 84% of community college students do not engage in HIPs. The authors also found that first generation students, males, and transfer students tend to be less engaged, engagement by race tends to be comparable, and international students tend to be more engaged. The 2019 CCSSE revealed that 72% of surveyed students had never participated in a community-based project (service-learning activity; CCCSE, 2020b) despite service-learning being the most common high-impact practice (Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). If students were enrolled at a non-research university, they were less likely to participate in study abroad or to have as many options for education abroad locales (Whatley, 2021). It appears that a large portion of two-year college students either lack the opportunity or, for a myriad of reasons, lack the motivation to engage in a set of rich experiences that have the potential to impact their future success and chance at completion.

To resolve this substantial shortcoming, Ishitani and McKittrick (2010) created pre-transfer experiential learning opportunities at a community college to ease students' adjustment post-transfer. Otherwise, barriers exist which lead to low HIPs participation by first-generation, low-income, or minority students: Hispanic students were less likely to participate in mandatory service-learning experiences (Cloyd, 2017); rural students faced transportation, distance, and time issues (Parsons, 1993); urban students struggled to find meaning in traditional service-learning (i.e., those with means find a place in the community without means and provide service; Kinloch et al., 2015), though Ho and Sanchez (2018) found ways to take first-

generation/students of color from an urban private university into parts of a major U.S. city that housed underserved, underrepresented populations.

When these barriers are removed, high-impact practices that correlate to student success include: first-year experience (FYE), internships, learning communities, and service-learning. *First-year experiences* at the community college might involve first-year seminar, early alerts, success classes, academic advising, and pre-orientation. When the content of FYEs are culturally cognizant and a sense of belonging is instilled, minority students are prone to excel (Rockey & Congleton, 2016). *Internships* are more often a part of Career and Technical Education programs than general education pathways at the two-year institution (CCCSE, 2020b) though they are frequently a part of baccalaureate programs at four-year schools. Fede et al. (2018) studied the effectiveness of on-campus employment as an experiential learning technique when students are unable to engage in internships due to financial reasons or need. They found higher GPA and graduation rates than peers who did not have a job (or internship) and transferable skill acquisition mirrored that of other studies on internships. *Learning communities* are pairs of courses in which students co-enroll that are usually linked by theme or goal/outcome. These experiential learning cohorts seem to be more beneficial for minorities than whites (Sweat et al., 2013). Life-changing results can come from a single engagement in *undergraduate research* with faculty (compared to multiple discussions of career plans or serving together on committee/project; Kuh et al., 2006). Undergraduate research has strongest effects for African American students and sophomores according to Sweat et al. (2013) even as Pérez (2017) discovered increased academic determination in Latino males who participated.

However, Kuh and Kinzie (2018) cautioned that merely offering HIPs at an institution does not increase success rates—there must be a quality of the experience and a purposeful

engagement in them for evidence-based results to be realized. Simply offering many HIPs did not bring the intended results. Kuh (2008b) even suggested that certain HIPs bring more successful results than others. Yet requiring at least one high-impact practice during a student's undergraduate experience was more likely to bring increased student success compared to not participating in HIPs (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). Finley and McNair (2013) noted that as participation in the number of HIPs grew, so did students' self-report of deeper learning. The authors found this to be true among transfer students as well as among Hispanic students—who perceived that their learning had increased with the increase in high-impact practice involvement.

### ***Study abroad***

One such high-impact practice, study abroad, is “a structured learning experience in which the student participants are required to live and learn in another country” (Goode, 2007; p. 150). Study abroad participants, for example, returned from their international experience and were more engaged in educationally purposeful activities and reported to get more out of college (Kuh, 2008a). This finding, like many others touting the value of going abroad to study, is based on studies at four-year universities and less so at two-year community colleges. Scant research exists on institutional profiles and study abroad at community colleges (Whatley, 2019b). Whatley (2019b) continued that community college students are not afforded similar educational experiences and are at a deficit compared to their four-year counterparts at competitive-entry institutions; when afforded those experiences, they believe study abroad to be a once-in-a-lifetime event and exhibit high interest. In previous research, Whatley (2018b) observed that only 1.7% of community college students engage in education abroad. Yet Raby (2020) found

that 21<sup>st</sup>-century students were more likely to have awareness of study abroad or know someone who has traveled abroad to study.

Unfortunately, all college students are not able to access study abroad opportunities. Salisbury et al. (2009) found that community college students were 29% less likely than liberal arts college counterparts to intend to study abroad, part-time status students were less committed to education abroad due to full-time employment (Whatley, 2019b), white students were more likely to experience certain HIPs than minorities (including study abroad; Sweat et al., 2013), and students with low levels of pre-college capital (even when financial constraints were mitigated) were less likely to be motivated to commit to such a cross-cultural experience. Yet when inquired about desire for study abroad participation, 83% of African American community college students responded affirmatively (Sweeney, 2013). Willis (2012) gave credence to that finding in her ethnography of the study abroad experiences of nineteen female African American community college students. She posited that study abroad experiences can provide minority students with social capital to navigate structural policies that work against their success.

In early research of community college students and study abroad, Raby et al. (2014) found that Hispanic community college students were shown to have greater success markers than white or Asian students as a result of study abroad experiences. In her analysis of a state university system dataset, Whatley (2017) found that Hispanic students were 3.5% more likely to study abroad than white students; they were 5.5% more likely when including GPA and institutional factors (e.g., location, demographic make-up) in the analysis. Once financial factors were added, the likelihood of Hispanic students participating dropped.

Challenges remain for minority student participation in study abroad as financial constraints were a primary reason given that kept most minority students at home and unable to

participate in education abroad (Salisbury et al., 2011; regarding student cost/benefit analysis: trip versus time off from work/family responsibilities, Raby, 2020). Financial factors play a large role “in that [they have] far-reaching implications in terms of who has access to its benefits” (Whatley, 2017, p. 436). Though Willis (2012) earlier noted that financial barriers can be overcome through financial assistance, Whatley (2019a) discovered that financial aid and education abroad is only starting to be studied. Whatley also found that merit-aid scholarships actually deterred participation in extra-curricular activities such as study abroad. In merit-aid states, policies established a maximum amount of credit hours earned or a minimum GPA.

Additional barriers to participation for community college students include any lack of social capital (Raby, 2020; Whatley & Clayton, 2020), high student-faculty ratio and location of the institution (Whatley, 2019b), and the stringent academic requirements for education abroad. Whatley and Raby (2020) posed the question of GPA negotiability. Often, low GPA students are barred from going abroad to study when they are the students most likely to benefit from the experiential learning opportunity with the greatest increase in student success markers (Kuh, 2008a). However, Whatley (2019b) did not find Pell status or gender to be a barrier to participation. She theorized that perhaps the two-year sector affords more opportunities for Pell-eligible or male students to consider study abroad.

In spite of the noted inequitable access to education abroad experiences (Guth, 2020; Raby, 2020) and the barriers identified that lead to low participation rates for Hispanic students, as a high-impact practice, study abroad continues to be a transformative experience for all students and particularly for students of color (Raby, 2020; Raby et al., 2014). Study abroad is critical in creating culturally-aware and globally-competitive students (Whatley, 2018a), in acquiring soft skills which are a desired skillset by employers (Raby, 2020), and in affording

two-year students equitable co-curricular opportunities with their four-year counterparts (Guth, 2020). Guth further posited that even a group of students not intending to transfer can have rich international experiences.

Similar to Kuh's earlier findings (2008a), Raby et al. (2014) noticed increased one- and two-year retention rates, a higher number of transferable credits completed, and an increased likelihood to enroll in a university for Hispanic community college students involved in education abroad compared to those who were not involved. Additionally, underserved students who had peers to encourage them to participate were more likely to participate (Whatley, 2018a) and were more likely to have successful cross-cultural experiences if other students of color participated (Longmire-Avital, 2019).

### ***Service-learning***

Service-learning combines a community service project with reflections on lessons learned while doing the project, assessing any impact made, and expressing how the student was affected by participating. It bridges the theory of the classroom with the real-world problems to solve in one's community (Gifford et al., 2005; Rutti et al., 2016) and results in an increased sense of personal efficacy and a shift to an others-orientation as posited in the formative service-learning research by Giles and Eyler (1994; see also Eyler et al., 1997). Service-learning was found to be the most frequently occurring high-impact practice (Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018), promoted student engagement (Yob, 2014), and was determined to be a strong indicator of intercultural competence development by community college students (Riley et al. (2016). Yob (2014) suggested that there are "significant features of the service-learning approach [which] aided in the retention of students" (p. 50) through integration into the institution, community,

faculty, and peers, through engagement with course content, and through students discovering meaning and relevance to coursework.

Harper (2009) noted that HIPs participation rates are low for minority students, however service-learning was the exception. Yob (2014) further found a positive relationship with retention and engagement, particularly among women and minority students while Louviere (2020) found no persistence rate difference by ethnicity (though study participants were predominantly white). Community colleges have been well-positioned to draw all students into service-learning activities in that two-year institutions enroll large numbers of students of color and serving the community is a primary mission of the colleges (Rutti et al., 2016; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). A recent study found service-learning to be an effective pedagogy for students of color—especially when it incorporated culturally relevant pedagogy and projects were designed to impact marginalized communities with which students could identify (Collins et al., 2020).

Gifford et al. (2005) noted work and family responsibilities and limited funding options often create barrier to community college students participating in service-learning—yet involvement continued to increase. In a more recent study of international students, focus group participants told Kwenani and Yu (2018) that they experienced difficulty in creating time to serve, finding dependable transportation to service sites, completing paperwork and/or background checks, and coming from differing backgrounds as barriers to service-learning. In addition, the authors found some students lacked confidence, had family members to worry about their safety, or felt discomfort volunteering as a solitary individual.

Bradley et al. (2015) concluded that service-learning participants were more likely to persist and engage in positive academic behaviors than their non-participating peers. Students who engaged in service-learning felt that their learning was at a deeper level than those not

engaged in service-learning (Finley & McNair, 2013). The resultant engagement, academic success, and worldview shift (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Padilla, 2020; Rutti et al., 2016; Taggart & Crisp, 2011; Yob, 2014) accompanied an increase in civic engagement, citizenship, and confidence in meeting community needs (Eyler et al., 1997). Kwenani and Yu (2018) identified skill-building, friendship and a sense of community, mindset and attitude shift, increased self-confidence, and mutual impact between student and agency as benefits to service-learning. Eyler et al. (1997) noted college students experienced a shift in mindset about the problems or about the people being served—or both—as they worked with individuals experiencing need. Faculty interaction outside the classroom or alongside traditional coursework shaped student attitudes and values as students held “the faith that one can make a difference” through service-learning (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 330); it helped students to see that they could help people who are less fortunate and even find their place in the world/what they want to do with their lives (Finley & McNair, 2016). When combined with a study abroad experience, service-learning was particularly transformational (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Rutti et al., 2016). Service-learning *does* impact the student (Eyler et al., 1997)!

### **Minority students**

Community colleges are the gateway to higher education for diverse students due to their open-access policy (Laanan, 2001; Shugart, 2019). This is reinforced by Schak et al. (2019) who claim that community colleges are critical in helping minority students get through the doorway to higher education. For example, the number of women and underrepresented minorities who pursue a STEM pathway via community colleges is increasing. Forty-nine percent of women receiving bachelor’s or master’s degrees started in community college as did the majority of similarly completing Native American, Hispanic, and African American students (Jackson et al.,

2013). Shugart (2019) propositioned that if diversifying the professions is a goal of higher education and workforce development, the community college is best situated to be the on-ramp for minority students to the baccalaureate degree and other professional credentials. He continued that economic inequity should be solved by higher education, but the entry of minority students through community colleges must be complemented by a seamless transfer experience to the university so they can earn a bachelor's degree (now the required credential for economic mobility in many cases; regarding Hispanic students, Love, 2020). There is more work to be done to provide such a transfer experience: "If you care about diversity and equity in this country's future, transfer *has* to work. *It has to work!*" (Shugart, 2019, 42:27). Yet transfer successes of students of color are not well-represented in the literature (Byrd, 2017); one researcher even cautioned that minority students experience stress in the transfer process in a number of ways beyond what majority students experience (Laanan, 2001).

### ***Hispanic Students***

For Hispanic students, transfer stress can result in a drop in academic performance. Poor academic results might reflect less on the student's academic ability and more so on Hispanics' ability to navigate the barriers and challenges they encounter in trying to persist while balancing family responsibilities. Though Tuttle and Musoba (2013) stated that family expectations were negative factors in student persistence, Sáenz et al. (2018) found that home life played a stronger role in persistence when campuses were not perceived to be supportive of Latin culture.

*Familismo*, one form of capital in Yosso's community cultural wealth theory (2005), actually aided, rather than hurt, student ability to persist. To engage Hispanic students, Kuh et al. (2006) affirmed that it is critical that institutions encourage experiential learning activities in the community and include families in the college acculturation process. There is a need to involve

families in their child's education, not only in the decision to go to college, but to be involved/supportive while they are there so the student is retained (Clark et al., 2013).

Latin families highly value education, yet they also expect family provision and support (Rendón et al., 2014), which creates tension for students between working/supporting their family and their educational pursuits. Because of the bent towards males being the achievers in Latin culture, to be the ones to get a college degree, there is the assumption that males are sending money back to family to support them, even into college (through Financial Aid) because they've been doing that since their mid-teens (Clark et al., 2013). Yet Clark et al. (2013) recognized, "The success of Latino male college students is dependent on educators capitalizing on the knowledge, skills, and resources students bring with them to college" (p. 127).

Commitment to work should be seen as an asset (versus a deficit) for the Hispanic student (Finley & McNair, 2016).

Less than 25% of Hispanic students have parents with a college degree—those who do get the counsel, navigation capital, financial help, and emotional support needed to succeed in postsecondary education (Schak et al., 2019). However, many Hispanic students (males especially) lack college-educated parents and must balance the strong undercurrent of *familismo* with their educational goals (Glynn, 2019). Therefore, they are less likely than other male students to be of full-time status (Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016). Increasing economic possibilities one day versus providing for family now—this is a tough choice in considering whether or not Hispanic students enroll. In addition is the construct of *machismo*—the expectation for a Latino male to provide for his family rather than pursue college education (Clark et al., 2013). While Ponjuán and Hernández (2016) discovered that *machismo* negatively impacted the likelihood of

Latino males to reach out for help or services, they at the same time “suggest that the narrative around Latino male student should not be portrayed in a deficit narrative framework” (p. 3).

A variation of familial capital exists among Hispanic students and their peers—though this can result in an overreliance to the students’ detriment (Pérez, 2017). Clark et al. (2013) found that if peers supported college education, Hispanic students would pursue college. If there was no support, they did not try. First generation Hispanic students struggle with peer pressure in that they have not navigated the system well, they see their peers going a different direction, and they tend to follow because they are so unsure. Lack of navigational knowledge is key in the student’s failure to persist.

*Navigational capital* among Hispanic students, according to Yosso (2005), was low based on a tendency for Hispanic males to internalize and not ask others for help (Ponjuán and Hernández, 2016). College procedural knowledge was difficult for first generation students (Bailey et al., 2015; Wang, 2020)—exponentially more so if the student was first generation and an English Language Learner (Almon, 2015). This aligned with Ishitani and McKittrick (2010) and Levesque (2018) who all affirmed the structural barriers and navigational challenges with which transfer students routinely contend. Mentoring was suggested to overcome this deficit as an increase in faculty mentors equated to a sense of belonging for Latino males, especially when combined with the layering of “culturally relevant moral support and guidance” (Sáenz et al., 2018, p. 43).

While Yosso (2005) overturned the assumption that a lack of support by family makes it difficult for Hispanic students to persist, financial insecurity has been found to stifle (and usurp) academic aspirations (Sáenz et al., 2018). Financial barriers (increasing tuition, less financial aid) plus a no-debt mindset cause many Hispanic students to have substantial concerns or drop out

altogether (Almon, 2015; Elengold et al., 2021; Sáenz et al., 2018; Schak et al., 2019). Despite their likely eligibility, Latino males are least likely (compared to other minority males) to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016). Financial barriers then carry over into one's decision whether or not to participate in a high-impact practice.

### ***HIPs participation by minority students***

Kuh and Kinzie (2018) asked the questions: Do all students have equitable access to high-impact practices? Which students are engaging in them and which are left behind? For all the findings on the efficacy of HIPs participation by college students, minority students are less likely to participate, yet experience the greatest gains when they do participate (Finley & McNair, 2013; Harper, 2009; Kuh, 2008a; Rockey & Congleton, 2016).

Participation in high-impact practices raised GPAs for white four-year students by less than .25 points while HIPs engagement raised Hispanic four-year student GPAs almost .50 points (Kuh, 2008a). This finding by Kuh is the reference point for subsequent studies that have investigated the positive effect of HIPs for students of color (AACU, 2015; Eynon & Iuzzini, 2020; Finley & McNair, 2013; Ho & Sanchez, 2018; Sweat et al., 2013; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018), though Brownell and Swaner (2009) found contradictory results. It appears that HIPs have a compensatory effect for students who come from underserved, underprepared, or first-generation student backgrounds (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kuh, 2008a).

Yet, participation among historically underrepresented student populations is dismal. In an AACU study (2015) of Chief Academic Officers, one CAO responded, "The research on high-impact practices shows that, one, they do have a high impact, but they're much more available at more affluent institutions and institutions that serve wealthier groups of students, and

that's the [participation] gap I'm talking about..." (p. 10). Sweat et al. (2013) highlighted that white students engaged in more HIPs than minority students; some of the HIPs are typical of junior/senior years at the university and the likelihood of minority retention at that point is reduced. Harper (2009) alluded earlier to these inequities: faculty predominantly invite majority white students to engage in high-impact practices and, due to biases, pass over students of color (SOC) and the opportunities to positively impact minority student success rates.

While Kuh et al. (2006) did not find any evidence that higher selective institutions have students engaging more in HIPs than less-affluent schools, they concurred in later work that underserved students benefit more from HIPs than their white counterparts despite less likelihood of participation (many were first generation and/or African American). The authors noticed that African American students were likelier to persist semester-to-semester at the same institution than their white counterparts by participating in HIPs and SOC in general were more likely to experience greater gains post-engagement in first-year GPA (Kuh, 2008a).

More recently, however, Whatley (2018b) found that race was not a significant factor in study abroad participation (white students and Hispanic students were just as likely). It was observed that, at the community college, race does not decrease the likelihood of participation (as it does at the four-year institutions). A possible reason for this finding is the study abroad structure at a community college is easier to navigate for students of color (who typically have challenges with navigating postsecondary education). In a later study, the author discovered that if a community college was situated in an urban built environment, students of color were more likely to participate (Whatley, 2019b). Nevertheless, Longmire-Avital (2019) found these positive indicators premature: there are still substantial inequities in study abroad participation by race/ethnicity.

Whatley delineated the type of aid that would increase study abroad participation for various minority populations: non-merit aid increased participation for all students, federal Pell grants increased participation by Hispanic students but not for African American students, institutional grants benefited Asian student participation (see also Salisbury et al., 2011), while taking out student loans to fund education abroad discouraged Hispanic student participation (Whatley, 2019a). Her results demonstrated that if students relied on loans for college, they were less likely to study abroad (Whatley 2017). Grant-funding increased the likelihood for study abroad participation—thus, grant-funding, not loan-funding, will increase study abroad participation across race/ethnicities (Whatley 2017; Whatley & Clayton, 2020). Hispanic students perceived grants to open up additional experiences to them that they would not otherwise enjoy (Salisbury et al., 2011). Whatley and Clayton (2020) echoed this finding as they determined that *any* need-based aid (such as the *100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund*) is very likely to increase study abroad participation and should be available to all students.

To see a participation increase come to fruition, Sweeney (2013) proposed that campuses intentionally recruit and support students of color (or other underrepresented populations) in successful study abroad experiences. Yosso (2005) and Finley and McNair (2016) raised awareness of the varieties of capital SOC bring to the college environment and their theories dovetail with the assertion by Ho and Sanchez (2018) that an end-of-sophomore-year study abroad experience emphasizes student strengths, not deficits.

### **Institutional Practices**

As institutions seek to close equity gaps in transfer success and completion for minority students, they must consider their practices and policies around equity. In their pioneering work on equity-mindedness, Bensimon and Malcom (2012) suggested institutions use the Equity

Scorecard to move from a sense of stagnation (in trying to explain away racial inequities) toward seeing those inequities as a problem of practice that can be addressed by practitioners as agents of change. The Equity Scorecard is a data tool that provides “inquiry methods to interrogate data and contemplate taken-for-granted practices...to learn how they work and for whom” (p. 4). They further argued that any change in the success of SOC would only come as these institutional agents first experienced a change in themselves (in how they saw equity and the deficit narrative).

The 2018 Advancing Talent Initiative report states that colleges/universities can make a substantial impact on students who historically have had the most difficulty entering through traditional methods. Advancing Talent Initiative is an Aspen Institute endeavor with almost 300 U.S. colleges and universities with greater than 70% graduation rates and are seeking to provide higher education access to an additional 50,000 high-achieving, low- and moderate-income students. These highly-selective schools should partner with community colleges to aid in reducing the barriers of student completion (LaViolet et al., 2018).

Engagement of transfer students with the four-year school results in effective and efficient transfer (Jackson et al., 2013). One way that Jackson et al. (2013) suggested engaging these students was to invite university faculty onto the community college campus. Their presence would debunk perceptions of the unengaged professor and would also aid in overcoming any negative stereotype from the university toward two-year students. Additionally,

Programs and services that support transfer students are of paramount importance as well.

Transfer student orientations, mentoring programs, **undergraduate research** programs, and opportunities for **engagement with peers and faculty in extracurricular activities**

have proven to be beneficial for transfer adjustment and satisfaction of women and underrepresented minorities (p. 73, emphasis added).

Connection with others, classmates, faculty, and community, were key to feelings of integration into a university. A meaningful mentoring relationship with a faculty or staff member proved especially valuable (Sweat et al., 2013; Wang, 2020).

The November 2015 AACU report found that some institutions have designed interventions (including developmental education redesign, first year experience requirement, early alerts and intrusive advising, and optional high-impact practices) to improve overall student success with specific attention to underserved populations, yet few institutions are tracking and disaggregating data on the impact of HIPs on the underserved population. While many have across-the-board goals for closing achievement gaps in retention and graduation, few have goals to close the gap in regard to learning outcomes or participation in HIPs (AACU, 2015). HIPs must be done well, scaled up so every student has multiple opportunities to engage. HIPs can bring equity (“level the playing field”) for minority student populations and increase the odds of their future degree attainment (Kuh, 2008a). To that end, the Tennessee Board of Regents attempted to create a HIPs framework across Tennessee community colleges such that scaling across the individual institution would provide increased access for underrepresented students (Jenkins et al., 2018; Valentine & Price, 2021). For minority-serving institutions in particular, Kuh et al. (2006) stated the importance of providing active and collaborative learning opportunities with peers along with service-learning experiences.

Additional institutional recommendations came from a variety of voices. Finley and McNair (2013) proposed to structure high-impact practices during sophomore/junior years and determine their efficacy through both quantitative and qualitative data. The authors also saw

value in showing students how participation outcomes connect with institutional learning outcomes. Through three community college case studies, Malkan and Pisani (2011) proposed development of international service-learning, foreign language immersion, and exchange/reciprocity relationships. They challenged two-year institutions to take up the mantle of demand from the larger American society to produce today's global citizens and tomorrow's globally competitive workforce. Carol Geary Schneider summarized, "The nation's future, employers contend, depends on the United States' ability to help a much larger fraction of Americans achieve high levels of knowledge and skills" (Kuh, 2008a, p. 5). Shugart (2019) reiterated years later that, "delivering real opportunity and rebuilding the middle class may be the most important challenges facing higher education, and, as I [will] argue, dramatic improvements in the transfer ecosystem will be required, indeed may be the only way, to meet these challenges" (11:07). To meet the educational challenges and necessary degree-attainment of a larger portion of Americans, Schneider continued that HIPs can't be a rarity; they must become the norm. (Kuh 2008a). Finley and McNair (2013) resoundingly agreed: high-impact practices should be pervasive on college campuses. In 2019, New York governor, Andrew Cuomo, appeared to concur with this mantra as he proposed policy requiring universities in the state of New York to increase HIPs and other experiential learning opportunities (Martinez & Santiago, 2020).

However, the implementation of high-impact practices at scale requires assessment that disaggregates data to determine if the effect is widespread for all students (Finley, 2019; Jenkins et al. 2018). Aligning HIPs to student learning outcomes is paramount if an institution seeks to not only offer a variety of experiential opportunities but also to ascertain which HIPs are working and for whom are they working (Eynon & Iuzzini, 2020; Finley, 2019; Jankowski &

Baker 2020). Finley and McNair (2013) created an assessment tool to measure equity in high-impact practices by asking *Who participates? Who has access? What impact is there on desired outcomes?* to ensure “equal representation, equal access, equal impact” (p. 36).

Looking at student success with the Hispanic population and these experiential best practices appears timely. Zilvinskis and Dumford (2018) raised the need for qualitative research that would deep-dive into the “why” of transfer student HIPs participation (or lack) and to look at different student types (i.e. first generation, minority, non-traditional)—all represented in strong numbers at the community college (The Aspen Institute, 2016; Bailey et al., 2015; Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016). A similar call from Sweat et al. (2013) came for additional research to be done to determine if national results from HIPs efficacy studies are true on individual campuses. By investigating the HIPs participation of Hispanic students pre-transfer, the effect on transfer success and HIPs participation post-transfer can be determined. Additionally, few studies have looked at transfer student involvement in more than one high-impact practice (Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018).

## **Summary**

In a review of the literature on transfer success of community college students, high-impact practices, and Hispanic students, it was found that student success can be explained through various iterations of student engagement theory. To promote student engagement, Kuh proposed the concept of high-impact practices in which faculty-student interaction in educationally purposeful activities and academic and social integration occur. While a vast body of research demonstrates the efficacy of high-impact practices at the four-year institution, scant literature exists on HIPs impact at community colleges. Even more so, few scholars address this impact among minority students at the two-year college. Hispanic community college students,

in particular, bring a wealth of capital gained from their lived experiences that position them to engage in experiential learning activities more accessibly as well as realize a more successful transfer experience that leads to degree attainment.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Despite the historical mission of two-year institutions and their promising access to underserved populations, completion rates for community colleges are disappointing at best (Jenkins & Fink, 2016; Shapiro et al., 2018; Sweat et al., 2013) with minority students transferring or completing at alarmingly lower rates than their white counterparts (College Completion, 2015; Shapiro, et al., 2018). However, studies have shown that participation in high-impact practices (HIPs), especially by minority students, increased the likelihood of transfer success and bachelor's degree completion (AACU, 2015; Kuh, 2016; Kuh et al., 2017; Sweat et al., 2013).

Two research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of HIPs participation by Hispanic students pre-transfer? Post-transfer?
2. What does an exploration of HIPs participation by Hispanic students reveal about supports that institutions should consider putting in place?

This chapter begins by describing the research design and case study methodology. It then overviews sampling and participants as well as the inclusion of case study contexts. The chapter concludes by reviewing the data collection process as well as data analysis techniques.

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of HIPs participation upon closing the gap in transfer success of minority students, especially Hispanics, in community colleges. It was my aim to engage in qualitative research, deep-dive into the use of high-impact practices of two large community colleges in the southern tier of the U.S., and explore how engagement in these experiential learning practices pre-transfer resulted in increased GPA, greater persistence, and higher completion rates post-transfer. This study also proposed recommendations and addressed

implications for two-year institutions as they seek to close the completion gap for Hispanic students. Both two- and four-year institutions are mutually responsible for transfer, but the focus of this study is on community college administrators and the domain of this researcher/practitioner. Participants in the study were Hispanic community college students that were both pre-transfer and post-transfer (community college alumni enrolled at 4-year public universities).

## **Research Design**

### ***Qualitative Methodology***

Qualitative research is “an inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological approach to inquiry that explores a social or human problem” (Creswell & Poth, 2018; p.326). It is a process carried out in natural settings and uses a variety of research methods to explain phenomena in a richly-detailed, holistic picture (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research uses “interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell & Poth, 2018; p.8). Most research has focused on the efficacy of HIPs at universities and has been largely quantitative in nature (Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Ho & Sanchez, 2018; Ishitani & McKittrick, 2010; Kilgo et al., 2015; Kuh, 2008a; Kuh, 2008b); recent studies have called for more qualitative research into the outcomes of HIPs participation (Sweat et al., 2013; Whatley & Clayton, 2020; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). This study aimed to highlight the student voice in not only investigating student engagement in these experiential activities, but also to give voice to their lived experience of the transfer process. Qualitative methods provided a deeper-dive into the reasons behind quantitative data that shows HIPs have a compensatory effect for minority students (Kuh, 2008a; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Rockey & Congleton, 2016).

### *Case Study Approach*

Case study is a qualitative research approach that investigates a “real-life, contemporary bounded system (defined by time, place, and participants) ... through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell & Poth, 2018; pp. 96-97). It is an in-depth exploration of an experience or process that is bounded by time and activity. Merriam (1998) defined case study by its “end product.... A unit around which there are boundaries, I can fence in what I am going to study” (p. 27). It results, she continued, in “a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon” (p. 41) and provides an opportunity to uncover the meaning and sense-making that people construct based on their experiences and interactions with a phenomenon (Yazan, 2015). Creswell & Poth (2018) affirmed Merriam’s sentiment and further advocated for the use of case studies as they highlighted “in-depth description and analysis as hallmarks of good case study” (p. 104).

Merriam (1998) proposed additional strengths for the use of case study in qualitative research: they are particularistic (meaning the study focuses on particular unit and the focus is very specific), descriptive (i.e., it is rich, “thick,” complete, and literal in its description of what is being studied), and heuristic, such that case studies extend the understanding, meaning, or experience of the reader in regard to the case. She continued, that “if the variables are so embedded in the situation as to be impossible to identify ahead of time, case study is likely to be the best choice” (p. 32). Merriam also found case studies to be particularly helpful in investigating educational processes and problems; she saw programs or institutions as specific examples of bounded phenomena (Yazan, 2015).

One type of case study used to answer qualitative research questions is the collective case study. Composing a collective case study (so called by its focus on understanding a specific

problem using multiple cases) allows research of one issue at one time to be viewed through multiple perspectives by collecting, reviewing and synthesizing interviews, documents, observations, and artifacts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Merriam (1998) termed this type of study “multiple studies” and “multisite studies” (p. 40). She continued to highlight their advantage, “The more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (p. 40). Scholars, though, cautioned that while multiple case studies are often attempted to make results more applicable across populations, an increase in cases usually lessens the depth of the cases when compared to a single case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Maintaining this tenuous line between specificity and generalization is difficult in that, by nature, case studies are the study of a case and should not be generalized to other cases. Merriam (1998) acknowledged the dissent of methodologists who see the reader imagining some population and extending the case study findings to that population.

Challenges to case study methodology include inquiry into rigor as another common concern though growing use and acceptance of this methodology evidences efforts to curtail poor quality (Yin, 2018). Other scholars attributed the charge of less rigor to the bias perceived to be on the part of the researcher (Merriam, 1998). Merriam cautioned against the researcher bias that can affect the end result of the case study.

## **Sampling and Participants**

### ***Case Contexts***

Two community colleges were studied, Tuttle Community College and Hamlin College (pseudonyms), both large two-year colleges in the southern tier of the United States, that met two criteria for selection: (a) they offer two high-impact practices (study abroad and service-learning) with regular frequency and at scale, and (b) they are working to close completion gaps in

minority students, particularly Hispanic students, as evidenced by including equity and diversity as a core value in their respective mission statements, strategic plans, and program offerings (Hamlin College, 2021a; Tuttle Community College, 2021a).

**Hamlin College.** Hamlin College is a large-sized community college situated in a fast-growing metropolitan area of the southern tier of the United States where almost 50,000 curriculum students are pursuing degrees, diplomas, and certificates in a variety of programs (NCES, 2021a). Hamlin College began in 1967 after state legislative approval authorized the creation of a 2-year institution in the county and offered the first public postsecondary education classes in the metropolitan area (Hamlin College, n.d.).

As a national leader in open-admissions education, Hamlin College received national recognition for being among the best community colleges in the U.S. and boasts noteworthy service-learning/civic engagement and international education programs and a scholars program which supports underserved middle school students with mentoring and future Hamlin scholarship opportunities (Hamlin College, 2021b). Hamlin College is one of the largest associate degree-granting Hispanic-serving institutions in the United States (more than 30% of Hamlin degrees were conferred on Hispanic students; Excelencia in Education, 2020a) and one of the largest Hispanic-serving institutions in its state (Excelencia in Education, 2020b).

The multiethnic student population at Hamlin is predominantly female (58%), enrolled part-time (65%), traditional-aged (75% are 24 years old and under), and non-Pell-recipient (60%; NCES, 2021a). In the Fall of 2019:

- 37% identified as Hispanic,
- 25% identified as White,
- 16% identified as Black or African American,

- 4% identified as Asian, and
- 3% identified as multiracial.

Hamlin College students persisted fall-to-fall at a rate of 60.8% (2017-2018; Hamlin College, 2021c) and graduated or transferred at a rate of 42% and 12%, respectively (NCES, 2021a). Hamlin's IPEDS report recounted 38% of Hispanic students completed compared to 46% of white students.

A brief investigation Hamlin's 2019 administration of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) provided a quantitative look at the level of student engagement and the high-impact practices climate at the college. *Active and Collaborative Learning* and *Student-Faculty Interaction* survey items measured student experiences that could be interpreted as HIPs-type experiences (e.g., community-based projects, team-based learning, and student-faculty interactions outside the classroom). Hamlin College surpassed peer Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) in student-faculty interactions and were as successful as peer HSIs and other 2019 cohort colleges in engaging students in active and collaborative types of learning experiences. One could surmise from this cursory evaluation that Hamlin is an institution that is open to the use of high-impact practices to engage students and to provide outside-the-classroom experiences for them to interact with faculty.

Though Hamlin offers baccalaureate degree programs, students seeking to transfer to a 4-year institution to complete their bachelor's degree are most likely to transfer to the Close Proximity University (a pseudonym). However, a formidable number transfer annually to Riverside View University (RVU; a pseudonym) despite a distance of greater than 150 miles away (RVU Charles School of Management, 2021; Riverside View University [RVU], 2021a ). Hamlin College and RVU participate in a statewide partnership that features guaranteed

admission, joint advising, and seamless transfer from traditional 2-year to 4-year institutions (RVU, 2021b).

**Tuttle Community College.** Tuttle Community College (TCC), established in 1960, opened as the state's first integrated 2-year college, and, by the mid-1960s, was the largest higher education institution in its state (Tuttle Community College [TCC], 2021a). Situated in a fast-growing metropolitan area of the southern tier of the United States, Tuttle Community College enrolls more than 50,000 curriculum students pursuing degrees, diplomas, and certificates in a variety of university transfer and workforce programs and has continued to be the cultural, educational, and economic force of the region (TCC, 2021b). TCC has been nationally recognized as one of the best community colleges in the U.S. and boasts noteworthy service-learning/civic engagement and international education programs alongside an innovative initiative which pairs minority students with minority professionals the community. TCC is a large Hispanic-serving institution and is among the highest degree granters in the U.S. for Hispanic students (more than 60% of total Tuttle degrees conferred; Excelencia in Education, 2020b).

The student population at Tuttle Community College is multiethnic and draws students from over 150 countries. In the Fall of 2019:

- 71% were Hispanic,
- 14% were Black or African American,
- 5% were white,
- 1% were Asian, and
- 1% were multiracial.

Tuttle students were also predominantly female (58%), enrolled part-time (58%), traditional-aged (73% were 24 years old and under), and Pell-recipient (66%) according to a recent IPEDS report (NCES, 2021b). TCC students persisted fall-to-fall at a rate of 65.3% (2018-2019; TCC, 2021b) and graduated and transferred at a rate of 33% and 7%, respectively (NCES, 2021b). Tuttle Community College's IPEDS report recounted 33% of Hispanic students completed compared to 40% of white students.

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is an assessment of student engagement at two-year institutions across the country that is typically administered once every three years (CCCSE, 2021). According to results of the 2018 CCSSE, Tuttle Community College led two-year colleges in its state, extra-large colleges (nationally), and 2018 cohort colleges in benchmark scores around Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction ([Tuttle Community College], 2021d). These markers could be interpreted as aligning with engagement outcomes of high-impact practices (e.g., community- and team-based projects and co-curricular interactions with faculty). Based on the 2018 campus-wide administration, a brief evaluation of the quantitative results could suggest that TCC is an upper-tier college in its offering of opportunities for students to engage in the life of the college.

Students seeking to transfer to another 4-year institution to complete their bachelor's degree are most likely to transfer to Riverside View University (RVU; TCC, 2021b). TCC and RVU have a robust and longtime partnership that features guaranteed admission, RVU advisors, wraparound supports, and seamless transfer (TCC, 2021c).

### ***Participants***

Twenty-four pre-transfer, Hispanic students from the community colleges in the case study formed eight focus groups. Pre-transfer students who engaged in more than one high-

impact practice in the previous two years at their community college were recruited (with at least one HIP being service-learning or study abroad). Pre-transfer students were selected in that their participation in high-impact practices is believed to result in increased transfer success as measured by increased cumulative GPA, greater persistence, and higher completion rates at the two-year institution. Focus groups carry specific advantages as a data collection tool in that they provide robust feedback through group members' interaction, particularly if they share demographic characteristics and/or experiences and processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) advocated for the use of focus groups when data collection must occur in a limited timeframe or if conducted on the Internet. Focus groups are considered to be an appropriate collection technique if an inquirer is seeking to elicit a collective reporting of historical information (e.g., shared experiences; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Part-time as well as full-time students were included in the college focus groups. Each case college has a predominantly part-time student enrollment (58% at Tuttle and 65% at Hamlin; NCES, 2021a; NCES, 2021b). These enrollment status rates are consistent with most two-year institutions across the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2021). Additionally, only transfer-intending students composed the focus groups. Students indicated their future educational aspirations on a survey administered prior to the focus group interviews by their transfer degree title and pre-major pathway title (if declared; see Appendix A).

Eight additional participants were post-transfer Hispanic students (case study community college alumni enrolled at the four-year university). Post-transfer students who have engaged in more than one high-impact practice in the last two years (prior to transfer) at their community

college of origin were recruited (with at least one HIP being service-learning or study abroad). Students who have already transferred are believed to not only experience greater likelihood of HIPs participation at the university, but also experience positive student success markers (increased cumulative GPA, greater persistence, and higher completion rates). These students were recruited for individual interviews that took place via remote technology.

### **Data Collection**

Recent Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) results at the case study colleges were reviewed in order to provide a framework of quantitative data from which to understand the engagement of students and HIPs culture of the colleges. Yin (2018) advocated for the use of both quantitative and qualitative elements in case studies. Demographic data and CCSSE data revealed the background characteristics of the student population at the two-year institutions.

I conducted semi-structured, face-to-face focus groups with Hispanic students at the case study colleges who indicated intent to transfer. Because face-to-face focus groups were not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic (limited number of students on campus and limited access and openness), I used an online, cloud-based audio/video conferencing platform. Students were recruited through contact with a community college “gatekeeper” (an administrator or staff member who oversees study abroad or service-learning programs) as recommended by the vice president/Chief Academic Officer (or designee) at each college. A pre-interview survey was administered to the pool of students which includes questions related to number and variety of high-impact practice engagement as well as demographic information (see Appendix A). A convenience selection from the recruitment pool resulted in multiple three to six student focus groups at each college. Once the focus groups were determined, an interview protocol was

followed that elicited data around HIPs participation and its impact on their college experience, what student success markers (GPA, persistence, completion) were reached, barriers they encountered in HIPs participation, family support of HIPs engagement, institutional recommendations they would make, benefits they perceive they acquired through HIPs participation, and their likelihood of transfer to a four-year university (see Appendix B).

The community college gatekeeper completed a pre-interview survey of demographic information (see Appendix C) and participated in a semi-structured interview (via remote technology) that queried their experiences in working with students through study abroad or service-learning programs. Interview questions in the protocol centered around the advising and recruitment of student participants, the variety of programs offered, and the influence of family and culture in participation. Also, the gatekeeper was asked to describe the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their program and how the program would move forward post-pandemic (see Appendix D).

Concurrently, a “gatekeeper” (transfer coordinator) at a public 4-year university was enlisted to recruit Hispanic transfer students from the respective case community colleges who engaged in study abroad or service-learning HIPs pre-transfer. The university gatekeeper completed a pre-interview survey of demographic information (see Appendix E) and was also engaged in a semi-structured interview (via remote technology) around the transfer success outcomes at the four-year institution for students who participated in HIPs at the two-year institutions. This university staff member responded to interview prompts around general HIPs involvement post-transfer of Hispanic transfer students, evidence noted of familial, social, cultural, or navigational capital, challenges observed in student success markers or reducing

transfer shock, and recommendations for two-year institutions in providing HIPs opportunities and transfer preparation of Hispanic students (see Appendix F).

Upon identification of a set of Hispanic transfer students, participants completed a pre-interview survey which includes questions related to demographic information and high-impact practice engagement (see Appendix G). I then engaged in eight semi-structured interviews at the university (via remote technology) where the protocol centered around general HIPs participation, the impact of HIPs participation on their community college experience, what student success markers (GPA, persistence, completion) were reached at the community college, family support of HIPs engagement, HIPs participation impact upon the selection of their four-year school, HIPs impact on transferring, family support of transferring and matriculation at the four-year institution, institutional barriers in past or in continued HIPs participation, and HIPs impact upon their persistence at the university (see Appendix H).

Each focus group or interview was approximately one-hour in length and was recorded with two recording devices. Because the focus groups and interviews were conducted virtually, the conferencing platform used also featured an audio and video recording component (though all participants kept their cameras turned off). Participants were asked to create pseudonyms to ensure anonymity in the study and they were compensated with gift cards for their participation.

Multiple sources of information were considered and gathered as I studied each case college. Relevant documents (syllabi, participation data reports, reflection examples) and artifacts (advertisements and marketing pieces to recruit student participation, photographs, college websites, social media posts/stories) were retrieved from each institution and similarly coded and themed. The resulting data was confirmed or triangulated with data from the focus group and interview transcripts to synthesize a richer, more meaningful explanation of the

transfer student experience (Yazan, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2018) described triangulation of data as “testing one course of data against another, looking for patterns of thought or behavior” (p. 205); such a practice adds trustworthiness and credibility to the findings. Use of additional sources of information typifies “good qualitative research” (p. 187) and brings the following advantages: obtaining the students’ voice (through analysis of documents such as reflections, participation reports) and providing opportunities for students to share their lived experience (through a rubric-based analysis of artifacts such as photographs and stories in institutional media outlets or web pages) among others (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Data Analysis**

Once data was collected and transcribed, I read each transcript and began to get an overall perception of the student experience. I first coded back to Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth theory as well as Kuh’s (2001) engagement theory by making use of *a priori* codes. Next, I coded the data using Saldaña’s (2009) Elemental Methods of descriptive, in vivo, and process coding as well as his Affective Method of emotion coding (a codebook follows in Appendix I). *Descriptive coding* is based on nouns or topics and is a foundation for future codes while *in vivo coding* is a code pulled from the language of the interviewee (a folk term) and is ideal for interviewee voices that are typically marginalized. Saldaña described *process coding* as sequence or process related as a part of case studies while *emotion coding* is utilized to code interviewee emotions, interpersonal experiences, or affect. Additionally, I clustered the codes into categories and organized the categories into common themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) that synthesized the codes and produced meaningful patterns of the students’ lived experiences by using Quirkos qualitative data analysis software. Last, I interpreted the meaning of the themes and how those themes inform the research questions of this study. Merriam referred to this

process as “making sense of the data...the process of making meaning” (Merriam, 1998). Results of this analysis are presented in Chapter Five of this study.

Another qualitative research tool used to assist in interpreting interview data was *composite participant profiles* (Willis, 2019). Composite profiles allow the researcher to coalesce a number of interviews into a single, unified story; it appears that one person is telling the combined story as *their* story. Wertz et al. (2011) proposed that the power of the blended stories was in the empathy that the reader develops toward the participant. A composite participant profile is “[this] space in which researchers and readers can have a ‘felt sense’ of...[the] phenomena.” (p. 5889). The stories are not fiction but actual narratives unified by rich and vivid detail such that the composite retells the collective interviews with a deeper interpretation. That interpretation by the researcher is framed by their review of the literature, the interviews themselves, and the positionality of the researcher.

In addition, I assessed the artifacts supplied by the case colleges and the common transfer university. All artifacts were analyzed and evaluated based on their inclusion of content related to the perspective of life-changing participation, details of the experience, reference to its educational value, quality of appearance, and institutional goal alignment. A rubric was used to both quantitatively and qualitatively measure the artifacts (see Appendix J).

Validity was achieved through commonly used qualitative research procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, I engaged in reflexivity by disclosing any personal bias through a statement of positionality. Then, participant review (reflecting back student responses throughout the interviews to seek student confirmation of me hearing them accurately) and member checking (presenting summary of themes to students in follow-up communications to determine accuracy of the interview content) were used to determine the

accuracy of the findings. Additionally, rich, thick description—a Merriam external validity-enhancing technique (Yazan, 2015)—was utilized throughout the analysis and results to “transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; p. 200).

Likewise, reliability was demonstrated through the creation of and adherence to a codebook (see Appendix I) as well as detailing the steps and procedures I followed in the data collection for use by follow-up research. Triangulating data collected through focus groups, interviews, relevant documents, and artifacts at each institution provided an additional reliability check (Yazan, 2015). The use of extensive memoing phrases, words, and emerging ideas (Creswell & Poth, 2018) allowed me to notate recurring patterns and themes as well as data to address the research questions or future directions that are present regardless of the type of datum collected. Saldaña (2009) described memoing as a common practice in qualitative research where anything that comes to mind is noted as the data is reviewed (e.g., in the margins of interview transcripts). He further suggested that memoing is a means by which the researcher reflects in the moment about what they are feeling as they scour each piece of datum.

Data was disaggregated by enrollment status (part-time, full-time). Literature suggests that the experiences of community college students differ based on enrollment status: part-time students are less likely to persist and complete than their full-time counterparts (Juszkiewicz, 2019; Kuh, 2016) and part-time students are engaged in study abroad less often than full-time students (Whatley, 2019b). Any differences in access to high-impact practices (through advising of college faculty and staff) or in participation rates will be discussed in chapter five as it relates to student experiences and any impact by external forces (e.g., *familismo*, financial issues, work conflicts). Though non-transfer students at these institutions engage in HIPs, the purpose of this

study focuses on the outcomes for transfer students. It is understood that two-year college students with an intent to transfer (as evidenced by enrollment in a transfer degree program/pathway) have different experiences (and potentially different outcomes) when they participate in high-impact practices (Guth, 2020; Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018).

### **Summary**

Through a collective case study of two community colleges, I collected rich, descriptive data that, upon analysis, demonstrated the efficacy of high-impact practices upon the transfer success of Hispanic students. By interviewing Hispanic students at two community colleges and their mutual transfer university, I explored the pre-transfer and post-transfer outcomes of participating in HIPs. I also gained a better understanding of the familial, social, and cultural capital that Hispanic students bring with them to the postsecondary experience. The value of these assets was highlighted as accompanying factors that increase the likelihood of Hispanic student transfer success and persistence toward completion and bachelor's degree attainment. Finally, results also provided implications for community college administrators as they seek to close equity gaps in transfer success.

## **CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES**

This chapter provides additional information about the collective case study participants at two two-year colleges, Tuttle Community College (TCC) and Hamlin College (HC), and their transfer university, Riverside View University (RVU), all located in the southern tier of the United States (all institutional names are pseudonyms). Thirty-two students participated in focus groups at the community colleges and in interviews at the university (10 students from Tuttle Community College, 14 students from Hamlin College, and 8 students from Riverside View University). Additionally, six gatekeepers from the three institutions were interviewed (3 from TCC, 2 from HC, and 1 from RVU). Tables are included in the chapter to help summarize the demographic data gleaned from the College Student Survey (see Appendix A), the University Student Survey (see Appendix G), and the College (or University) Gatekeeper Survey (see Appendix C or Appendix E). Finally, composite participant profiles are included to provide voice for the participants and complete the verbal picture of their experiences in this qualitative study.

### **Participant Profiles**

Tables 4.1 to 4.4 provide demographic, enrollment, and high-impact practices (HIPs) participation data for community college students, university students, and demographic and student engagement data for college and university gatekeepers. Tuttle Community College had 13 participants (10 students and 3 gatekeepers), Hamlin College had 16 participants (14 students and 2 gatekeepers), and Riverside View University had 9 participants (8 students and 1 gatekeeper). All participants are listed by a pseudonym to anonymize their identity.

### Tuttle Community College Student Participants

Ten students from Tuttle Community College, a large community college in the southern tier of the United States, were part of virtual focus groups occurring in the spring of 2021 (one year into the COVID-19 pandemic). Students identified primarily as female (one identified as male and one identified as non-binary gender), Hispanic (one student denoted Hispanic/African American race/ethnicity), and full-time (two indicated part-time enrollment status). All participants were transfer-intending (based on their degree pathway) and highlighted robust engagement in HIPs—eight students participated in at least two high-impact practices, though two students were limited to service-learning alone. Table 4.1 presents their demographic information, enrollment status, and high-impact practice participation.

**Table 4.1.**

Tuttle Community College Student Demographic Information.

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Esmeralda	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, writing, service-learning, team-based
Hailey	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	AA – General	Service-learning
Hannah	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Mass Communication, Journalism	Service-learning

**Table 4.1** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Hermoine	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Nursing	FYE, learning community, service-learning, team-based
Jasmine	Hispanic/African American	Female	Full-time	AA – Pre-medicine	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, team-based
John Smith	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AS – General	Service-learning, undergraduate research, team-based
Madison	Hispanic	Non-binary	Full-time	AA – Graphic Arts	FYE, service-learning, team-based
Marcus Wade	Hispanic	Male	Full-time	Other – Pre-Physical Therapy	FYE, service-learning
Reina Mendez	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, service-learning
Valentina Lopez	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	Other	FYE, study abroad, ePortfolio

*Note.* AA = Associate in Arts degree; AS = Associate in Science degree; ePortfolio = portable, updatable digital tool that documents accomplishments and experiences; FYE = *first year*

*experience*, freshman seminar, success course; Internship = experience in the work setting (often with course credit) with supervisor-provided coaching; Learning Community = cohort of students who take two or more linked courses around a common topic; Service-learning = community-based projects that feature a reflective/learning component; Study Abroad = structured learning experiences outside the U.S.; Team-based = projects in which students work collaboratively to solve problems; Undergraduate Research = research experiences for students, typically in the sciences; Writing = writing-intensive courses across the curriculum (Kuh, 2017).

### **Hamlin College Student Participants**

As shown in Table 4.2, fourteen students from Hamlin College, a large community college in the southern tier of the United States, participated in virtual focus groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants included ten who identified as female, three as male, and one as non-binary gender. Eleven students were enrolled full-time while three indicated part-time enrollment status with all 14 enrolled in a transfer degree program or indicated intent to transfer. High-impact practice participation was strong as 12 students specified at least two HIPs. Two students denoted participating only in service-learning.

**Table 4.2.**

Hamlin College Student Demographic Information.

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Abi	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Service-learning
AeonD	Hispanic	Male	Part-time	AS – Software Development	FYE, service-learning, capstone, team-based
Akira	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Internship, study abroad
Butterfly	Hispanic/White non-Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Service-learning, internship
Crissy	Hispanic/White non-Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AS – Legal Studies	FYE, learning community, service-learning, study abroad
Don Diego de la Vega	Hispanic	Male	Full-time	AA – Engineering	FYE, service-learning, undergraduate research
japa	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Nursing	Service-learning
Kelly Moore	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, service-learning, undergraduate research

**Table 4.2** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Leo	Hispanic	Male	Full-time	Other	Internship, study abroad
Natty O	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Service-learning, study abroad
Octane	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Computer Science	FYE, service-learning, internship, team-based
sky	Hispanic	Non-binary	Part-time	AS – General	Service-learning, undergraduate research
Star	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, writing, service-learning, internship, capstone, team-based
Taher	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, service-learning, internship, capstone, undergraduate research

*Note.* AA = Associate in Arts degree; AS = Associate in Science degree; Capstone = culminating projects that synthesize and apply learning ; FYE = *first year experience*, freshman seminar, success course; Internship = experience in the work setting (often with course credit) with supervisor-provided coaching; Learning Community = cohort of students who take two or more

linked courses around a common topic; Service-learning = community-based projects that feature a reflective/learning component; Study Abroad = structured learning experiences outside the United States; Team-based = projects in which students work collaboratively to solve problems; Undergraduate Research = research experiences for students, typically in the sciences; Writing = writing-intensive courses across the curriculum (Kuh, 2017).

### **Riverside View University Student Participants**

Riverside View University (RVU) is a large four-year public university in the southern tier of the United States and eight of RVU's students participated in interviews during spring and summer 2021. All students identified as Hispanic and were primarily female (one male participant). Six students were enrolled full-time while two students indicated part-time enrollment status. Comparatively, all students specified full-time enrollment at their respective community colleges; one student denoted both full- and part-time status while at the community college. All eight interviewees earned an associate degree pre-transfer. While all students participated in at least two high-impact practices while at their community college, two were more highly engaged (one student engaged in seven HIPs pre-transfer while another student engaged in eight HIPs pre-transfer). After transferring to RVU, all students were involved in at least one high-impact practice and, as a group, averaged 2.63 HIPs thus far in their baccalaureate degree program. Table 4.3 details the student demographic, enrollment status, and HIPs participation (pre- and post-transfer) information.

**Table 4.3.**

Riverside View University Student Demographic Information.

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status (4-yr)	Enrollment status (2-yr)	Degree (2-yr)	HIPs experience (2-yr)	HIPs experience (4-yr)
Alli	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	Writing, service-learning	Internship, team-based
Betty S	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	Full-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, service-learning	Writing
Camilla	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – Elementary Education	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, undergraduate research, team-based, ePortfolio	Writing, learning community, service-learning, team-based, ePortfolio

**Table 4.3** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status (4-yr)	Enrollment status (2-yr)	Degree (2-yr)	HIPs experience (2-yr)	HIPs experience (4-yr)
Emile Blanchet	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, internship, study abroad, undergraduate research, team-based	Internship, undergraduate research
Jason	Hispanic	Male	Part-time	Full-time/ Part-time	AA - Philosophy	FYE, service-learning, team-based	Team-based
Rose	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, service-learning, team-based	Service-learning, undergraduate research

**Table 4.3** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status (4-yr)	Enrollment status (2-yr)	Degree (2-yr)	HIPs experience (2-yr)	HIPs experience (4-yr)
Sunny	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, team-based	Writing, learning community, capstone, team-based
Valentina Romero	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, study abroad, team-based	Writing, internship, undergraduate research, team-based

*Note.* AA = Associate in Arts degree; AS = Associate in Science degree; Capstone = culminating projects that synthesize and apply learning ; ePortfolio = portable, updatable digital tool that documents accomplishments and experiences; FYE = *first year experience*, freshman seminar, success course; Internship = experience in the work setting (often with course credit) with supervisor-provided coaching; Learning Community = cohort of students who take two or more linked courses around a common topic; Service-learning =

community-based projects that feature a reflective/learning component; Study Abroad = structured learning experiences outside the United States; Team-based = projects in which students work together to solve problems collaboratively; Undergraduate Research = research experiences for students, typically in the sciences; Writing = writing-intensive courses across the curriculum (Kuh, 2017).

### **Gatekeeper Participants**

There were six gatekeepers that participated in interviews from the community colleges and university (three from Tuttle Community College, two from Hamlin College, and one from Riverside View University). As represented in Table 4.4, three gatekeepers identified as White/Non-Hispanic while two gatekeepers identified as Hispanic and one gatekeeper identified as Asian/Pacific Islander. Four females and two males composed the gatekeeper group with the majority serving in the Student Affairs side of the institution (only one served in Academic Affairs). Regarding the interaction of gatekeepers with transfer students at their college or university, one gatekeeper had high levels, two gatekeeper participants indicated moderate levels and two rated their level of interaction as low. One gatekeeper did not interact with transfer students. In their levels of interaction with Hispanic, part-time, and full-time students, three gatekeepers denoted high levels while two gatekeepers specified moderate levels. One gatekeeper indicated high levels of interaction with Hispanic and part-time students, but moderate levels with full-time students.

**Table 4.4.**

Gatekeeper Participant Demographic Information.

Pseudonym (Institution)	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Primary role	Level of interaction by student-type			
				Transfer	Hispanic	Part-time	Full-time
Anne (HC)	White/Non-Hispanic	Female	International Education staff	Low	High	High	High
M Smith (TCC)	Hispanic/Latino	Female	International Education staff	Low	High	High	High
Mr. Downtown (TCC)	Hispanic/Latino	Male	Academic Advising staff	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Natasha (HC)	White/Non-Hispanic	Female	Department Chair/Dean/Director	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

**Table 4.4** (continued).

Pseudonym (Institution)	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Primary role	Level of interaction by student-type			
				Transfer	Hispanic	Part-time	Full-time
Nina (RVU)	Asian/Pacific Islander	Female	Transfer Students staff	High	High	High	Moderate
Xavier (TCC)	White/Non- Hispanic	Male	Support services staff	Do not interact	High	High	High

*Note.* HC = Hamlin College; RVU = Riverside View University; TCC = Tuttle Community College.

### Composite Participant Profiles

Three composite participant profiles follow: Isabela – Part-time Community College Student, Diego – Full-time Community College Student, Paola – Full-time University Student. Also called *composite narratives* (Willis, 2019), composite participant profiles are interviews combined into a unified story as if being told by a single individual and are a useful (though underutilized) tool for qualitative researchers who seek to interpret interview data. As an analysis device, composite narratives found their history in psychotherapy qualitative research as clinicians sought to “capture the essence of patients’ lives, experience and perspective” (p. 472) and represent several patients while keeping patient confidentiality. In what was perhaps the theoretical precursor to Willis (2019), Todres (1998) posited combining texture and structure to create balance between impersonal, anonymous data and “only personal” qualitative details (p. 126). He further rationalized the use of the aesthetic to convey a greater depth to psychotherapy research. Wertz et al. (2011) concurred in that the efficacy of using the interviewees’ language builds empathy in the reader and they begin to care for the participant. A composite participant profile is “[this] space in which researchers and readers can have a ‘felt sense’ of...[the] phenomena.” (p. 5889).

To create a composite participant profile, each composite should be formed from 3-5 interview transcripts and should include quotes that are *in vivo* from the interviewees (no single interviewee’s quotes should dominate). The composite narratives are not fiction created by the researcher, but are actual stories combined from a set of interviews that craft a single, richly detailed story (Willis, 2019). Wertz et al. (2011)—echoing Todres (1998)—encouraged the addition of rich texture, but not so overwhelming of the structure such that the interviewee specifics are lost or downplayed. Wertz et al. (2011) continued that while all possible themes

could be included, most are not—usually just those similar across the interviews are utilized. Again, the composite is not a retelling of a single interview (or even a set of interviews), but is the interpretation of the researcher through their lens of reviewing the literature, the interview content, and their own worldview.

Composite participant profiles are beneficial, then, because they provide a look at the research through fresh eyes (Wertz et al., 2011). Willis (2019) advocated that such a reporting tool offers anonymity to a large number of participants without removing too many details to diminish the power of the story. The researcher is enabled to “find ways to convey the richness and complexity of an individual’s perspective” (p. 476).

In order to relate the stories of the 32 student participants, I developed three composite participant profiles situated in part-time community college enrollment, full-time community college enrollment, and full-time university enrollment. The profiles were informed by five themes that were present across all 13 focus groups and interviews: (a) High-impact Practices at My Community College, (b) My Service-learning and Study Abroad Experiences, (c) What It Means to be a Part-/Full-time Student at [My Institution], (d) Challenges in Navigating [My Institution], and (e) The Impact of My Family and Culture and contained rich, holistic descriptions to draw the reader into the participants’ lived experiences. I also:

- used actual quotes from the interview transcripts. All participants were quoted at least once, but no more than two times in a profile.
- reflected the exact language used by focus group/interview participants. The narratives were written in first-person and incorporated rich, thick, and complete descriptions (Merriam, 1998).

- refrained from interjecting my own judgment onto the fictional participant or into the profiles. Though my reflexivity and knowledge of the literature enabled me to add texture to the narratives, I made great efforts to not lose the structures or specifics from the original transcripts.

The three composite narratives will sound very similar to the reader in spite of students' unique lived experiences at their respective institutions. I intentionally chose two case colleges that were similar in context—both enjoy statewide reputations for closing achievement gaps as well as for their engagement of Hispanic students through high-impact practices and each has earned national recognition for their excellence in the community college sector. By combining the stories of students at both colleges, similarities in student experiences were enhanced by virtue of attending college in comparable contexts and as well as transitioning to the same university. Also, an outcome of this design was a larger number of students who benefited from best practices in HIPs recruitment and engagement at the institutions—a number which proved to be vital during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though six gatekeepers were interviewed (four provided direct oversight to the implementation of each high-impact practice explored in the study), their institutional positions included several unique and secondary roles that made crafting a composite narrative difficult. Chapter five includes findings from the analysis of gatekeeper interviews and their artifacts. The three composite participant profiles follow.

### **Isabela – A Part-time Community College Student**

Isabella is a Hispanic female enrolled as a part-time student at Tuttle Community College and is a composite of five students at TCC and Hamlin College. Her plans, upon completion of

her associate in arts degree at TCC (one more semester!), is to transfer to Riverside View University.

### **High-impact Practices at My Community College**

I am really grateful for Tuttle Community College. Like a friend of mine said, “Honestly, I went into college [lacking] some confidence ... regarding academia. [At TCC], I feel like a lot of my confidence [and] my academic skills, [have really soared].” I agree wholeheartedly! The opportunities to go to college and participate in three—what do you call them—high-impact practices? Anyway, that has really helped me in ways I never expected. The First Year Experience class was a fun, eye-opening class that got me thinking about my path at Tuttle and how I could be a successful student before I transferred. Then service-learning...where do I start? Another friend summed it up better than I could:

It was much more pleasant than you think, and it was much more fun than you would think because it was awesome and now ever since, I felt like I’m definitely on the right track with my degree. I feel incredibly lucky to have received the service-learning opportunity: it has opened so many different doors for me such as I’m doing research in my AA degree.

Who knew that I’d also be able to do undergraduate research before I get to the university? Working on a project with my professor has been a great experience and one that prepares me for being a future psychology major.

### **My Service-learning and Study Abroad Experiences**

Out of all of the high-impact practices I did, the service-learning experience will stay with me the longest. At first, I wasn’t too excited about service-learning. TCC made it sound like we were just doing it because it was a graduation requirement...just to check the box. That kind

of killed my motivation. However, someone told me to think of it as developing future job skills and filling my professional toolkit so I started to look at all of the options (though there weren't any associated with my major). And then I hit a wall—I didn't think I would be able to participate in that I had a baby midway through last fall semester. I know COVID made going to school a real pain; who would want to be online 24/7? But it was a huge blessing in disguise for me so I could take care of my newborn—my family could only help so much with babysitting—and if it weren't for online [service-] learning opportunities, I wouldn't have been able to do it.

This service-learning experience led to me changing my major. I worked with elderly residents of a local elder center through Zoom social check-ins. Another friend of mine said (and I couldn't agree more!), “It opened my eyes to be a little bit more sensitive towards grandparents/elderly; [mine] passed away in another country...[the service-learning] gave me that sense of what I was longing for.” I never knew my grandparents before they passed—they didn't come to the U.S. with my parents. So this was a great chance for me to connect with this generation and adopt some *abuelitos* [grandparents] in the middle of one of the worst times for our nation (COVID-19). They were so excited when I showed them my baby on Zoom! It made me a proud mom to share that precious part of my life with them and they enjoyed it, too. We became an extended family for many of them, and I just *knew* that psychology was the right choice for me! I really enjoyed helping people in difficult places and in difficult times.

Speaking of COVID, I would've completed a fourth high-impact practice if it wasn't for the pandemic. I had planned to do a study abroad trip, but Tuttle cancelled everything for this summer, too. Sure there are virtual international experiences at TCC, but I'd rather just wait and do the real thing after I transfer.

## **What It Means to Be a Part-time Student at TCC**

As a part-time student, it's taken me a while to get to where I feel graduation and transfer are within reach. I've been at TCC for seven semesters and have one more semester left. I can't wait to transfer to RVU, Riverside View. It's the local university. And yet, I'm nervous about transferring. Even though the campus is heavily Hispanic, it's larger and more spread-out than TCC and there are many more cultures there that I've not experienced as much here at TCC.

The journey to get this far has been a long one with all of the challenges I've experienced: working, a newborn, being a dedicated student, juggling family. But, hey, it paid off, though, as I hit the Dean's List two times and was invited to join the Honors College! I think I've got a 3.52 [GPA]. That's not too bad for a someone with a high school GPA of 1.2—that was before I dropped out. But it's almost like I needed that to happen to get me to where I am today. I was so young, but it didn't take me too long to realize that dead-end jobs were not getting me where I wanted to be, and that more years of those kind of jobs would just keep me stuck and miserable. It put my life into perspective and that's the motivation I needed to go back to school, get my GED, and finish my associates at Tuttle. It always felt like the right place, where I belonged. As I said, I'm really grateful for this college.

## **Challenges Experienced in Navigating TCC**

That's not to say that everything was picture perfect—as a friend put it. At least not at the start. I remember how hectic it was when I first enrolled. The most difficult part was not knowing where to turn for help—my family really couldn't help me as I experienced confusion about the FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid]. There was definitely a need for financial support, but when I would reach out for answers, I felt like I was being shifted around like a pinball. Finally things started to come together—I was able to get the financial aid in place

for that first year (I had paid out of pocket earlier not knowing how the aid gets applied) and TCC started to feel like a good place to be. Then COVID hit and it seemed like a step backwards. Everything went online and my days seemed to be nothing but course [Learning Management System (LMS)], [campus email platform (email)], LMS, email, LMS, email.... But it gradually got better.

### **The Impact of My Family and Culture**

My family was probably the main reason I saw improvement during those early days at TCC. My parents, my family, we're all immigrants. They brought me and my sister here from Venezuela, well, before I can remember. My grandparents, unfortunately, passed back in my country—they didn't come with us—so it was just the four of us. And now it's the five of us with my newborn—I guess I can still call him that. He'll be a year old in the fall. We're a close-knit family that has a strong work ethic and really believes in education. Some of my family in Venezuela have a degree and it's been ingrained in us to get a degree! That's somewhat typical of my culture, hard-working and get an education, as my friend said, "My family all have degrees—the minimum is getting this degree."

This push to excel also comes from my culture. Latin culture drives you to do well. Another friend told me, "[Culture] gave me a push compared to the people I know that've lived here. Made me a better person. Made me want to do more and give me the extra push that I needed." Being Hispanic gives me a push, too, so I guess that's how I can manage everything: pretty good grades, pitching-in around the house, taking care of a baby, and now getting ready to transfer. It's a lot to juggle but my parents and sister help out as much as they can with the baby, getting me to campus for my classes now that we're open again, and just their overall support for

me to succeed. Though I think they do it to keep me grounded as a Latina, sometimes I fear that I'm drifting from their culture into a new culture. I think about that a lot.

### **Diego – A Full-time Community College Student**

Diego is a Hispanic male enrolled as a full-time student at Hamlin College and is a composite of nineteen students at TCC and Hamlin College. His plans, upon completion of his associate in arts degree at Hamlin, is to transfer to Riverside View University.

### **High-impact Practices at My Community College**

I loved my community college experience at Hamlin College! It provided me so many opportunities to grow—as a man and as an example to my brother and the Hispanic community. I knew Hamlin was a great place to connect with people and I had a friend that already graduated tell me, “There are people that I still have like a connection with despite I like moved to a different city when I transferred to a four year university. And I feel like all of my experiences in general at my community college like really made a huge difference of me feeling [a sense of] belonging.” That sense of belonging is what I felt with serving and study abroad (even though it was virtual due to COVID).

Those experiences—along with the many team projects I worked on in my classes—gave me a connection to the college that I don't know if I would've had otherwise. Even though COVID hijacked everybody's plans and we couldn't travel, the study abroad group (20-30 students) became a family. My friend summed it up best,

We were so excited to be a part of this program and learning about our different cultures.

Because there was a really big group...just you know learning about them and just having them as friends. It really made me really happy to have that experience even though we didn't get to travel.

Combined with the connections I made in the service-learning projects I participated in, I'd say my time at Hamlin has been nothing short of incredible.

### **My Service-learning and Study Abroad Experiences**

I was so excited to explore service-learning and study abroad...and then COVID hit. Everything went online. Classes, student services...study abroad! How do you study abroad online? How do you serve virtually? I was so worried that my experience would be "less than." Ay, was I wrong! The travel experience did end up being virtual, but it was very interesting. Hamlin partnered us with college students in classes from other countries—kind of a virtual exchange—and it allowed us to interact a couple times during the semester and get to know the behind-the-scenes of their culture. Though it gave me the feeling of being in class with them, it made me want to do a study abroad and explore their country in person. The staff really tried to make the experience the next best thing (kudos!) and it really didn't cost me anything other than tuition. Well, my financial aid actually covered that, which is great because I was having to rely on several scholarships to make the trip work [if we had travelled].

Service-learning, on the other hand, didn't begin quite so great. To be honest, I thought it would be a waste—just another class requirement that couldn't be any good because it was virtual and not hands-on. I couldn't have been more off-base. This turned out to be a great experience as I ended up changing my major to nursing. A friend told me, "You could do this! COVID did stop a lot of study abroad opportunities [that you] could have had and some service, as well, in hospitals." Here I was virtually helping patients, talking to them, encouraging them, and learning about them. As an immigrant, it deepened my exposure to American culture...and my English actually improved. I loved it and am so glad that my advisor recommended it! To my

advisor, I'd definitely say, "Thank you. [Service-learning's] one of the best experiences I've ever had in my life.... It's a beautiful experience I feel like I'll recommend it to everyone."

Because of a really meaningful first experience, I took an independent service-learning class where I worked with a non-profit and lived with a migrant family and did migrant work. It opened my eyes to this population's needs and I hope to use my nursing one day to help them. One of my classmates had this incredible result, "[In service-learning], I was learning what I really want to do on my future, so I was like obsessed, and I really wanted to learn and get all the information. Now I'm working for them and getting paid for it!" Can you believe that they got a part-time job out of this? We're both so lucky and glad we took the service-learning class.

### **What It Means to Be a Full-time Student at Hamlin**

Due to some lingering mental health issues, it took me a while that first semester or so to get going. I was in school full-time making a lot of "C"s, and I wasn't really satisfied with my major. I changed majors and started to really apply myself and am now making mostly "A"s. In fact, last fall semester, I made the Dean's List! Right now my GPA is still decent—3.48. It's definitely harder in nursing and the COVID situation pushed most of our spring classes online to start with (we still had to come to campus for labs). Also, thanks to COVID, I only took 12 hours during two semesters, so to keep me on track and because I changed my major, I had to do two summers. But after this summer, I will graduate! My original plan had been to transfer to RVU in the fall, but I've not ruled out staying at Hamlin to complete my bachelor's. We have a bachelor's in nursing—it's a pretty good program—and I'm a little concerned about RVU's size and some of the stories I hear! Plus, it's cheaper at Hamlin. Yeah, I'll probably stick with my original plan, but it's tempting to think about staying.

## Challenges Experienced in Navigating Hamlin

“I had to overcome all this trouble by myself...I kind of felt a little bit abandoned by [Hamlin].” So said a friend of mine that really struggled to get their bearings. My experience was not quite as bad, but I do remember wondering how to register and which classes to take. I found the Navigate app and between that and friends, I figured out that first semester. Once COVID hit and everything went online, it was a little bit of a challenge again, navigating the website and the college structures virtually. When I changed my major, I ended up calling multiple departments because it seemed like everyone had a different message or step for me to do. Sometimes I felt like all of that was created for someone who has some college know-how, not a first-timer like me.

But I got through and figured it out—there’s something in our culture that makes Hispanic students want to press on and get through the problems. Another friend wasn’t as lucky as they were also a first-timer hitting some of those barriers. Their issue was submitting transcripts. They complained to me,

[Student Services is] not really flexible with different documentations or paper [transcripts]. They needed the sealed original...it’s an add-on to the experience. It’s money, a lot of money! And you know it maybe costs like \$300...Maybe be more flexible with the steps and trying to understand every situation.

Even though I worked over 30 hours a week at the call center and discovered many answers and resources, my language would get in my way. I’m fluent in English but I think in Spanish and like my friend, some things just didn’t make sense to me. Fortunately, I had professors, call center staff, and advisors who could point me in the right direction. One classmate nailed it when they said, “It’s more intimate [at our satellite campus]...you’re able to have one-on-one

connections sometime with a professor.” Another classmate echoed, “Because the classes are so much smaller, it really is a lot easier for the professors to give time to every single student.” I agree that our campus size is just right for first-timers to get support compared to the main campus. It was by connecting with my advisor that I found out about service-learning—I almost forgot about that.

### **The Impact of My Family and Culture**

You know, I don’t feel comfortable saying where my parents came from, but we are immigrants from a Latin American country, my parents, brother, and I. My parents were super supportive of me going to college and participating in all the activities I did. I think that’s pretty typical of Latin culture: close, supportive families. When we would visit my home country, it’s “education always, always, always!” And then the smells, the food of *mi abuelita* [my granny]—wow, I miss it. But that’s our culture—we’re community, we’re family. Several of my friends have said the same over and over, “Family was really supportive of me,” “They know it’s what I’m focused on [and are there for me],” “I’m super blessed to have a family that understands that school sometime it’s really, really important,” “I’m super grateful that [my mom] went ahead and told me [to do service-learning] and I thank her every day,” and “[My parents even] engaged in [my study abroad meetings] themselves so they can help me or so they [can] support me.”

Now don’t get the impression that everything is perfect. It’s not. Some parents are supportive but unaware, as one friend described, “They’re supportive in that they think it’s great, but it does get to the point, when you need advice and things like that, I find myself a little bit lost sometimes because no one else in my family has really done this.” They’re there in moral support, but it’s hard to explain to some family that you have a paper due over Thanksgiving. Another friend figured it out, though, “I managed to finish my work all in one week so I have the

weekend to spend time with my family. And that's something that's very, very important." As you can see, as Hispanic students, we struggle to have the right balance between school and *familismo*, "family first." Or maybe our families don't immediately see the need for college. I overheard a classmate say, "[My parents not believing I would make it] pushed me to work harder and better through myself, because I was like 'I don't want the life that they went through.' If I didn't have that to inspire me to keep moving forward, I don't think I would have been able to keep going." My first semester, my mom would say, "We need you," but she'd also say, "No, focus on your education."

So I find myself choosing homework over family but trying to enjoy family because that's important, too. My dad passed right after I started at Hamlin but I was able to keep going with a little help from my professors and friends. I heard a classmate tell our class earlier in the summer that they just started back after taking a break as their family had also experienced a loss. They said, "I would do a lot of school work and also take care of my family so that was very challenging...(I remember them starting to cry)...but it was definitely worth it having their support." So even in loss, we keep going because of *familismo*. Some people discriminate against me when they hear where I'm from and think "drugs!" But that's not me! We're a resilient people—our problems shape us and we're better through hard work and our community. We see someone with a *fútbol* jersey from our country and we immediately bond! One of my closest friends summed it up perfectly, "I had a hard time trying to adapt to the new language and the culture and everything. If you see someone from your own country, it gets you closer to home and to them."

### **Paola – A Full-time University Student**

Paola is a Hispanic female enrolled as a full-time student at Riverside View University and is a composite of eight students at RVU. She transferred from Tuttle Community College as a part of the transfer pipeline program that guarantees admission to RVU for community college students upon completion of an associate degree.

#### **High-impact Practices at My Community College**

This is the right place for me—a place that helps me grow. The opportunities Tuttle Community College gave me helped lead me to make the right choice of transferring to Riverside View University. TCC opened so many doors for me to engage with college: First Year Experience (FYE), writing-intensive courses, and a lot of team projects, based on my memory. Yet service-learning and study abroad are two things that impacted me the most. At first, I wasn't too excited about service-learning as it was a requirement for my FYE class. But the more I did and the more friends I made, the more meaningful it was. A friend from FYE said it well, "Now that I've done so much service-learning in the classroom, I feel that I'm much more prepared for the real world." Also, the study abroad in Paris really expanded my worldview—making me even more ready for that real world. Though I haven't done as much at RVU, these experiences led the way to doing some service-learning after transfer as well as undergraduate research. And team-based projects, too.

#### **My Service-learning and Study Abroad Experiences**

Service-learning is addictive! Like I said, I wasn't so convinced early on, but the more I did, the more I wanted to do. A service-learning requirement in FYE later led me to volunteering with a local nature preserve which led to me changing my major to environmental science. Sometimes it felt like I lived at the college—or at my service-learning site—but it gave me

access to more of our faculty and their advice for moving forward in my new major and connections with the community. And then my trip to Paris where all of this was confirmed! I remember being surrounded by all of that great culture and the works of all those famous artists and thinkers and recognizing how they impacted the world. I felt so small. I realized I had impacts yet to make and I think my future career will give me many chances to do that.

I didn't have as many of these experiences after I transferred. The distance to RVU from my house was quite a bit, so it kind of took away some of the motivation to do much extra-curricular beyond my classes. Plus, I missed having my TCC friends to nudge me into participating with them. One of them reminded me not that long ago, "[TCC] really likes to hold your hand all the way to the very last minute. They make things as easy as they can for students and everything as accessible as possible." So, even though it was a lot easier there to do more outside the classroom, I have noticed here that what they call "high-impact practices" are more structured and better organized.

There were a couple barriers, too, with the study abroad trip: the obvious one was the cost. If it weren't for winning a student scholarship in the Honors College, I probably wouldn't have been able to go. To me the competition for money could also be a barrier. Standing in front of the Louvre Museum meant so much to me—what if I hadn't had that opportunity and missed out because I couldn't pay out of pocket? The community I come from, people don't have these kinds of experiences. And how does the student with a 1.0 GPA experience such a fantastic, transforming, cross-cultural opportunity?

### **What It Means to Be a Full-time Student at RVU**

I completed my associate in arts degree in general studies at Tuttle by going both full-time and part-time and was pursuing a biomedical major before I transferred. Because of my

service-learning, I changed to environmental science and will graduate this semester with a strong GPA. I came to RVU “seamlessly” as a part of the guaranteed admission program for TCC students and I remember it being a pretty smooth first semester. I guess you could say that I experienced minimal transfer shock at RVU in spite of its size and diversity of cultures. I’ve said to myself more than once, “I owe it all to my college experience at Tuttle.” There’s a national STEM scholarship that I’m a semi-finalist for—I owe that to Tuttle, too! If I get it, that will help open some doors after I graduate! One of my friends wasn’t so lucky as she experienced a lot of culture shock in her first semester after transferring. The size of the university overwhelmed her and she felt like she was given little if any direction compared to freshmen or those who started at RVU.

There were a few barriers in my transition from the community college. Despite my strong GPA from TCC—and I credit a strong support network for that—the shift to RVU was a little tough because I didn’t get any scholarships after transfer. That was a let-down. I worked hard on my GPA and my on-campus and off-campus involvements and I sort of hoped it would pay off a little better than it did. I remember getting a lot of emails from several campus organizations because of my TCC extra-curriculars: invitations to be on the Dean’s Council, but no scholarship. (My brother had scholarships coming into the university, but he started at RVU and wasn’t a transfer.) Another barrier, as I said before, was the commute. It, and also my job, really kept me from doing as many extra things as I did at Tuttle’s neighborhood campus. Speaking of involvement, another friend had a tough transfer and told me, “So I didn’t do...I didn’t go all the way, I guess you could say, where I could do my very best, I know I did. So that’s one of the things I do regret about that.” I’m glad that I could keep my grades up and have no regrets at either place.

## Challenges Experienced in Navigating RVU

My transition was kind of difficult. I didn't really receive any guidance. I compared it to other people who were freshmen that were not transferring and they received all their guidance from advisors and me presently as a transfer student, I didn't really get any help.

This is the comment from my friend I mentioned who also joined me at RVU. They ended up relying on other students to help get through that first semester after transferring. Fortunately, my navigating challenges were nowhere near that. However, despite the mostly seamless transfer that the pipeline provided for me, a couple challenges were around communication. It was tough to reach anyone by phone. If this happened at TCC, it would be no problem because my campus was a neighborhood campus that was easy to navigate—nothing like the huge RVU campus. Before COVID, if I needed help, I would just try to connect in person once I figured out where their office was. If that need for help was unexpected and while at home, as I mentioned before, that meant a long drive to campus just to get an answer.

Other challenges were how processes worked—like withdrawing from class and making a map for my major—and if I would have dependable Wi-fi at work. It wasn't an issue my first semester because I worked on campus and it was pre-COVID. Having a job on campus helped acclimate me. But I had to work a lot during COVID—*somebody* had to work the drive-thru—and when I would try to do homework at work, I couldn't always count on a strong signal. These weren't major challenges like what some of my friends faced, but there were many times that I felt like I was not in on a secret. It's like everyone knew but me because they started at RVU. Not being in on the secret usually made me feel like I was a step behind everyone else. Too many times “*Yo no se*” [I don't know].

## **The Impact of My Family and Culture**

My family is very, very, very close. Even though I come from a divorced family, we are still very close-knit. I live with my mom and older brother (he just graduated from RVU last year) and they support me in everything I've done both at TCC and now at RVU—especially my brother. When I didn't get accepted to start with at RVU, he wanted me to go to Tuttle and then transfer in to the university. Of course, my always-states-the-obvious friend said, "That's what everyone normally does, they go from Tuttle to RVU. That's the norm, 'normal transfer.'" Ay! My dad and step-mom are supportive, too. They came to several of my service-learning events and gave me lots of verbal support for study abroad—they were especially glad since I had several scholarships. He would've preferred me to go to a smaller state school in the town where he lives. He was worried about his little girl in the big city (though I've lived here for much of my life!). He's come around, though, in that he wears his "RVU Dad" t-shirt literally everywhere. Though neither he nor my mom can provide much financial support like some parents, I would rather have their family support. To me, that's priceless.

My culture tells me to prioritize family. I see that in my mom as she stays up with me if I am up late studying for a test. I hear it from my dad as he tells me, "You got this...keep going!" But I feel like I am having to juggle family and school more and more. I take homework when we go to my grandma's house. Other times, I'll try to finish it during the week so I can spend the weekend with them. Sometimes, though, it gets a little too close-knit. My brother wants to hang out after he comes home from work. I'm thinking about moving out to create a little distance. But moving out is not really my culture, especially for a daughter. I don't know. Juggling is hard to do.

My culture shapes me, but my culture is also who I am at the core—my identity. I am U.S.-born but my parents are immigrants. They came to this country with nothing in their pockets. Even though they're no longer together, they keep teaching me to work hard, to push through, to be humble, and maybe to be a little perfectionistic, too. I love my culture and how it was such a strong part of TCC—we were close-knit there, too—and is a pretty strong part of RVU. Because it's more diverse, that makes it feel like a real university! It's hard to separate me from my culture and my friends—where one ends and one begins. I often say to them, “We've always just been kind of like Hispanic together.” And that's true! Even if you're not related by blood—they're just there for you! That is our identity. A friend of mine who transferred to a predominantly white institution before transferring to RVU said,

I think it's very important to have diversity and all of those factors and then, once you have that, to be inclusive. Because you know I learned from my experience firsthand and my first school that just being there is not just enough. Like my existence in a white space is not enough to make people in that room realize all that I've been through or I am capable of.

Her voice speaks of the strength of our cultural identity. You know, “... [like being] Hispanic together!”

### **Summary**

Composite participant profiles are an effective means to represent qualitative research data. A composite of a set of interview transcripts allows student voices and stories to compose a single, unified narrative that engages the reader and links them to the researcher and participant. Three composite participant profiles—Isabela, Diego, and Paola—were created to represent the 32 students engaged in 13 focus groups/interviews while participant profiles and summary tables

were also included to help frame the experiences of students at three collective case study institutions. The composite profiles had a similar sound in that the college contexts were comparable by design. The two case colleges are similarly recognized at state and national levels for their use of best practices in HIPs implementation as well as for their work to close achievement gaps for Hispanic students. Findings of the student experiences that were discovered and explored through these interviews will be explicated in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE EFFECT OF HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE PARTICIPATION ON TRANSFER SUCCESS: EXPERIENCES OF HISPANIC STUDENTS**

This collective case study explored the experiences of high-impact practice participation of Hispanic students. The following chapter was written to meet the submission requirements of the *Journal of Latinos and Education* (JLE). The journal provides a platform for the analysis and discussion of educational issues relevant to Hispanic populations around the arenas of research and practice (Journal of Latinos and Education, 2021). This study of the transfer success of Hispanic community college students is situated within the aim and scope of JLE. Guidelines for the journal's feature articles include an abstract of up to 200 words and a manuscript of up to 30 pages excluding references and tables. Two research questions were addressed in this article with data collected from student, alumni, and gatekeeper interviews, and institutional artifacts.

The manuscript is organized around an introduction, a review of the literature and theoretical framework, data collection and analysis methodology, and findings reflected in five themes: (a) "Family first" for pre-transfer Hispanic students: highly supportive, (b) High-impact practices (HIPs) experiences for pre-transfer Hispanic students: emotional, life-changing, and transformational, (c) Successful transfer for post-transfer Hispanic students: overcoming barriers with substantial capital and cultural wealth, (d) HIPs participation for Hispanic students: institutions have systems in place to elevate participation, and (e) HIPs programs for Hispanic students: institutions have strong resources and supports in place to ensure strong programs. The themes were a consolidation of nine themes identified after multiple rounds of coding and clustering. In addition to *a priori* codes based on Yosso (2005) and Kuh (2001), 184 codes emerged employing Saldaña's (2009) Elemental and Affective methods of coding (e.g., descriptive, in vivo, process, and emotion codes) which were then categorized into 17 clusters. A

discussion of the relevance of the themes as well as implications for research and practice conclude the article. A comprehensive reference section at the end of this dissertation includes sources cited in this manuscript. All appendices noted in the manuscript are likewise included at the end of this dissertation.

## **The Effect of High-impact Practice Participation on Transfer Success: Experiences of Hispanic Students**

### **Abstract**

This qualitative, collective case study explored the experiences of Hispanic community college students who participated in high-impact practices and the effect of participation upon their transfer success. Experiential, high-impact practices (e.g., first-year experience, learning communities, service-learning, and internships) have been noted to boost student success markers (e.g., GPA, persistence, completion) particularly for students of color (Kuh, 2008a.). Yet limited literature is available that studied the effects of participating in those educational activities pre-transfer upon their transfer experience at the university. The relevance of Yosso's (2005) *community cultural wealth* theory was also investigated as it affected the lived experience of pre- and post-transfer Hispanic students. Findings from student and alumni interviews revealed themes of family support and cultural pride. The themes encapsulated students' ability to overcome systemic barriers and realize transformative life-change provided by service-learning and study abroad experiences. These experiences positively impacted their transfer experience and success at the university through decreased transfer shock, strong GPAs, persistence, and completion. As the gateway to higher education for students of color (Lanaan,

2001; Schak et al., 2019; Shugart, 2019), two-year institutions can ill-afford not to implement systemic changes if they hope to positively affect Hispanic student transfer rates.

*Keywords:* high-impact practices, transfer success, Hispanic students

### **Introduction**

Engagement research generally accepts that the greater the institutional investment into students, the greater the chance of that student completing (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2001; Kuh 2008b). In the 1990s, Kuh (2001) investigated the impact of what he called “high-impact practices” (p. 2; HIPs)—educationally purposeful and experiential activities such as learning communities and internships—that, when students participated, appeared to result in an increase in student success (Bradley et al., 2015; Kuh, 2016; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Kuh et al., 2017). Kuh and Kinzie further found that HIPs participation by Hispanic students related to higher graduation rates and transfer rates (Raby et al., 2014). When students of color participate in HIPs, the results are even more substantial than those of their white counterparts (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kilgo et al., 2015; Kuh, 2016; Kuh et al., 2017; Raby et al., 2014; Rockey & Congleton, 2016), and yet the involvement rate for minority students remains low and historically underserved students are deprived of these potentially life-changing practices (Kuh et al., 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2016).

Because the outcomes of high-impact practices increase chances of persistence, transfer, and completion, it is critical for institutions to engage students into their institutions if there is any hope of bachelor’s degree attainment and economic mobility—especially for students of color. While upwards of 78% of students entering community colleges today express intent to transfer (Bailey et al., 2016; Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2020a; Wang, 2020), only 33% do transfer with 14% of students ultimately attaining a baccalaureate degree after six years (Jenkins & Fink, 2016; Shapiro et al., 2020). If the student is a student of color,

the graduation rate is 5.5% (Shapiro et al., 2018). Several benefits of bachelor degree attainment include economic upward mobility, a sense of meaning and accomplishment, and even a benefit to the community (Kuh et al., 2006; Boggs & McPhail, 2016), yet that degree attainment often goes unreached for many community college students post-transfer.

Because historically underserved students utilize community colleges as their major on-ramp to higher education (Gonzalez Canche, 2014; Shugart, 2019), students of color continue to enroll in colleges at strong rates with Hispanic student enrollment growing by 134% from 2000-2016 (NCES, 2019). Simultaneously, national organizations and states are setting credential attainment goals (Anguiano & Navarro, 2020; myFutureNC Commission, 2021). Without a strong uptick in their transfer success and bachelor's degree attainment, Hispanic students will see their dream for family-sustaining wages fade (Excelencia in Education, 2020a) and continue to rely on service-industry jobs that are usually some of the lowest-paying in order to provide for their families and their futures (Martinez & Santiago, 2020).

### **Literature Review**

Student engagement theory has developed out of academics' exploration of the effect of student characteristics or institutional attributes on a student's integration into the college or university (Edmunds et al., 2013; Johnson, 2016; Kuh, 2008b; Salis, et al., 2016; Sweat et al., 2013). Student integration or engagement in the institution has been explained as involvement (Astin, 1984), academic and social integration (Tinto, 1975), "psychological and physical involvement" (Pascarella, 1985b, p. 657), and a sense of belonging (Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Wang, 2020). Further, engagement happens when integration aligns with institutional attributes (Ishitani & McKittrick, 2010; Laanan, 2001). Investigating the factors that lead to academic and social integration to a student's coursework and the institution, Kuh (2001) proposed that

faculty-student interaction and social engagement combine into purposeful education activities which he termed *high-impact practices* (HIPs).

### **High-impact Practices**

High-impact practices—such as first-year experience, learning communities, service-learning, study abroad, internships, and undergraduate research—engage students in meaningful interactions (typically) outside the classroom with their faculty and peers. These HIPs led to stronger GPAs, greater fall-to-fall persistence, and higher completion rates over those who did not participate in HIPs (Bonet & Walters, 2016; Bradley et al., 2015; Eynon & Iuzzini, 2020; Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Finley & McNair, 2013; Ho & Sanchez, 2018; LaViolet et al., 2018; Perez, 2016; Salis et al., 2016; Selingo, 2017; Sweat et al., 2013; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). Kuh et al. (2017) noted that when students of color engaged in such educationally purposeful activities, their results exceeded those of white students. In addition, Kuh and Kinzie (2018) found that participating in just one high-impact practice gave Hispanic university students a 10% greater chance to graduate and attain a bachelor's degree.

A key to the success of HIPs is the increased faculty-student interaction (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kuh & Love, 2000; Luciano-Wong & Crowe, 2019; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018); the same faculty-student connection has been found to be key to transfer success (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Pascarella, 1985a; Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016; Salis et al., 2016). When students engage with faculty through HIPs at community colleges, it positively impacts their transfer experience at the university (Harris, 2017; Jackson et al., 2013). While the research has been robust on this faculty-student interaction at the four-year institution (Chen, 2008; Kilgo, et al., 2015; Hullender et al., 2015; Salis et al., 2016), there is limited research that looks at the relationship between community college HIPs participation and a successful transfer experience

(reduced transfer shock, increased GPA, higher persistence and completion rates) for students of color (AACU, 2015; Chen, 2008; Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Luciano-Wong & Crowe, 2019; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018).

### **Service-learning and Study Abroad**

If the substantial return on HIPs participation exists for students of color (Brownell & Swaner 2009; Jackson et al., 2013; Kezar, 2014; Kuh et al., 2008; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018), it is critical for community college faculty and staff to create greater access and frequency of these impactful experiences. Yet so few classes provide these experiential learning activities—only 28% of community college students had participated in a community-based project (i.e., service-learning; CCCSE, 2020b) despite this being one of the most common HIPs (Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). Service-learning combines a traditional community service project with a reflective/learning component where students assess the impact they made on the project (site) and the impact the project made on them (Gifford et al., 2005; Rutti et al., 2016). Studying abroad involves “a structured learning experience in which the student participants are required to live and learn in another country” (Goode, 2007; p. 150). However, those not enrolled at research universities were found in a recent study to participate less in study abroad or have few options for trips/destinations (Whatley, 2021). Community college students are at a disadvantage in their opportunities to engage in these experiences that have great potential to impact their future success and completion. Adapting HIPs for the two-year context and making them more common across institutions can best-position students for transfer success.

### **Transfer Success**

Student success is typically measured through GPA, retention/persistence, and completion (Hawkins, 2015; Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010; NCCCS, 2019). Though high grades

often equate to student success, successful community college students often experience a disruption in their success during the transfer process—through *transfer shock* (decreasing GPA; Jackson et al., 2013; Laanan, 2001, Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). Rendón et al. (2014) observed that students of color experience transfer shock in that they toggle between their personal/cultural world and the institutional world. However, Laanan (2001) noted that students' GPA usually recovers within an academic year by what he termed *transfer ecstasy*. Persistence and completion markers are also vulnerable to barriers experienced in the transfer process particularly by students of color. Helmer (2013) found that students were more inclined to stop-out when hitting a barrier if they were either low-income or non-native English speakers, yet Glynn (2019) discovered transfer students can persist at levels comparable to native university students when barriers are mitigated. Completion can also be at-risk if transfer students are not fully engaged at the university post-transfer. That risk can be diminished and completion rates considerably improved as students increase institutional engagement by enrolling full-time (Ishitani & McKittrick, 2010) and earning 30 or more hours pre-transfer (Bailey et al., 2016; Belfield et al., 2019). Yet not all students experience that momentum-to-completion as demonstrated by race/ethnicity and gender gaps in degree attainment (Juskiewicz, 2019; Wang, 2020). Ensuring that students of color have a successful transfer experience is essential if they are to see an increase in GPA and, ultimately, completion rates.

### **Community Cultural Wealth**

*Community cultural wealth* theory recognizes that students of color enter the classroom with strengths and assets and provides an alternate narrative to the prevailing view of minority students' weaknesses and deficits (Pérez, 2017, Sáenz et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). The theory posits an accumulation of various capitals that form cultural wealth for historically underserved

students: aspirational capital (dreams, resilience), linguistic capital (bilingual, translation skills), familial capital (*familismo*: support, surrounded care), social capital (knowledge gained from peers), navigational capital (highly motivated, determined to work around obstacles), and resistance capital (challenges status quo, societal norms). Rendón et al. (2014) extended Yosso's theory to include four additional assets: perseverance, cultural pride, spirituality/faith, and *pluralversality* (concurrently participating in multiple worlds).

### **Hispanic Students**

Because they are open-access institutions, community colleges are positioned as the gateway to higher education for students of color in general and Hispanic students specifically (Laanan, 2001; Shugart, 2019). Hispanic students represent the fastest-growing demographic segment in the United States (Tippett, 2020) as well as the fastest-enrolling minority student population in community colleges (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021). Martinez and Santiago (2020) speculate “higher education can be a game changer for Latino students’ mobility” (p. 12). However, for Hispanic students, their ability to navigate challenges in community college (and then university) structures, policies, and procedures can impact persistence when combined with the expectation of *familismo* (“family first”) to balance family and school. Yosso (2005) did not see family as a hindrance in her community cultural wealth theory. In fact, she proposed that the family is an aid to students’ success and persistence. Kuh et al. (2006) also observed this as they saw the critical need for institutions to provide experiential activities and encourage families to play a role in the student’s acculturation to the college. Engaging Hispanic students in high-impact practices while welcoming their families’ involvement can provide key support as students navigate institutional challenges.

## Participation in HIPs

Kuh and Kinzie (2018) inquired: Is there equitable access for all students to HIPs? Are there some students that are engaging in them and some that are sitting on the sidelines?

According to a 2015 study, historically underserved students consistently have the lowest rates for HIPs participation (AACU, 2015). Compounding matters is the abundance of literature showing the efficacy of HIPs in the four-year sector (Chen, 2008; Kilgo et al., 2015; Hullender et al., 2015; Kezar, 2014; Salis et al., 2016; Schock, 2017; Whatley, 2019b, 2021) while success of high-impact practices in the two-year sector has scant representation (Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Ishtani & McKitrick, 2010). Jackson et al. (2013) suggested:

Programs and services that support transfer students are of paramount importance as well. Transfer student orientations, mentoring programs, **undergraduate research** programs, and opportunities for **engagement with peers and faculty in extracurricular activities** have proven to be beneficial for transfer adjustment and satisfaction of women and underrepresented minorities (p. 73, emphasis added).

To that end, Tennessee community colleges have scaled the HIPs framework across their system in order to provide greater access for underserved students (Jenkins et al., 2018; Valentine & Price, 2021). HIPs must be high-quality experiences and they must be accessible to all students such that students have multiple on-ramps to engage. Equity can be an outcome of HIPs framework implementation and level the playing field for minority students as it enhances their chance of academic success and degree attainment.

## Conceptual Framework

Two theories framed this study: Kuh's theory of student engagement and Yosso's *Community Cultural Wealth* theory. Kuh (2001) claimed that high-impact practice participation

leads to greater levels of student engagement while Yosso (2005) proposed that minority students enter the educational arena with a collection of assets and capital that could lead to their academic success as opposed to them being seen as entering with deficits and a multitude of barriers that threaten their success. By creating a conceptual framework that inserts Kuh's student engagement theory (as demonstrated through HIPs) and Yosso's community cultural wealth theory conjointly into a Hispanic student's community college pre-transfer trajectory, the resulting outcomes at the university post-transfer will be higher student success across multiple markers (i.e., GPA, persistence, completion).

To ensure continued engagement of students of color in two-year institutions, particularly Hispanic students, and close the gaps in successful transfer to four-year institutions, this study aims to engage in qualitative research that explores the effects of participating in high-impact practices pre-transfer upon GPA, persistence, and completion rates post-transfer. Two research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of HIPs participation by Hispanic students pre-transfer? Post-transfer?
2. What does an exploration of HIPs participation by Hispanic students reveal about supports that institutions should consider putting in place?

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

Participants for this collective case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1998) were students from two large community colleges (Hamlin College and Tuttle Community College) and their common transfer university (Riverside View University)—all pseudonyms—in the southern tier of the United States. The two colleges studied met the following criteria: (a) they

offer two high-impact practices (study abroad and service-learning) with regular frequency and at scale, and (b) they are working to close completion gaps in minority students (particularly Hispanic students). Each college, through their mission and core values statements, strategic plans, and programming emphasized equity, diversity, and inclusion (Hamlin College, 2021a; Tuttle Community College, 2021a). Faculty/staff gatekeepers at the community colleges and university recruited students in spring 2021 who identified as Hispanic/Latino, were currently enrolled, had engaged in at least one high-impact practice while at the community college, and intended to transfer (or had transferred). Students indicated their gender, race/ethnicity, HIPs participation, and their transfer intent on a brief, pre-focus group survey that determined eligibility (see Appendix A). Students who were recruited at the university were alumni from the two case colleges and had participated in at least one high-impact practice pre-transfer. They completed a similar brief, pre-interview demographic survey to determine eligibility (see Appendix G). Participant demographic information tables follow in Tables 5.1 - 5.4.

**Table 5.1.**

Tuttle Community College Student Demographic Information.

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Esmeralda	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, writing, service-learning, team-based
Hailey	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	AA – General	Service-learning
Hannah	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Mass Communication, Journalism	Service-learning

**Table 5.1** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Hermoine	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Nursing	FYE, learning community, service-learning, team-based
Jasmine	Hispanic/African American	Female	Full-time	AA – Pre-medicine	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning , team-based
John Smith	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AS – General	Service-learning, undergraduate research, team-based
Madison	Hispanic	Non-binary	Full-time	AA – Graphic Arts	FYE, service-learning , team-based
Marcus Wade	Hispanic	Male	Full-time	Other – Pre-Physical Therapy	FYE, service-learning
Reina Mendez	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, service-learning
Valentina Lopez	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	Other	FYE, study abroad, ePortfolio

*Note.* AA = Associate in Arts degree; AS = Associate in Science degree; ePortfolio = portable, updatable digital tool that documents accomplishments and experiences; FYE = *first year*

*experience*, freshman seminar, success course; Learning Community = cohort of students who take two or more linked courses around a common topic; Service-learning = community-based projects that feature a reflective/learning component; Study Abroad = structured learning experiences outside the U.S.; Team-based = projects in which students work collaboratively to solve problems; Undergraduate Research = research experiences for students, typically in the sciences; Writing = writing-intensive courses across the curriculum (Kuh, 2017).

**Table 5.2.**

Hamlin College Student Demographic Information.

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Abi	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Service-learning
AeonD	Hispanic	Male	Part-time	AS – Software Development	FYE, service-learning, capstone, team-based
Akira	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Internship, study abroad
Butterfly	Hispanic/White non-Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Service-learning, internship
Crissy	Hispanic/White non-Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AS – Legal Studies	FYE, learning community, service-learning, study abroad
Don Diego de la Vega	Hispanic	Male	Full-time	AA – Engineering	FYE, service-learning, undergraduate research

**Table 5.2** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
japa	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Nursing	Service-learning
Kelly Moore	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, service-learning, undergraduate research
Leo	Hispanic	Male	Full-time	Other	Internship, study abroad
Natty O	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Service-learning, study abroad
Octane	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Computer Science	FYE, service-learning, internship, team-based
sky	Hispanic	Non-binary	Part-time	AS – General	Service-learning, undergraduate research
Star	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, writing, service-learning, internship, capstone, team-based
Taher	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, service-learning, internship, capstone, undergraduate research

**Table 5.2** (continued).

*Note.* AA = Associate in Arts degree; AS = Associate in Science degree; Capstone = culminating projects that synthesize and apply learning ; FYE = *first year experience*, freshman seminar, success course; Internship = experience in the work setting (often with course credit) with supervisor-provided coaching; Learning Community = cohort of students who take two or more linked courses around a common topic; Service-learning = community-based projects that feature a reflective/learning component; Study Abroad = structured learning experiences outside the United States; Team-based = projects in which students work collaboratively to solve problems; Undergraduate Research = research experiences for students, typically in the sciences; Writing = writing-intensive courses across the curriculum (Kuh, 2017).

**Table 5.3.**

Riverside View University Student Demographic Information.

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status (4-yr)	Enrollment status (2-yr)	Degree (2-yr)	HIPs experience (2-yr)	HIPs experience (4-yr)
Alli	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	Writing, service-learning	Internship, team-based
Betty S	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	Full-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, service-learning	Writing
Camilla	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – Elementary Education	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, undergraduate research, team-based, ePortfolio	Writing, learning community, service-learning, team-based, ePortfolio

**Table 5.3** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status (4-yr)	Enrollment status (2-yr)	Degree (2-yr)	HIPs experience (2-yr)	HIPs experience (4-yr)
Emile Blanchet	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, internship, study abroad, undergraduate research, team-based	Internship, undergraduate research
Jason	Hispanic	Male	Part-time	Full-time/ Part-time	AA - Philosophy	FYE, service-learning, team-based	Team-based
Rose	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, service-learning, team-based	Service-learning, undergraduate research

**Table 5.3** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status (4-yr)	Enrollment status (2-yr)	Degree (2-yr)	HIPs experience (2-yr)	HIPs experience (4-yr)
Sunny	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, team-based	Writing, learning community, capstone, team-based
Valentina Romero	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, study abroad, team-based	Writing, internship, undergraduate research, team-based

*Note.* AA = Associate in Arts degree; AS = Associate in Science degree; Capstone = culminating projects that synthesize and apply learning ; ePortfolio = portable, updatable digital tool that documents accomplishments and experiences; FYE = *first year experience*, freshman seminar, success course; Internship = experience in the work setting (often with course credit) with supervisor-provided coaching; Learning Community = cohort of students who take two or more linked courses around a common topic; Service-learning =

community-based projects that feature a reflective/learning component; Study Abroad = structured learning experiences outside the United States; Team-based = projects in which students work together to solve problems collaboratively; Undergraduate Research = research experiences for students, typically in the sciences; Writing = writing-intensive courses across the curriculum (Kuh, 2017).

**Table 5.4.**

Gatekeeper Participant Demographic Information.

Pseudonym (Institution)	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Primary role	Level of interaction by student-type			
				Transfer	Hispanic	Part-time	Full-time
Anne (HC)	White/Non-Hispanic	Female	International Education staff	Low	High	High	High
M Smith (TCC)	Hispanic/Latino	Female	International Education staff	Low	High	High	High

**Table 5.4** (continued).

Pseudonym (Institution)	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Primary role	Level of interaction by student-type			
				Transfer	Hispanic	Part-time	Full-time
Mr. Downtown (TCC)	Hispanic/ Latino	Male	Academic Advising staff	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Natasha (HC)	White/Non- Hispanic	Female	Department Chair/Dean/ Director	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Nina (RVU)	Asian/Pacific Islander	Female	Transfer Students staff	High	High	High	Moderate
Xavier (TCC)	White/Non- Hispanic	Male	Support services staff	Do not interact	High	High	High

*Note.* HC = Hamlin College; RVU = Riverside View University; TCC = Tuttle Community College.

## **Procedure**

Twenty-four Hispanic students from Tuttle Community College and Hamlin College, participated in eight one-hour focus groups where an interview protocol (see Appendix B) was followed that inquired about HIPs participation, challenges encountered at the community college, family support, student success markers (GPA, persistence, completion), benefits received from HIPs participation, and recommendations they would make to college leadership. Eight students at Riverside View University (alumni from Hamlin and TCC) participated in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews that lasted approximately one hour. The university interview protocol (see Appendix H) elicited data around HIPs participation, transfer experience, student success markers, HIPs impact upon transfer, matriculation, and persistence at the university, and institutional barriers to participating in HIPs. Additionally, six gatekeeper interviews (see Appendices D & F) were conducted about institutional structures and student recruitment for HIPs, transfer processes, and gatekeeper interaction with students. Gatekeepers also provided documents and artifacts for service-learning, study abroad, and transfer experiences (e.g., brochures, recruitment flyers, websites, training manuals, applications). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all focus groups and interviews were conducted via remote technology and were audio-recorded and transcribed.

## **Data Interpretation**

Once the data was collected, I read each transcription and began to form initial perceptions of the students' lived experiences. I first coded back to Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth theory as well as Kuh's (2001) engagement theory by making use of *a priori* codes. Using Saldaña's (2009) Elemental and Affective methods of coding, I then coded the data in multiple rounds: descriptive, in vivo, process, and emotion coding. Next, I clustered the codes

into categories and synthesized the categories into emergent themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The themes were the meaningful patterns that developed around the student *testimonios* (stories). Finally, documents and artifacts were analyzed and evaluated based on their inclusion of content related to the perspective of life-changing participation, details of the experience, reference to its educational value, quality of appearance, and institutional goal alignment. A rubric was used to both quantitatively and qualitatively measure the documents and artifacts (see Appendix J).

Through participant review and member checking, as well as the use of rich, thick description, I determined and maintained the accuracy of my findings. Reliability was achieved through the triangulating of data collected in the interviews, artifacts, and documents, and the use of extensive memoing in which I noted patterns and themes from the *testimonios* and reflections about the interview.

### **Positionality**

As an academic dean who is involved in multiple transfer initiatives and oversees university partnerships at my community college, I am engaged in streamlining the transfer process, training faculty in accurate advising of transfer students, and improving the engagement of general education/transfer students. Additionally, though I am not a person of color, my formative years were spent in a state with a significant Hispanic population where I developed friendships and an affinity for the people and cultures of Latin America. That affinity has led to a respect for the challenges that many have overcome to provide a better future for themselves and their families. International travel has also exposed me to the cultures described by many of the students I interviewed. Finally, I provide leadership to areas of my college that create cultural

and global experiences for our students as well as promote student engagement through high-impact practices.

### **Findings**

Five themes surfaced through data analysis of the focus groups and interviews of 32 Hispanic students. The five themes address two research questions and encapsulate the pre- and post-transfer lived experiences of the students. The themes also center around high-impact practices (HIPs) which are high-quality and highly engaging educational activities such as learning communities, internships, and capstones that are characterized by high levels of interaction with faculty and peers (Kuh, 2001; Kuh, 2008b). The themes summarized in this section are: (a) “Family first” for pre-transfer Hispanic students: highly supportive, (b) HIPs experiences for pre-transfer Hispanic students: emotional, life-changing, and transformational, (c) Successful transfer for post-transfer Hispanic students: overcoming barriers with substantial capital and cultural wealth, (d) HIPs participation for Hispanic students: institutions have systems in place to elevate participation, and (e) HIPs programs for Hispanic students: institutions have strong resources and supports in place to ensure strong programs.

### **Themes**

The first three themes address Research Question 1: What are the experiences of high-impact practices participation by Hispanic students pre-transfer? Post-transfer? The final two themes that address Research Question 2 were primarily informed by the gatekeeper interviews at both community colleges and the transfer university: What does an exploration of HIPs participation by Hispanic students reveal about supports that institutions should consider putting in place?

***“Family first” for pre-transfer Hispanic students: highly supportive***

Yosso (2005) described *familismo* as family, kinship, or community that supports a student’s ability to persist and identified this attribute as a prominent type of capital in a student’s accumulation of cultural wealth. *Familismo* also allows a student to understand that they do not struggle alone (Wang, 2020). Though this sense of “family first” is seen by many institutional systems as an interference—a deficit—to a Hispanic students’ educational goals, studies found that Hispanic parents highly valued education (Clark et al., 2013; Rendón et al., 2014; Sáenz et al., 2018) and even rewarded students or excused them from chores in support of their education (Pérez, 2017).

While “family first” permeated the student and alumni interviews, three subthemes surfaced regarding the more granular influence and priority of students’ families: (a) supportive, (b) unaware/unsupportive, (c) juggling/balancing act. A summary of findings that coalesced around these subthemes follows.

**Supportive.** The overwhelming majority of Tuttle Community College (TCC) and Hamlin College student *testimonios* (stories) reflected supportive families. Though in most cases, it was the support of parents that students recalled, family support also meant children, spouses, or siblings. One gatekeeper at Hamlin College found it amusing when the researcher assumed that family support only meant the parents of a student. To explain her reaction, Anne referenced Hamlin students with children and spouses who participated in service-learning or study abroad with ample support from those same family members as well.

Marcus Wade, from TCC, summed up the value of *familismo* best as he reflected on his service-learning experience “They've been along on the train the whole ride ... they're supportive no matter what and they know that it's going to be a challenge for me and they're going to be

here to help me no matter what.” Similarly, AeonD felt strong support when it came to his international experience “My family was very open to the idea of me going to different cultures...and to participate in the study abroad.”

Regarding the extent that family will go to sustain their students, RVU student Valentina Romero illustrated from her time at Hamlin College:

My parents, to this day, still don't really have the means to support me in the way that they wish they could. But as far as verbal support, they were all about it because they knew how much I've always wanted to go out of the country ... My mom, in particular, got really emotional about it and was very supportive. And she talked about possibly getting a second job to help me cover any costs and things like that.

Several other students recalled high levels of support: John Smith (TCC student) realized “I'm super blessed to have a family that understands that school is really, really important,” a point echoed by Japa from Hamlin “They're going to understand at the end of the day—by the grace and understanding that you need to keep up.” This reinforcement extended into students’ high-impact practice participation as well: Abi reflected on her service-learning project at Hamlin College “[My family was] really supportive of me. They were like, as long as I'm helping and doing good for the greater people, I should be fine.” Madison’s family took their support a step further at TCC: “They engaged in [the service-learning] themselves so they can help me!” Almost as an exclamation point to describing support from home, when asked about family support of her transfer to RVU, Valentina Romero’s response was “It’s priceless!”

**Unaware/unsupportive.** In contrast, Martinez and Santiago (2020) found that while parents want to support and help their student, they lack the navigational capital to direct the student through processes and procedures. This played out in several student stories as they

spoke of either unaware or unsupportive family members. AeonD mused about his time at Hamlin College “Yes, our family members support where we're going, what we plan to do or future plans, but they don't have the slightest idea what we're trying to get through!” Taher, also of Hamlin, concurred:

Sometimes you do have to choose school over family, and I feel like sometimes, in our [Hispanic] culture that'd be kind of odd ... [with] "family first" and because they're not really doing these things in the field [I'm in], it's kind of like, "Oh, are you really going to do this? You're going to choose the career over this time you have to spend [with us]?"

While Jason was at TCC, he remembered a similarly unsupportive time: “[My mother] didn't really get involved with anything that I did ... I didn't go to her for any help. I pretty much did [service-learning] alone. ... I drove there; no one told me to do it ... I just did it myself.” However, recalling her parents not believing she would be able to make it at Hamlin, Star said it pushed her “to work harder ... if I didn't have that to inspire me to keep moving forward, I don't think I would have been able to keep going.” In referring to barriers and challenges in general, Hannah (at TCC) echoed “You kind of just have to keep moving forward.” Nonetheless, each of these students found other forms of capital and moved forward in their educational journeys.

**Juggling/Balancing Act.** With or without support from their home environments, students struggled with the balancing act of family and school that is typical of most community college students (Rendón et al., 2014; Tuttle & Musoba, 2013). While at Hamlin College, sky affirmed:

My family is in a different city and I'm in [Hamlin's city]...it was really difficult because I was driving back and forth ... those two hour drives. ...This has been a really hard

juggling problem because I feel like I'm obligated, and it'd be wrong for me to ... not see my family. It was [the] balancing that kind of put me behind in some of my studies.

John Smith, a Tuttle Community College student, framed the family/college balancing needed: “It took a lot of hard work. [We] have ... problems along the way, but there's something behind it all that has made students still want to go through the long process, the long hours of hard work.”

Camilla, a transfer student at Riverside View University (RVU) spoke of her experiences with that balancing act. She expressed her priority of family “I'm very family oriented. I always like to put family first, then school, you know I'm very close to my family. So what I would do is I wouldn't take all my classes on campus,” and she went on to say that some of her courses were online so she would have more time at home and not have to worry about transportation issues. Camilla concluded “Like I said before, my family is very supportive of me. And not just me, me and my brother, they want us to like finish our degree. That's their main goal as parents.”

Community college students also juggled work schedules (often more than one job), transportation issues, financial demands, and growing families (two students had babies just a few months prior to the interviews). Most students found the wherewithal and perseverance to overcome obstacles through familial capital. Hannah (at TCC) revealed her lived experience: “I have a very large family but never really had a problem with [juggling].” Because her family is large, the responsibilities can be shared. Yet, in recalling that she and her family recently lost a close family member, she assumed a larger share and remembered “I would do a lot of school work and also take care of my family so that was very challenging ... (starts crying) ... but it was definitely worth it having their support.” Though they felt the tension of the balancing act, most students sensed the support of their families. Even in situations with unaware parents, there was

a pattern of support that students experienced that comes along with *familismo*. “Family first” and its accompanying support provides a foundation upon which the student can be successful in the classroom and sets-up the student to fully engage in the HIPs experiences their colleges designed for them.

***HIPs experiences for pre-transfer Hispanic students: emotional, life-changing, and transformational.***

HIPs, particularly service-learning and study abroad, are transformative experiences for students of color (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Eyler et al., 1997; Raby, 2020; Raby et al., 2014; Rutti et al., 2016) because of the eye-opening encounters they have. Almost every student referenced such transformation through service experiences, life-changing trips, and meaningful changes to their mindset, lifestyle, and life trajectory. Two subthemes, *Never Forget the Effect on Others* and *I’ll Never Be the Same* summarize those student experiences and the power of study abroad and service-learning.

**Never Forget the Effect on Others.** Several students spoke about the potential impact of helping others and how meaningful it was and two articulated it to a greater depth as they understood the effect they had on another person’s life by virtue of their service-learning experience. Jasmine, a student at Tuttle Community College, conveyed “I see my community differently ... I feel like I’m playing a part in the community ... I’m affecting other people’s lives, which is a good feeling.” Octane recalled assisting a single mom who was trying to get insurance for her family, but could not communicate effectively in English. Octane, a bilingual Hamlin student, gushed “I’m so proud of myself to have known another language because without that, this lady would have been lost.” There is little doubt of the impact these students

made on other's lives but also the impact that the service-learning project made on their own lives.

**“I’ll never be the same.”** When asked to reflect on their high-impact practice takeaways, students easily effused the personal and academic benefits. Hailey from TCC shared “It kind of gave me that sense of what I was longing for,” while classmate Hannah contemplated “It just helped me to dig deep within myself.” Their counterparts at Hamlin were equally reflective as Natty O and Japa echoed, respectively, “it's something that impacted me and I carry in my heart every day,” and “it was an experience that I'll always have with me.” Akira, also from Hamlin College, was able to take away an element of joy in the midst of COVID-19: “We really became like a family, even though [our trip was cancelled]. We were so excited just to be part of this program.”

Some students spoke of a deeper level of impact in that they found connections between their major and their HIPs experiences. Hailey, a future psychology major at RVU, said of her service-learning at TCC “[it] opened my eyes a little bit to be more sensitive towards grandparents or elderly people.” She further shared that on a personal level the eye-opening project was especially meaningful in that her grandparents live in another country and were not a strong part of her life. Similarly benefitting, Sky responded “[since my service-learning], I feel like I’m definitely on the right track with my degree.” She worked for an organization that helped children dealing with grief and plans to be a psychology major when she transfers from Hamlin to a university. However, Butterfly, also a Hamlin student, had perhaps one of the most beneficial takeaways—a job offer! She conveyed:

What I was learning there was for my future and I was able to see this is what I really want to do in my future ... and they saw that in me. I got so lucky, and I have so much to thank service-learning for, for giving me this opportunity [which led to a job]!

Finally, Japa summarized “[service-learning’s] one of the best experiences I’ve ever had in my life ... It’s a beautiful experience. I feel like I’ll recommend it to everyone.”

What made these experiences so easy to “recommend to everyone” was their life-altering nature: the eye-opening experiences students had impacting another’s life, seeing their future in a different light, believing in themselves for a skill they possess, understanding others’ cultures in a meaningful way, and learning that their course content can be used to solve real-world problems. Students’ lives were changed and their likelihood of being academically successful at the community college and later at their transfer university greatly increased.

***Successful transfer for post-transfer Hispanic students: overcoming barriers with substantial capital and cultural wealth.***

Hamlin College and Tuttle Community College students that transferred to Riverside View University did so with an accumulation of capital and high-impact practice participation. Following are two subthemes, *Familial and Cultural Capital* and *Navigational Capital*, that explicate students’ transfer experiences to the university as conveyed in individual interviews.

**Familial and Cultural Capital.** Interviews with RVU students revealed that the cultural wealth they already possessed and the capital they accumulated at the community college empowered them to overcome challenges post-transfer. Like their peers who were pre-transfer, substantial familial and cultural capital existed in RVU transfers: “If I couldn’t hang out with [my family] ... [because I had to study for a test], they understood,” (Alli); “There were nights where I would stay up all night and my mom wouldn’t go to sleep either,” (Sunny); and, “I’m

definitely much more secure in my cultural identity and proud of being a first generation student,” (Valentina Romero).

**Navigational Capital.** Transfer students also exhibited strong navigational and resistance capital—which manifests as high motivation and determination—and has the capacity to lead to their ultimate academic success and baccalaureate degree completion (Glynn, 2019).

*Navigational capital* is the student’s ability to find their way through institutional systems and structures. Camilla affirmed “It’s better to go to community college first because it prepares you for university life ... my outcomes were positive last time, so ... if I have the same attitude [here], I will also end up with good things.”

However, despite solid navigational skills, some transfer students struggled to find their way in the first semester post-transfer. Jason remembered:

My first semester at RVU, I didn’t do great ... I didn’t do horrible, either, but it was pretty stressful. I was a bit lost I guess you could say. [At TCC], little by little, I learned the process, I learned ‘the code’ for everything ... the same thing’s going on now at RVU.

As a part-time university student, Jason was still finding his way. He overcame incredible odds in completing his associate degree: he dropped out of high school, worked “really bad retail jobs,” and decided to return to get his high school equivalency at TCC alternating between part- and full-time enrollment status. Born in a Latin American capital city, he and his family moved to several U.S. West Coast cities before settling in his current city where a substantial Hispanic population allowed him to finally “[feel] right at home.”

*HIPs participation for Hispanic students: institutions have systems in place to elevate participation.*

Both case colleges recruit participants for HIPs in similar ways and their practice is reflected in M Smith's comments:

[TCC] is a minority-serving institution so we use our strategies for the entire population because we will obtain students that are very different in all senses ... we don't target our outreach based on their ethnicity [or enrollment status] ... we try to advise for study abroad in a very holistic manner.

As such, Mr. Downtown, whose office at TCC provides wraparound support for students in the transfer pipeline to RVU, spoke of the importance of the advisor: "Advisors are extremely connected ... we establish that tight-knit relationship with them early on ... let's be honest, we nag you and try to keep you on track!"

As advisors steer students toward high-impact practice participation, students experience real-world learning that can be an extension of their major coursework, as in the cases of Leo, who had a "wonderful experience" in a Hamlin service-learning project related to his film major, or Reina Mendez, whose service-learning allowed her to test-drive her major at TCC and she realized it was not the career goal she really wanted—"I [discovered I] wanted to do [business administration]."

To help open the door for broader student access and participation, a portion of the work that Xavier and his staff provide is support for faculty in designing academic service-learning experiences. He noted having a good professor, even for one semester, "can bring growth and transformation ... [the] professor is really key to overcoming all of these possible micro-

barriers.” Hermoine concurred: “one-on-one engagement with the professor ... it’s better for learning for me.”

To ensure more higher-level and experiential learning like in Hermoine’s situation, Xavier posited: “high-quality, high impact practices put students on a different path towards a more successful life ... professionally, personally, and civically ... We need more of these community-engaged learning experiences/high-impact practices at community colleges ... there aren’t enough of them.” Nina signaled parallel thinking on the post-transfer side at RVU: “that’s definitely something that we hear from students again, ‘I just don’t feel like I’m on a college campus. I wanted to get that type of experience.’” Such experiences are possible, according to Xavier’s observations, when leadership envisions and supports high-impact practices. He explains “we have deans [at TCC] that really get this work and support us—that makes all the difference ... our current president ... is also a champion of this.”

*HIPs programs for Hispanic students: institutions have strong resources and supports in place to ensure strong programs.*

Three subthemes follow that illustrate the strong resources and supports in place at the case study institutions. Gatekeepers spotlighted these best-practices in their interviews as well as through artifacts they provided: (a) dedicated offices, (b) high-quality resources, and (c) COVID-19 reboot.

**Dedicated offices.** Xavier, one of the gatekeepers from TCC, oversees academic service-learning, and aptly observed that “rarely is there an office like TCC has with professional staff to support and encourage academic service-learning. Even the study abroad office—you know a lot of schools don’t have that.” (Gatekeeper M Smith occupies the study abroad office at TCC.) Similar offices are in place at Hamlin and student engagement and transfer pipeline offices exist

at RVU. Institutions that prioritize student engagement and high-impact practices have provided centralized locations for their programs.

**High-quality resources.** An internal Hamlin College employee newsletter featured both announcements of and reports from study abroad experiences at the college. Most thought-provoking in this creative communication tool for study abroad was a challenge by a recent trip's faculty lead:

International programs are high-impact practices that create far more opportunities for a student's academic and personal development than traditional classroom-based programs ... as such, educators and institutions need to promote them and invest in them more heavily so that a greater number and diversity of students can participate in them.

Hamlin College has made such an investment through their high-quality resources and recruiting tools. To promote study abroad, they designed flyers, training manuals, internal communications/emails, an informative website, and faculty resources while their service-learning office produced detailed brochures, a robust website, and recruiting videos.

TCC won several awards for their service-learning videos that feature the voices of community partners and TCC students describing their transformative experiences. One community partner stated “[Service-learning is] infused in [TCC’s] DNA to give back to the community [giving] the students opportunities through the college—intertwining college and community.” Students concurred through life-changing, snippet takeaways in other short YouTube videos (e.g., “[It was] over the moon”). Other support resources for study abroad included advisor, financial, and veterans flyers, faculty engagement materials, and a virtual study abroad fair to parallel the service-learning videos, website, and resources for faculty course development.

**COVID-19 Reboot.** The COVID-19 pandemic brought both a quick pivot as well as a creative reboot to many service-learning and study abroad opportunities across the United States (Bordeau, 2020). Gifted faculty and staff gatekeepers were working throughout the pandemic to innovate and reconfigure delivery of service-learning and study abroad as well as the overall transfer experience. At Hamlin College, Anne felt deflated early-on “[It takes] about a year and a half for us to put together a faculty-led [study abroad] experience. So, to be honest, I really felt like I flushed down the drain a year and a half worth of work.” But she and her staff reached an “A-ha moment” after retooling their international experiential learning at Hamlin: “The amount of students we’ve been able to reach with our virtual experience has far exceeded the number of students that we sent on study abroad.” Across campus, in Natasha’s strategic education office, similar outside-the-box thinking was underway so more students could earn service-learning credits during the first COVID-19 semester “We bent the rules a little bit, I guess you can say, for the spring 2020 term.” At TCC, M Smith likewise realized “Having these virtual opportunities will allow us to offer a global experience to more students that otherwise wouldn’t go.”

While still finding their way through the COVID-19 reboot, TCC’s study abroad gatekeeper discovered that offering a virtual festival versus *a la carte* virtual product-driven international experiences has proven more successful. M Smith and her staff increased study abroad scholarships and found that virtual information sessions and orientations made for a better recruiting tool. Xavier, another TCC gatekeeper, referenced implementing the *Democratic Cycle* civic engagement tool as a prominent part of their service-learning reboot. An interactive piece with dozens of civic actions, Xavier described the *Cycle* as “It’s very equitable; it’s accessible because you can do most of the activities from home anytime you want.” Hamlin

designed collaborative online international learning, virtual exchanges, and online International Week events/activities (their “Internationalizing at Home” initiative) for study abroad opportunities as well as alternate assignments, an online listing of community partners, and a 50/50 hybrid model of online and in-person delivery of service-learning activities.

The study findings suggested that familial and cultural capital are critical to Hispanic student success at the community college. Supportive families and pride in cultural background surfaced as primary indicators of student persistence and one’s ability to overcome personal challenges and institutional barriers. Participation in high-impact practices led to transformational experiences, increased student engagement and sense of belonging, and contributed to successful university transfer. Findings also suggested that institutions have systems, structures, and supports in place that elevate participation in strong HIPs programs.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this case study align with Yosso’s (2005) theory of *Community Cultural Wealth* (CCW) and its six forms of capital: aspirational, linguistic familial, social, navigational, and resistance. Discussion of specific alignment with CCW dimensions will follow along with a discussion of findings that parallel Kuh’s (2001) student engagement theory and concept of high-impact practices and their substantial effect on the educational success of students of color (Kuh, 2008a).

#### **Community Cultural Wealth**

Yosso’s (2005) six forms of capital began with her describing the dreams that Hispanic parents have for their students as *aspirational capital* and parental support, and even vicarious success, was evident in the *testimonios*. Obtaining an associate degree and then a bachelor’s degree was a goal that each Hamlin and TCC student related—along with some aspiring to

graduate studies. Even one day participating in study abroad was an aspiration of several interviewees as they heard their peers reflect on that life-changing high-impact practice. The presence of *linguistic capital*, another form within CCW, was often evidenced by the translation efforts students provided at home, in the classroom, and in their service-learning projects as well as their inherent ability to live in two worlds linguistically (an example of *pluralversality* according to Rendón et al., 2014).

Perhaps the strongest evidence of CCW in the case study was *familial capital*, or *familismo*. The idea of “family first” was pervasive throughout each focus group and interview with both pre- and post-transfer students. Exploration of students’ lived experiences revolved around supportive parents, siblings, spouses, and children who prodded them toward course success, transfer, and graduation—mirroring findings in the literature (Phillips & Horowitz, 2017; Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016; Schak et al., 2019). Perhaps surprising, whether reflecting on family influence in their service-learning, study abroad, transfer, or university-choice experiences, was how powerfully yet easily students steered the conversation to *familismo*. They affirmed its dominant role in Latin culture while also giving evidence of the balancing act of family and school (or family *and work* and school) that they are expected to perform.

Other forms of capital in CCW include *social capital* which Zilvinskis and Dumford (2018) found to be one of the most common casualties of *transfer shock*. However, students in this study indicated that their transfer experience was often more successful due to university students aiding them in information and navigation. Regarding *navigational capital*, though Hispanic males are usually portrayed in the literature as lacking this form of capital (Pérez, 2017; Ponjuán & Hernández, 2016), the men interviewed from Hamlin and TCC often spoke of finding the wherewithal to locate services, buildings, and programs on their own. An additional

discovery for both men and women was that the stronger the student's engagement in the college (through campus employment, club involvement, etc.), the stronger their navigational capacity. And yet, the final form of capital, *resistance capital*, was critical in staying engaged. Despite both case colleges being predominantly Hispanic in their student demographic, several students referenced concerns of bias or discrimination from Hispanic students who were from different Latin American countries-of-origin. Students credited their ability to persevere and overcome to their cultural background; it was the source of their spirit to fight as well their resilience.

### **Yosso (2005) Extended**

In 2014, Rendón et al. extended Yosso's (2005) *community cultural wealth* theory to also consider additional *ventajas* (assets): perseverance, ethnic consciousness (cultural pride), spirituality/faith, and *pluralversality* ("both/and" thinking; being able to move in and out of multiple worlds simultaneously). Perseverance has been noted as an asset of Hamlin and TCC students as they have endured and overcome life experiences that threatened to sidetrack their education pursuits (e.g., loss of loved ones, births of children, COVID-19 pandemic). Cultural pride overflowed in student *testimonios*. Whether by relating rich descriptions of their countries of origin, recalling a myriad of team (country) jerseys worn during the World Cup, reflecting the comfortability in speaking Spanish and celebrating Latin events on their campuses, or recognizing the one-big-family nature of Latin culture, evidence of ethnic consciousness was salient in this case study.

Students in this study confirmed each of the additional *ventajas* posited by the authors except spirituality/faith. Though one student identified as a person of faith and another mentioned church as a part of her routine, this aspect of students' lived experiences was not explored. Future research should investigate the impact of this asset/strength.

## High-impact Practices

Kuh (2008a; 2017) found that when students of color participated in high-impact practices such as first-year experience, undergraduate research, or service-learning, they enjoyed higher success rates (GPA, persistence, completion) than those who did not participate. Students in this case study self-identified as having a solid or high GPA and were on track to transfer to a university with an associate degree earned or had transferred and were within one year or less of completing a baccalaureate degree. Many described their HIPs involvement as transformational and life-changing and portrayed interactions with faculty members in these course-embedded or co-curricular activities in glowing terms and with unremitting gratitude.

Aligning with the literature (Eyler et al., 1997; Harper, 2009; Yob, 2014; Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018), service-learning experiences (out of the 11 recognized HIPs) provided the strongest and most frequent evidence of impact for this study's participants. Study abroad remained a transformational high-impact practice though it was elusive for many Hamlin and TCC students—though not for the commonly reported objection regarding cost and inaccessibility (Raby, 2020; Salisbury et al., 2011; Whatley 2017; Whatley & Clayton, 2020). Study abroad participation at the two case colleges was impacted most by the COVID-19 pandemic (experiences were cancelled for over 18 months). In a resolution of the study abroad elusiveness for two-year students typically found in the literature, Hamlin College and Tuttle Community College removed multiple barriers to study abroad participation, particularly to historically underserved student populations, with increased scholarships, holistic recruiting practices, and dedicated support staff.

This case study found that Hispanic students' *community cultural wealth* can lead to their academic engagement and success. When combined with participation in high-impact

educational activities, students experience high GPA and high levels of persistence and completion. Additionally, participation in high-impact practices such as service-learning and study abroad, where faculty-student interaction is high and institutional support is strong, was transformative and life-changing.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

This study confirmed Yosso's (2005) theory of *community cultural wealth* and the assets that students of color, particularly Hispanic students, bring to the educational arena. It also reinforced Kuh's (2001) student engagement theory and supported findings that students of color experienced improved success markers (e.g., increased GPA, semester-to-semester persistence, completion rates) by participating in high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008a; Kuh, 2017; Kuh et al., 2008). In addition, because HIPs participation has a transformative effect on participants (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Kuh, 2008b; Raby, 2020; Raby et al., 2014; Rutti et al., 2016), it also contributed to transfer success for students in this study. More so, the data also showed that when challenges arose (even exponential challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic), adapting and redeveloping engagement experiences were critical for students to enjoy continued success—even if the alternate version was less life-changing.

Data in this study showed that, though HIPs should not work as well in the community college context—originally designed more for full-time enrolled students with limited barriers (e.g., financial, work/school balance, family/school balance) in a four-year context—when combined with the influence of students' community cultural wealth, they fit together. HIPs, in theory, should not coalesce with student success in the two-year institutions, yet when the forms of capital that Yosso (2005) proposed are situated in that environment alongside participation in these high-quality, highly-engaging practices, life-changing results occur. Because of their

transformative nature, HIPs should be scaled institution-wide at community colleges but not without simultaneously leveraging Hispanic students' family and cultural capital to further enrich those experiences.

This study also revealed that students appear to have accumulated a number of engaging experiences (several students indicated participating in as many as 3 - 5 HIPs) and this *accumulated engagement wealth* propelled them to experience reduced transfer shock and increased student success markers post-transfer (e.g., strong GPA, increased persistence and completion rates). Increased navigational and resistance capital was noted in alumni as they encountered barriers in the transfer process and yet relied on lessons learned from being heavily engaged at their college pre-transfer (students referenced both co-curricular HIPs and extra-curricular involvement such as student government, clubs, and on-campus employment). They also dug deep into wells of cultural pride and ethnic consciousness (Rendón et al., 2014) to move into the four-year environment with a strong cultural identity in place. Institutions that are able to provide Hispanic students with a supportive environment characterized by affinity groups and a welcoming/culturally-aware atmosphere would aid in students' development of assets that will strengthen them for less-culturally adept transfer settings. Also, institutions should find ways to increase students' capital and create a college culture that values community cultural wealth.

Lastly, data gathered in gatekeeper interviews, documents, and artifacts provided evidence of the adaptation of HIPs experiences for students. The COVID-19 pandemic as well as other factors forced traditional delivery methods for service-learning and study abroad to be adapted for the community college context. Virtual study abroad, virtual exchanges, and remote service-learning opportunities are examples of the efforts to overcome barriers and create new chances for students to access HIPs and accumulate engagement wealth. Though these

adaptations were not as life-altering as their traditional versions, they nonetheless offered an alternate in order to overcome the existing barriers. Institutions should, regardless of the barrier—be it traditional or novel—always be in a mode of adapting proven engagement practices and re-creating resources and supports with the community college student in mind. When combined with solutions that might be inherent in their community cultural wealth (e.g., family capital typically ensures strong family support of student involvement, even to the point of engaging in the activity with the student in some cases), these experiential educational activities can be developed to overcome a number of obstacles many first generation students or students of color encounter. The resulting *accumulated engagement wealth* of Hispanic students will position them for greater transfer success.

### **Future Research Directions**

Although this exploration of service-learning and study abroad participation discovered a relationship between those two specific high-impact practices and transfer success, it would be beneficial to explore the relationship of other HIPs with transfer success. There is also a need for investigation of the transfer experience of alumni who transferred from Hamlin and TCC to other state universities that do not offer a guaranteed admission transfer pipeline. Though this sample of students participated in RVU's transfer pipeline program, it is possible for transfer students to enter RVU outside the pipeline or transfer to another 4-year institution without such a transfer structure and process.

Additional research directions include the efficacy of virtual delivery of HIPs (or alternative deliveries) in a post-pandemic environment: Do results align with pre-pandemic findings? Do all students experience equitable access and outcomes with new delivery methods? (Initial qualitative data indicate that more students are reached through virtual options and cost

barriers have been mitigated.) It would also be helpful to examine the success of Hispanic students with limited capital—students that experience strong success markers but have, for example, unsupportive/unaware families (low familial capital). Future research should also explore other forms of capital not addressed in this study (e.g., the spiritual/faith *ventaja* [asset]; Rendón et al., 2014) and their impact upon transfer success when combined with high-impact practice participation. Since both Hamlin and TCC are urban institutions, additional studies could consider how HIPs participation and transfer experiences look different at rural colleges. Also, future research could more deeply examine the experience of transfer students enrolled part-time at the 4-year university. Finally, investigation of the transition success of Hispanic students from the four-year university side could further illuminate the role of family, culture, and engagement through high-impact practices.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored the effects of pre-transfer high-impact practice participation on the transfer success of Hispanic community college students. It contributed to the limited literature around HIPs effectiveness and accessibility at community colleges—particularly its impact on Hispanic students. The cultural wealth Hispanic students brought to their educational arenas, particularly having supportive families who were engaged in their college acculturation, allowed them to overcome barriers and challenges and experience deeper engagement with their institutions through participating in HIPs. These accumulated engaging experiences related to strong GPAs, persistence, and completion at the university post-transfer. By coupling a student strengths/assets model like Community Cultural Wealth with the demonstrated efficacy and transformative power of high-impact practices—particularly service-learning and study abroad—

two-year institutions that implement and scale the HIPs framework can ensure greater likelihood of a successful transfer experience to four-year institutions for their Hispanic students.

## CHAPTER 6: IMPACT BRIEFS

This chapter contains impact briefs for the two community colleges studied: Tuttle Community College and Hamlin College (pseudonyms). Briefs feature formats that are shorter, more concise and are written for a practitioner audience. Briefs are typically two to eight pages in length, utilize non-technical language, and make practice-based research accessible to decision-makers. Quotations from student participants are included as are recommendations for policy and practice around the efficacy and experiences of Hispanic student high-impact practice participation. Briefs presented to the actual colleges will have fictional community college identities removed and will include participant tables for the respective institutions. A comprehensive reference section at the end of the full dissertation includes all sources cited in the briefs.

The briefs that follow describe two case colleges that are similar except for data that are unique to the institutions—and that is by design. The context of the briefs is similar because I intentionally chose institutions that were alike in that they both model best practices as related to high-impact practices. Both Tuttle Community College (TCC) and Hamlin College have statewide reputations for student engagement through high-impact practices and their success in closing achievement gaps and have each garnered national recognition in their sector. To be eligible for this study, students were required to be currently enrolled, to identify as Hispanic/Latino, to indicate transfer intent, and to have participated in either study abroad or service-learning in the last two years. Thus, a larger sample made possible by the parallel institutional contexts proved critical in that this study was situated amid the COVID-19 global pandemic.

## Impact Brief for Tuttle Community College

### Introduction

This qualitative study explored how study abroad and service-learning participation effected the experiences of Hispanic<sup>1</sup> transfer students. Recommendations and implications are suggested for two-year institutions that serve Hispanic students. It should be noted that transfer is the mutual responsibility of both two- and four-year institutions, but the goal of this study is to focus on community college administrators and the researcher's domain as a practitioner. Results showed community college students who participate in these educationally purposeful and experiential activities are more likely to experience transfer success in the form of higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates. Evidence from the study suggests that Hispanic students bring family support and cultural pride to the community college which, when combined with study abroad and service-learning participation, leads to a more positive transfer experience. This research is valuable in that not only are Hispanic students more likely to start their college education at a community college than at a university, but Hispanic students who have rich educational experiences outside the classroom are more likely to be successful in their transfer experience as compared to others that transfer and are, thereby, more likely to earn a bachelor's degree. And we know that students who attain a baccalaureate degree have greater upward economic mobility (The Aspen Institute, 2016; Tackling Transfer Advisory Board, 2021) which in turn benefits the broader community (Boggs & McPhail, 2016; Sweat et al., 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> The term Hispanic used throughout this study mirrors the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definition "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race" (NCES, 2021c, Race/ethnicity section).

### **Key Student Takeaways**

- Students engaged in study abroad and service-learning were able to experience transfer success (e.g., higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates) due to supportive families and cultural pride.
- Participating in high-impact practices (HIPs)—such as service-learning and study abroad—gave students life-changing experiences that propelled them toward transfer.
- Colleges had structures and systems in place—such as advising and dedicated programming offices—that removed barriers to student participation in HIPs.
- Students were more likely to participate in HIPs when institutional resources and programs were adapted to provide greater access and designed to overcome challenges.
- Former students recalled strong engagement in multiple HIPs and co-curricular opportunities which contributed to a more successful transfer experience.

### **The Project**

High-impact practices (HIPs)—highly-engaging, hands-on, educationally purposeful activities that increase student engagement and faculty-student interaction, such as service-learning and study abroad—have been found to lead to higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates (Bradley et al., 2015; Kuh, 2016; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Kuh et al., 2017). Studies have discovered a positive effect of HIPs upon Hispanic students that participate, but this demographic is less likely to engage in these activities compared to their white peers (Harper, 2009; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Sweat et al., 2013) and less likely to successfully transition to the university (Rendón et al., 2014). Success is certainly within their reach as many researchers believe students of color, particularly Hispanic students, possess the assets needed to succeed (Finley & McNair, 2016; Rendón et al., 2014; Sáenz et al., 2018;

Yosso, 2005). Because students from this fastest-growing minority population will enroll in large numbers in U.S. community colleges in the coming decades (Clark et al., 2013; D. Jenkins, personal communication, February 23, 2021), and if “higher education can be a game changer for Latino students’ mobility” (Martinez & Santiago, 2020; p. 12; see also Shugart, 2019), community college leaders must take action to increase Hispanic student transfer success. Transfer student success will ultimately solidify students’ economic upward mobility and their families and communities will enjoy a more promising future (Tackling Transfer Advisory Board, 2021).

During spring 2021, this study was undertaken by interviewing students and gatekeepers<sup>2</sup> and by reviewing documents and artifacts from Tuttle Community College (TCC). Current and former students volunteered to be interviewed about their HIPs participation and were determined to be eligible for the study based on their participation in either study abroad or service-learning while at TCC (two of at least eight HIPs offered by the college). Twenty TCC participants provided data in one-hour, semi-structured focus groups and interviews (ten students, seven former students, and three gatekeepers) which was coded and analyzed for patterns and themes. Table 6.1 presents students’ demographic information, enrollment status, degree attained, and high-impact practice participation.

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<sup>2</sup> Gatekeepers were the primary faculty/staff liaisons on each college and university campus. These study abroad, service-learning, or transfer experts assisted in recruiting students as well as provided an insider lens through which to view, access, and understand programming at the institution.

**Table 6.1.**

Tuttle Community College Student Demographic Information.

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Alli	Hispanic	Female	Former student	AA – General	Writing, service-learning
Betty S	Hispanic	Female	Former student	AA – Psychology	FYE, service-learning
Camilla	Hispanic	Female	Former student	AA – Elementary Education	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, undergraduate research, team-based, ePortfolio
Emile Blanchet	Hispanic	Female	Former student	AA – General	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, internship, study abroad, undergraduate research, team-based
Esmeralda	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, Writing, service-learning, team-based
Hailey	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	AA – General	Service-learning

**Table 6.1** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Hannah	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Mass Communication, Journalism	Service-learning
Hermoine	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Nursing	FYE, learning community, service-learning, team-based
Jasmine	Hispanic/African American	Female	Full-time	AA – Pre-medicine	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, team-based
Jason	Hispanic	Male	Former student	AA - Philosophy	FYE, service-learning , team-based
John Smith	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AS – General	Service-learning, undergraduate research, team-based
Madison	Hispanic	Non-binary	Full-time	AA – Graphic Arts	FYE, service-learning, team-based
Marcus Wade Johnson	Hispanic	Male	Full-time	Other – Pre-Physical Therapy	FYE, service-learning

**Table 6.1** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Reina Mendez	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, service-learning
Rose	Hispanic	Female	Former student	AA – General	FYE, service-learning, team-based
Sunny	Hispanic	Female	Former student	AA – General	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, team-based
Valentina Lopez	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	Other	FYE, study abroad, ePortfolio

*Note.* AA = Associate in Arts degree; AS = Associate in Science degree; ePortfolio = portable, updatable digital tool that documents accomplishments and experiences; FYE = *first year experience*, freshman seminar, success course; Internship = experience in the work setting (often with course credit) with supervisor-provided coaching; Learning Community = cohort of students who take two or more linked courses around a common topic; Service-learning = community-based projects that feature a reflective/learning component; Study Abroad = structured learning experiences outside the U.S.; Team-based = projects in which students work collaboratively to solve problems; Undergraduate Research = research experiences for students, typically in the sciences; Writing = writing-intensive courses across the curriculum (Kuh, 2017).

Current and former students reported that their overall experience at Tuttle Community College was, as several described it, “amazing,” “[there were] lots of opportunities,” and “a really good experience for me.” Camilla, an alumna, advised students considering attendance at TCC “it’s better to go to a community college first because it prepares you for your university life,” while Emile Blanchet, another TCC graduate, summed it up “I owe it all to my college experience at Tuttle!” Also, students overwhelmingly spoke of gratitude for the college’s opportunities such as service-learning and study abroad—their thankfulness was effusive throughout the focus groups and interviews.

Focus groups revealed several key points, among them the finding that a supportive family and strong cultural pride made a difference in a student’s transfer success at TCC (e.g., higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates). Marcus Wade reflected on the power of *familismo* (“family first”) “They've been along on the train the whole ride ... they're supportive no matter what and they know that it's going to be a challenge for me and they're going to be here to help me no matter what.” Madison remembered their family joining them in the HIPs experience “they engaged in [the service-learning] themselves so they can help me!” Valentina Lopez understood the influence of culture upon her achievement : “[My culture] affected me in a good way because it’s made me want to do more and gave me the extra push that I needed” as did Marcus Wade: “Because I’m [Hispanic and] a bilingual student, I use that as motivation to face upcoming challenges ... I’m ready to face whatever [transfer’s] going to give me.” Additionally, Betty S, another alumna, recognized how the tight-knit culture of the campus reflected her cultural heritage “we’ve just been Hispanic together”—it made her comfortable on campus and allowed her to feel like she belonged. Both current and former

students acknowledged the priority and support of their families as well as their rich cultural background as key to overcoming challenges and propelling them to academic success.

Students also spoke very easily of the transformative effect of high-impact practice participation throughout the interviews. Jasmine, a service-learning participant, conveyed “I see my community differently ... I feel like I’m playing a part in the community ... I’m affecting other people’s lives, which is a good feeling.” Hannah reflected “it just helped me dig deep within myself,” while Hailey remembered that her service-learning experience “gave me that sense of what I was longing for.” Though Hailey would have preferred more options related to her major, she developed meaningful connections with her adopted *abuelitos* (grandparents) at the project site she selected. Reina Mendez’s service-learning experience was impactful as well, as it opened her eyes to “what ... I wanted to do” and she changed her major to business. The eye-opening experiences of other TCC students echoed these accounts: HIPs enabled them to see other cultures differently and to meaningfully connect their course content and future majors to real-world application.

Another finding was the presence of structures and systems at TCC that encouraged HIPs participation: dedicated offices for study abroad and service-learning, supportive advisors and professors, and leadership backing for scaled HIPs offerings. Several students spoke of the advisors and professors that kept them afloat: “one-on-one engagement with the professor ... it’s better for learning for me” (Hermoine), and “[my professor] would text me and tell me ‘Hey, [are you] doing your [service-learning] hours today? How are you feeling?’” (Hailey). A TCC gatekeeper for this study reiterated “advisors are extremely connected ... we establish that tight-knit relationship with them early on ... let’s be honest, we nag you and try to keep you on track” while another gatekeeper confirmed “we have deans [at TCC] that really get this [high-impact

practices] work and support us—that makes all the difference ... our current president ... is also a champion of this.” While no program is perfect, as one student lamented “a maze of going through a bunch of people,” the majority of students concurred with Betty S’s summary of the college’s efforts “[TCC] really likes to hold your hand all the way to the very last minute. They make things as easy as they can for students and everything as accessible as possible.” Having structures in place allowed more students to receive support while they participated in HIPs and progressed with their academic careers. Additionally, TCC administrators—including senior leadership—played a pivotal role in moving these practices forward; that backing proved critical in scaling HIPs and achieving systemic change.

An additional outcome of this study shed light on the strong resources and experiences that Tuttle Community College provided for its students. Robust websites and traditional eye-catching brochures and flyers were readily available to communicate high-quality HIPs programs to students. For example, a community partner reflected on a TCC service-learning video “[Service-learning is] infused in [TCC’s] DNA to give back to the community [giving] the students opportunities through the college—intertwining college and community.” Yet what stood out in this investigation of artifacts and processes was the innovation and adaptation that TCC showed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to another of the study’s gatekeepers, cancelled trips in the summer of 2020 led to creating a partnership with a Southeast Asian university to allow TCC students to virtually engage with the university’s classes. Other examples of redesign for this new context were the adaptation of the *Democratic Cycle* civic engagement tool for use in remote settings as well as the addition of virtual components to a limited number of in-person events to create a hybrid two-week study abroad festival. By coupling traditional recruitment tools and informative resources with innovative alternatives and

methods of delivery, TCC expanded the accessibility of academic service-learning and international education to a greater number of its students.

An unexpected discovery was the accumulation of experiences with which TCC students transferred to Riverside View University (RVU)--many students referred to participating in 3-5 HIPs in addition to involvement in student government, on-campus employment, or club leadership. This *accumulated engagement wealth* allowed them to overcome barriers and transfer with less *transfer shock* and higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates. Rose, an alumna who was employed at TCC related her advice for other students “if [you’re] active in school, there’s so many benefits.” She connected her work study job to navigating RVU with greater ease/less stress. Due to her membership in Phi Theta Kappa (the national community college honor society), running for student government, and her domestic cross-cultural experience (a study abroad proxy, as she explained), Emile transferred with “way more confidence in myself” and was able to secure a competitive national research internship in her first summer post-transfer—“they were impressed with ... my transition from community college ... and how I assimilated really quickly.” By engaging in HIPs and other co-curricular experiences, students built an engagement wealth that eased their transfer experience at the university.

### **For Decision Makers: Impact on Policy and Practice**

Decision makers interested in continuing to promote HIPs and increasing student capital and transfer success should consider the following:

- Provide multiple and frequent layers of communication about what HIPs opportunities are available. TCC created robust websites, beautiful brochures, and detail-filled flyers for both study abroad and service-learning. Students still seek even more notifications

regarding HIPs; over-communicating can increase accessibility for all students. Engaging student focus groups could also provide feedback on the effectiveness of current communication modes and timelines and what new and impactful forms of media might be needed to reach students post-COVID-19. Examples might include promoting a family-inclusive service-learning opportunity featuring TCC students and their families at a project site in a TikTok video or social media blasts that could alert students of approaching study abroad application deadlines.

- Continue to adapt in-person experiences for the community college and post-pandemic context. By offering an increasing number of major-related service-learning opportunities in a variety of participation modes, students are more likely to see the connection between course content and real-world application, particularly in careers the students are pursuing. Several students indicated a change of major after experiencing a hands-on project in their original major. A searchable database by major would make the service site selection a more efficient task as well. For study abroad, leverage technology to bring the world to the college: create virtual exchanges with international postsecondary partners or recruit global guest speakers from partner institutions or organizations. Post-pandemic scenarios will likely require that colleges develop travel plans and service-learning agreements that factor in quarantine, vaccination, and entry requirements and agency/client protocols.
- Design cultural affinity groups—social and support gatherings for those who share Latin cultural identity—for those students not transferring to RVU/outside the transfer pipeline. These groups would build social and cultural capital for students. Having a strong

cultural identity in place could reduce transfer shock for Hispanic students, especially those transferring to a non-Hispanic-serving institution (HSI).

- Build student capital—their accumulation of assets and strengths—to overcome real or perceived barriers by including families where possible (e.g., offer a parent-student study abroad trip or family-friendly service-learning project). Gatekeepers in this study said they observed that students retrieve the program information themselves, but then take it home to process with their family—they still decide collectively. Several TCC students referenced their family engaging in their service-learning activity.
- Equip faculty and advisors with cheat sheets with ample information about service-learning or study abroad (depending on their sphere)—this will minimize confusion in navigating HIPs. Fine-tuning clarity about college processes (e.g., FAFSA, transcripts, trip applications), particularly intra-office, reduces the number of hand-offs and a student’s perception of mixed (or limited) messaging. These additional layers of support are especially valuable for part-time students participating in HIPs.
- Make the life-changing nature of HIPs accessible to more students—beyond the highly motivated or those required to complete a component for an Academic Service Learning class. Consider using former students (perhaps those involved in service-learning at RVU) to return to be a bridge on the community college side and speak to the gains they experienced from participating in HIPs and the advantages they experienced in the transfer process. (This would parallel the formerly-TCC student ambassadors—now RVU students themselves—eagerly awaiting the chance to help welcome and acclimate transfer students at RVU.)

## Conclusion

The strength of TCC's study abroad and service-learning programs was most apparent in the *testimonios* [stories] by current and former student participants. Hispanic students who had strong family and cultural capital and participated in high-impact practices enjoyed some of the most transformative experiences. By providing a substantial structure and resources, albeit continuing to adapt them for a post-COVID-19 reality, the college increased HIPs accessibility so more students could participate—which could lead them to more successful transfer experiences. Former students who transferred to RVU with an accumulation of engagement experiences while at TCC referenced reduced transfer shock and increased student transfer success (higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates). These findings are important in that the Hispanic students that participate in HIPs often report greater transfer success which in turn will increase the likelihood of bachelor's degree attainment and providing a better future for their families and communities (Tackling Transfer Advisory Board, 2021).

The impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic was certainly felt throughout the institutions (and their communities) highlighted in this study. The pandemic's effect on the conducting of this research was by no means comparable to the magnitude effect globally, yet was nonetheless experienced. The institutions I investigated responded to the pandemic with such resiliency from their students and many innovations from their faculty/staff so that engagement and learning would continue. Moving forward, institutions will be required to adapt high-impact practice delivery to this changing context. Additionally, to optimize student transition success, they will have to find ways to take full advantage of student assets in their re-created HIPs experiences. Family capital and cultural wealth can be assets community colleges

leverage alongside these transformative experiences as they seek to ensure student engagement, transfer success, and degree attainment post-COVID-19.

### **About This Brief**

Turner, S. T. (2021). *A collective case study of the experience of high-impact practice participation upon Hispanic student transfer success*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation.] North Carolina State University.

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### **Further Reading**

Finley, A. & McNair, T. (2013). *Assessing underserved students' engagement in high-impact practices*. American Association of Colleges and Universities.

Rendón, L. I., Nora, A. & Kanagala, V. (2014). *Ventajas/Assets y conocimientos/knowledge: Leveraging Latin@ strengths to foster student success*. Center for Research and Policy in Education, The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Valentine, J., & Price, D. (2021). *Scaling high-impact practices to improve community college student outcomes: Evidence from the Tennessee Board of Regents*. Lumina Issue Paper. *Lumina Foundation*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED611261.pdf>

## Impact Brief for Hamlin College

### Introduction

This qualitative study explored how study abroad and service-learning participation affected the experiences of Hispanic<sup>3</sup> transfer students. The study also discovered recommendations and implications for two-year institutions that serve Hispanic students. It should be noted that transfer is the mutual responsibility of both two- and four-year institutions, but the goal of this study is to focus on community college administrators and the researcher's domain as a practitioner. Results showed community college students who participate in these educationally purposeful and experiential activities are more likely to experience success when they transfer in the form of higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates. Evidence from the study suggests that Hispanic students bring family support and cultural pride (among other assets) to the community college which, when combined with study abroad and service-learning participation, leads to a more positive transfer experience. This research is valuable in that not only are Hispanic students more likely to start their college education at a community college than at a university, but Hispanic students who have rich educational experiences outside the classroom are more likely to be successful in their transfer experience as compared to others that transfer and are, thereby, more likely to earn a bachelor's degree.

Students who attain a baccalaureate degree have greater upward economic mobility (The Aspen

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<sup>3</sup> The term Hispanic used throughout this study mirrors the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definition "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race" (NCES, 2021c, Race/ethnicity section).

Institute, 2016; Tackling Transfer Advisory Board, 2021) which in turn benefits the broader community (Boggs & McPhail, 2016; Sweat et al., 2013).

### **Key Student Takeaways**

- Students realized they could make an impact in others' lives and have meaningful and transformative experiences through study abroad and service-learning projects.
- Students were more likely to participate in high-impact practices (HIPs) when resources and programs were adapted to provide greater access and re-created to overcome challenges.
- Students engaged in study abroad and service-learning were able to experience transfer success (e.g., higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates) due to supportive families and cultural pride.
- Building perseverance capital—their accumulation of assets and strengths to overcome and persevere—and establishing a strong cultural identity through engagement enabled former community college students to experience a smoother transition to the university.
- By providing adequate staffing and investing in the creation of supportive resources, the college removed additional barriers for students to participate in HIPs.

### **The Project**

High-impact practices (HIPs)—highly-engaging, hands-on, educationally purposeful activities that increase student engagement and faculty-student interaction, such as service-learning and study abroad—have been found to lead to higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates (Bradley et al., 2015; Kuh, 2016; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Kuh et al., 2017). Studies have discovered a positive effect of HIPs upon Hispanic students that participate, but this demographic is less likely to engage in these activities compared to their

white peers (Harper, 2009; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Sweat et al., 2013) ) and less likely to successfully transition to the university (Rendón et al., 2014). Success is certainly within their reach as many researchers believe students of color, particularly Hispanic students, possess the assets needed to succeed (Finley & McNair, 2016; Rendón et al., 2014; Sáenz et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). Because students from this fastest-growing minority population will enroll in large numbers in U.S. community colleges in the coming decades (Clark et al., 2013; D. Jenkins, personal communication, February 23, 2021), and if “higher education can be a game changer for Latino students’ mobility” (Martinez & Santiago, 2020, p. 12; see also Shugart, 2019), community college leaders must take action to increase Hispanic student transfer success. Transfer student success will ultimately solidify students’ economic upward mobility and their families and communities will enjoy a more promising future (Tackling Transfer Advisory Board, 2021).

During spring 2021, this study was undertaken by interviewing students and gatekeepers<sup>4</sup> and by reviewing documents and artifacts from Hamlin College. Current and former students volunteered to be interviewed about their HIPs participation and were determined to be eligible for the study based on their participation in either study abroad or service-learning while at Hamlin (two of at least nine HIPs offered by the college). There were 17 Hamlin participants in focus groups and interviews (fourteen students, one former student, and two gatekeepers) which provided data that was coded and analyzed for patterns and themes. Table 6.2 presents students’

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<sup>4</sup> Gatekeepers were the primary faculty/staff liaisons on each college and university campus. These study abroad, service-learning, or transfer experts assisted in recruiting students as well as provided an insider lens through which to view, access, and understand programming at the institution.

demographic information, enrollment status, degree attainment, and high-impact practice participation.

**Table 6.2.**

Hamlin College Student Demographic Information.

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Abi	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Service-learning
AeonD	Hispanic	Male	Part-time	AS – Software Development	FYE, service-learning, capstone, team-based
Akira	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Internship, study abroad
Butterfly	Hispanic/White non-Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Service-learning, internship
Crissy	Hispanic/White non-Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AS – Legal Studies	FYE, learning community, service-learning, study abroad
Don Diego de la Vega	Hispanic	Male	Full-time	AA – Engineering	FYE, service-learning, undergraduate research
japa	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Nursing	Service-learning

**Table 6.2** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Kelly Moore	Hispanic	Female	Part-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, service-learning, undergraduate research
Leo	Hispanic	Male	Full-time	Other	Internship, study abroad
Natty O	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	Service-learning, study abroad
Octane	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Computer Science	FYE, service-learning, internship, team-based
sky	Hispanic	Non-binary	Part-time	AS – General	Service-learning, undergraduate research
Star	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – General	FYE, writing, service-learning, internship, capstone, team-based
Taher	Hispanic	Female	Full-time	AA – Psychology	FYE, service-learning, internship, capstone, undergraduate research

**Table 6.2** (continued).

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Enrollment status	Degree	HIPs experience
Valentina Romero	Hispanic	Female	Former student	AA – General	FYE, writing, learning community, service-learning, study abroad, team-based

*Note.* AA = Associate in Arts degree; AS = Associate in Science degree; Capstone = culminating projects that synthesize and apply learning ; FYE = *first year experience*, freshman seminar, success course; Internship = experience in the work setting (often with course credit) with supervisor-provided coaching; Learning Community = cohort of students who take two or more linked courses around a common topic; Service-learning = community-based projects that feature a reflective/learning component; Study Abroad = structured learning experiences outside the United States; Team-based = projects in which students work collaboratively to solve problems; Undergraduate Research = research experiences for students, typically in the sciences; Writing = writing-intensive courses across the curriculum (Kuh, 2017).

Current and former students easily conveyed their affection for Hamlin College: “an amazing institution” (Crissy), “I went to Hamlin and fell in love with it!” (Butterfly), and “I feel like all of my experiences at my community college really made a huge difference in feeling like I belonged” (Natty O). Also, students overwhelmingly shared their gratitude for the college’s

opportunities such as service-learning and study abroad—their thankfulness was effusive throughout the focus groups and interviews.

Focus groups revealed several key points, among them the realization by students that by participating in service-learning or study abroad, they could impact the lives of others and simultaneously experience personal transformation. Reflecting on her service-learning project, Octane recalled assisting a single mother, who only spoke Spanish, navigate insurance for her family of small children. As a bilingual student, Octane joyfully reflected “I’m so proud of myself to have known another language, because without that, this lady would have been lost.” Butterfly was equally effusive in her joy:

What I was learning there was for my [major] and I was able to see this is what I really want to do in my future ... and they saw that in me. I got so lucky, and I have so much to thank service-learning for, for giving me this opportunity [which led to a job]!

Natty O added “[study abroad] impacted me, and I carry [it] in my heart every day,” while Japa concluded “[service-learning’s] one of the best experiences I’ve ever had in my life ... It’s a beautiful experience. I feel like I’ll recommend it to everyone.” They echoed what most Hamlin students expressed, that their participation in study abroad or service-learning was a highly beneficial, life-changing experience.

Another interesting discovery was the increase in HIPs participation when the college adapted or re-created programs for the two-year context. The COVID-19 pandemic forced Hamlin faculty and staff to innovate and adapt current resources and programs to retain and expand their efficacy in a changing context. Anne (study abroad gatekeeper) conceded “[It takes] about a year and a half for us to put together a faculty-led [study abroad] experience. So, to be honest, I really felt like I flushed down the drain a year and a half worth of work.” But it was

during this time that she and her gifted staff reached an “A-ha moment,” retooled their global experience, and realized “the amount of students we’ve been able to reach with our virtual experience has far exceeded the number of students that we sent on study abroad.” They also redesigned Hamlin Global Scholars to accommodate distance learning and created several international partnerships that feature virtual exchanges and global guest speakers.

Similarly, Natasha (service-learning gatekeeper) and her staff created alternate credit-earning avenues for students to complete their project early in the COVID-19 lockdown. They also designed a hybrid service-learning experience that combined online and in-person service-learning activity delivery that could be used by more students post-pandemic—even if it was less transformative. The adapted experiences proved difficult for some students to navigate the online database or arrange their own service-learning partners, or, like Crissy, were just “disappointed” in the not-quite-hands-on elements of the redesign. However, Taher exclaimed “the virtual service-learning ... has been really great!” and most students felt “incredibly lucky” (as sky did) to have the opportunity to serve their communities. Though the experiences might have been less life-changing than ideal, students recognized the inherent value of service-learning and study abroad experiences.

In addition, the interviews uncovered highly supportive families and strong cultural pride among student participants. AeonD spoke of his parents’ support of his pursuit of global learning: “my family was very open to the idea of me going to different cultures...and to participate in the study abroad.” Anne spoke of the calls coming into the study abroad office: “[They would say] ‘I want my child to [go], I never got the opportunity,’ or ‘I [went] and it was wonderful! I would love for my ... child to go abroad.’ I’ve seen supportive family structures for studying abroad.” Yet almost as strong of a point in student focus groups was their pride in Latin

culture. For example, Don Diego de la Vega recollected “I had a hard time trying to adapt to the new language and the culture ... [but] if you see someone from your own country, it gets you close to home and to them,” even as Abi elaborated “[During] the World Cup trials ... we would all wear our jerseys. When we see someone with the same jersey ... we would be like ‘Oh my God!’ It brings us closer knowing we’re from the same country.” Hispanic pride, like family support, enabled students to persist through the college experience with these assets in-hand and from a position of strength.

An additional finding was that strong cultural identity, heavy engagement, and the ability to persevere were exhibited by transfer students as they transitioned to the university. Valentina Romero, a former student, reflected:

At [Hamlin], I felt super comfortable because it was a diversity that I knew from back home ... it just allowed me to be and eventually to thrive ... I’m definitely much more secure in my cultural identity and proud of being a first generation student.

The confidence in being Hispanic and the hard work mentality that is present in the culture also enabled students to persevere while at the community college. Even though her parents struggled to believe she would be successful at Hamlin, Star recalled that made her want “to work harder ... if I didn't have that to inspire me to keep moving forward, I don't think I would have been able to keep going.” High levels of engagement also boosted confidence as Hamlin students often participated in multiple HIPs, student government, or on-campus employment. Nina, a gatekeeper at Riverside View University, noted that “[students who] actively engaged in some type of ... service-learning or involvement in clubs and organizations, they tend to ... acclimate quicker.” The ability to rely on their culture, be actively engaged, and push through challenges set-up Star and her classmates for a transition experience that involved less transfer shock and

heightened transfer success (e.g., higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates).

A final discovery was that as investment was made in resources and staffing, students experienced fewer barriers in HIPs participation. Hamlin College has made a strong investment in the development of study abroad and service-learning communication resources: robust websites, high-quality recruitment flyers and brochures, training manuals, and faculty resources. In one of those resources, an employee newsletter featured a prior study abroad trip and included this thought-provoking statement by one of the faculty leads:

International programs are high-impact practices that create far more opportunities for a student's academic and personal development than traditional classroom-based programs ... as such, educators and institutions need to promote them and invest in them more heavily so that a greater number and diversity of students can participate in them.

Nina echoed that sentiment in her own challenge to Hamlin and other two-year institutions “[to] connect [the high-impact practice] to the students’ academic experience. I think that's where there might be a disconnect for students.” Leo testified to the power of that connection and called his film major-related service-learning project a “wonderful experience.” When resources investment is coupled with staffing to adequately advise students toward major-specific service-learning or study abroad projects, the students experienced a greater connection between major coursework and real-world learning.

### **For Decision Makers: Impact on Policy and Practice**

Decision makers interested in continuing to promote HIPs and increasing student capital and transfer success should consider the following:

- Continue to adapt in-person experiences for the community college and post-pandemic contexts so that the transformative nature of HIPs is accessible to more students. This can lead to higher incidences of engagement and increase their chances of successful transfer to the university. Often, high-impact practices are crafted with four-year residential students in mind, whereas adapting to the two-year context requires offering a variety of formats and delivery options. Two-year institutions can develop alternate service-learning projects that emphasize civic engagement activities (such as voter registration or attending an online local government meeting) which depend less on in-person/on-site delivery. To make international learning more accessible, hybrid models of delivery could include virtual country visits alongside ethnic cooking demonstrations or interactive music/dance that is part of an in-person festival experience.
- Provide multiple and frequent layers of communication about what HIPs opportunities are available. Hamlin created robust websites, beautiful brochures, and detail-filled flyers for both study abroad and service-learning. Students still seek even more notifications regarding HIPs opportunities; over-communicating can increase accessibility for all students. Continuing to explore additional means of relevant and accessible communication (e.g., social media, text blasts) is recommended. Engaging student focus groups could also provide feedback on the effectiveness of current communication modes and timelines and what new and impactful forms of media might be needed to reach students post-COVID-19. Utilizing virtual information sessions could allow for a more targeted or intentional experience delivered across satellite campuses as a complement to traditional in-person meetings.

- Connect the life-changing experiences of service-learning and study abroad with more major-specific opportunities. Students expressed the desire for projects that align with their current pre-transfer pathway or post-transfer major. Even combining HIPs, such as service-learning with internships, could create a robust experience for students and propel them into transfer-readiness based on increased confidence and persistence capital.
- Create more opportunities to celebrate culture and *familismo* (“family first”). Because of the strong support of families, design HIPs experiences that are family-friendly (e.g., a community project that features parent-student pairings) or celebration events to mark completion of HIPs participation (e.g., a study abroad welcome-back dinner to which families are invited). Cultural affinity groups and organizations (culture-based student groups that provide social capital-building opportunities) could co-sponsor the events.
- Combine the two high-impact practices, service-learning and study abroad, with the community college context in mind. A faculty-led project-based assignment in the community or meeting a need that was identified by a cross-cultural organization (e.g., solar-powered phone chargers) could be paired with virtual exchanges during the project or virtual follow-up visits. This would create and establish the human connection with the group/individuals with whom the project is being undertaken. Seeing the end-user of the students’ efforts and having a faculty member to help navigate the logistics could result in a more powerful, transformative experience.
- Design experiences where Hispanic students’ culture can be an asset in meeting the outcome of the experience (e.g., translation, mentoring). An alternate to this could be adapting a work-based learning opportunity (on-the-job “internship” experiences—typically for Career and Technical Education students—that often lead to future

employment with the same company) that starts as a service-learning project and could lead to employment (or paid-internship) at a local non-profit that services the students' own Latin community.

- Focus on people as resources and the relational mechanisms already in place to increase student engagement and success. While budgetary resources are critical, this study focused mostly on relationships: student-faculty interaction, student-advisor connection. Senior leadership capitalizing on the human talent within the organization and developing employees that care about students is crucial if students are to feel welcomed, supported, and mentored by advisors, faculty, and staff. Administrators can model this as they demonstrate care through their policies and practices as well as promote a campus culture where a strengths/assets narrative about students of color is reflected. Similarly, if HIPs are to move beyond pilots or occurring solely in pockets, leaders need to identify and develop employees that have a passion for implementing and scaling HIPs and understand the efficacy and transformative power of these practices particularly with students of color.

## **Conclusion**

*Testimonios* [stories] and interviews by current and former students uncovered the breadth and depth of Hamlin College's study abroad and service-learning programs. Hispanic students spoke of transformative and life-changing experiences through participation in HIPs, particularly as those educational activities were adapted to allow for greater student access. Increased transfer student success (e.g., higher GPA, greater semester-to-semester enrollment and graduation rates) was noted by many participants. They alluded to supportive families, strong cultural identity and pride, and an ability to persevere which led to smoother transitions to

the university. When there was adequate staffing and robust institutional investment in creating resources and supports, additional barriers were removed to allow for more HIPs participation. If Hispanic students are to experience less transfer shock and greater transfer success, these findings are important in that increased engagement in HIPs leads to greater likelihood of baccalaureate degree attainment and the opportunity to provide a better future for their families and communities (Boggs & McPhail, 2016, Carnevale et al., 2011; Kuh et al., 2006).

The impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic was certainly felt throughout the institutions (and their communities) highlighted in this study. The pandemic's effect on the conducting of this research was by no means comparable to the magnitude effect globally, yet was nonetheless experienced. The institutions I investigated responded to the pandemic with such resiliency from their students and many innovations from their faculty/staff so that engagement and learning would continue. Moving forward, institutions will be required to adapt high-impact practice delivery to this changing context. Additionally, to optimize student transition success, they will have to find ways to take full advantage of student assets in their re-created HIPs experiences. Family capital and cultural wealth can be assets community colleges leverage alongside these transformative experiences as they seek to ensure student engagement, transfer success, and degree attainment post-COVID-19.

### **About This Brief**

Turner, S. T. (2021). *A collective case study of the experience of high-impact practice participation upon Hispanic student transfer success*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation.] North Carolina State University.

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**Further Reading**

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**APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

### Community College Student Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Race/ethnicity

- African American/Black non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander,
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- White, non-Hispanic
- More than one race/ethnicity
- Prefer not to respond
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Gender

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to respond
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the following have you participated in since starting at this college or the last two years (whichever is most recent)?

- First year/First semester seminar or experience (or a college success course, e.g., ACA122)
- Writing-intensive course (designated in syllabus or course description)
- Learning community
- Service learning/community-based learning project
- Internship
- Capstone project/capstone course
- Study abroad
- Undergraduate research
- Team-based assignments/cooperative projects or research
- ePortfolio

#### Enrollment Status

- Full-time
- Part-time

#### College transfer pathway

- Associate in Arts

- Transfer pathway (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ (list subject area, e.g., psychology)
- Associate in Science
  - Transfer pathway (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ (list subject area, e.g., biology)
- Other
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (list subject area, if applicable)

## Appendix B

### Community College Student Focus Group Protocol

1. Tell me about your study abroad or service learning participation.
2. Describe its impact on your community college experience.
3. What student success markers (GPA, persistence, completion) have you reached?
4. Describe any barriers you encountered in participating in service learning? Study abroad?
5. What was the degree of family support as you engaged in service learning? Study abroad?
6. What is it like to juggle family and school? Are there times that you have to choose school over family? If so, what is that like?
7. Describe your level of navigational capital—the ability to navigate the community college structures and environments. What is that like?
8. How do you believe your culture affects your experience in community college? What impact do you perceive it will make at the university post-transfer?
9. Describe the path that you are on toward transfer to a four-year university.
10. What benefits do you perceive you acquired through participation in service learning? Study abroad?
11. What would you like for your institution to know regarding your experiences in service learning and/or study abroad?

## Appendix C

### Community College Gatekeeper Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Race/ethnicity

- African American/Black non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander,
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- White, non-Hispanic
- More than one race/ethnicity
- Prefer not to respond
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Gender

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to respond
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### What is your primary role at the college?

- Academic Affairs/Instruction
  - Faculty
  - Department Chair or Dean
- Student Affairs/Student Services
  - Admissions
  - Transfer Students
  - Academic Advising
  - Support Services (e.g., Financial Aid, Tutoring, Veterans, Counseling)
  - Club/Organization Advisor
  - International Education staff

#### How would you characterize your level of interaction with students, by type of student?

- Transfer students
  - High
  - Moderate
  - Low
  - Do not interact with these students
- Hispanic students
  - High
  - Moderate

- Low
  - Do not interact with these students
- Part-time students
  - High
  - Moderate
  - Low
  - Do not interact with these students
- Full-time students
  - High
  - Moderate
  - Low
  - Do not interact with these students

## Appendix D

### Community College Gatekeeper Interview Protocol

1. How are part-time and full-time students advised about the opportunities for study abroad? How are they advised about opportunities for service learning? How are they different? How are they similar?
2. How are students recruited for study abroad in regard to student enrollment status (PT v FT)?
3. How are students recruited for study abroad in regard to student race/ethnicity?
4. What are the opportunities for service learning projects? Classroom-based? College-wide/Student Life-based?
5. If college-wide, how are students recruited for service learning projects in regard to student enrollment status (PT v FT)?
6. If college-wide, how are students recruited for service learning projects in regard to student race/ethnicity?
7. How do you believe a student's family affected their experience in navigating the college? How do you believe the student's family affected their experience in deciding to study abroad or engage in service learning?
8. How has culture played a role in whether or not students decide to study abroad or engage in service learning?
9. With the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to our institutions, what was the impact to study abroad and service learning?
10. Describe study abroad and service learning opportunities moving forward—different? The same?

## Appendix E

### University Gatekeeper Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Race/ethnicity

- African American/Black non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander,
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- White, non-Hispanic
- More than one race/ethnicity
- Prefer not to respond
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Gender

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to respond
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### What is your primary role at the university?

- Academic Affairs
  - Faculty
  - Department Chair or Dean
- Student Affairs
  - Admissions
  - Transfer Students
  - Academic Advising
  - Support Services (e.g., Financial Aid, Tutoring, Veterans, Counseling)
  - Club/Organization Advisor
  - International Education staff

#### How would you characterize your level of interaction with students, by type of student?

- Transfer students
  - High
  - Moderate
  - Low
  - Do not interact with these students
- Hispanic students
  - High
  - Moderate

- Low
  - Do not interact with these students
- Part-time students
  - High
  - Moderate
  - Low
  - Do not interact with these students
- Full-time students
  - High
  - Moderate
  - Low
  - Do not interact with these students

## Appendix F

### University Gatekeeper Interview Protocol

1. How different are the transfer success outcomes of students who participated in service learning pre-transfer? Study abroad?
2. What evidence have you seen in these students regarding familial capital? Social capital? Cultural capital? Navigational capital?
3. What challenges have you observed in their student success markers (eg, GPA, persistence, completion)?
4. How have the students worked to reduce transfer shock? How has the institution worked to reduce transfer shock?
5. How have students' families helped reduce transfer shock? Students' cultural background?
6. Describe the involvement in high-impact practices post-transfer of Hispanic students from [case] community college.
7. How have students' families been involved in their university choice? In their participation in high-impact practices?
8. What are your recommendations for two-year institutions in providing HIPs opportunities for Hispanic students?
9. What are your recommendations for two-year institutions in preparing Hispanic students for transfer?
10. With the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to our institutions, what was the impact on the transfer process for the students? Were some students impacted differently? How so?
11. Moving forward, describe transfer success and student participation in high-impact practices (such as study abroad and service learning)—different than before COVID-19? The same?

## Appendix G

### University Student Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Race/ethnicity

- African American/Black non-Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander,
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- White, non-Hispanic
- More than one race/ethnicity
- Prefer not to respond
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Gender

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to respond
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Which of the following did you participate in at the community/state college?

- First year/First semester seminar or experience (or a college success course, e.g., ACA122)
- Writing-intensive course (designated in syllabus or course description)
- Learning community
- Service learning/community-based learning project
- Internship
- Capstone project/capstone course
- Study abroad
- Undergraduate research
- Team-based assignments/cooperative projects or research
- ePortfolio

#### Which of the following have you participated in since transferring from the community/state college or in the last two years (whichever is most recent)?

- First year/First semester seminar or experience (or a college success course)
- Writing-intensive course (designated in syllabus or course description)
- Learning community
- Service learning/community-based learning project
- Internship
- Capstone project/capstone course

- Study abroad
- Undergraduate research
- Team-based assignments/cooperative projects or research
- ePortfolio

Current Enrollment Status at the University (check all that apply)

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Transfer
- Non-transfer

If you are a transfer student, what was your prior Enrollment Status at the Community/State College

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Both

If you are a transfer student, what was your degree program?

- Associate in Arts
  - Transfer pathway (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ (list subject area, e.g., psychology)
- Associate in Science
  - Transfer pathway (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ (list subject area, e.g., biology)
- Other
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (list subject area, if applicable)

## Appendix H

### University Student Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your study abroad or service learning participation.
2. Describe the impact of service learning or study abroad participation on your community college experience.
3. How were you successful (GPA, persistence, completion) at the community college?
4. What have those student success markers been like since transferring to the university? Describe your experience related to those markers in your first semester/year post-transfer.
5. Describe the level of family support of study abroad or service learning.
6. Explain the involvement of your family in selecting the university.
7. How did participating in service learning or study abroad affect your experience transferring to the university.
8. How did your family support your transferring and continuing at the four-year institution?
9. How do you believe your cultural background affected your experience in community college? In transferring to the university?
10. What was it like to juggle family and school at the community college?
11. Do you still have to juggle family and school at the university? If so, what are those experiences like?
12. Did you leave your family in order to transfer to the university? If so, what was that like?
13. Describe your level of navigational capital—the ability to navigate the community college as well as the university structures and environments.
14. What barriers existed at your community college that impacted your participation in service learning or study abroad?
15. Have you participated in high-impact practices since transferring? What have those experiences been like in the university environment?

## Appendix I

### Codebook for Coding, Clustering, and Theming Transcripts from Focus Groups and Interviews with Hispanic Students

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
Familial	Family	Family	“Family first” for pre-transfer Hispanic students: highly supportive
	Family not aware	Family	
	Family not supportive	Family	
	Family priority/juggling	Family	
	Family balance/tension	Family	
	Independent	Family	
	Financial support	Family	
	“Gaps”	Family	
	Supportive	Family	
	Transportation support	Family	
	HIPs support	Family	
	“Family First”	Family	
Navigational	Navigational	Navigating	Institutions have systems in place that limit student participation in HIPs

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Stigma of community colleges	Navigating	
	Campus size	Navigating	
	Challenges	Navigating	
	Distance/commute	Navigating	
	Scholarships	Navigating	
	High school	Navigating	
	Institutional Positives	Navigating	
	Value of community colleges	Navigating	
Social	Social	Navigating	
Resistance	Resistance	Resilient	Students have strong resilience due to their culture, supportive families, and resistance mentality
	Resilience	Resilient	
	Workarounds	Resilient	
Aspirational	Aspirational	Aspiration	Students have emotional, life-changing, and transformational experiences
	Future Plans	Aspiration	
	Changed Plans	Aspiration	
	Major-related	Aspiration	

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Opened eyes	Aspiration	
Linguistic	Linguistic	Assets	Hispanic students possess substantial capital and cultural wealth that leads them to overcome barriers and successfully transfer
	Best practices	Assets	
	Time management	Assets	
	Family assets	Assets	
	“Huge drive”	Assets	
	Faith/spirituality	Assets	
Culture	Cultural	Culture	Latin students are proud of their heritage: “Being Hispanic together”
	Latin uniqueness	Culture	
	Culture = barrier	Culture	
	Stereotype/discrimination	Culture	
	First gen	Culture	
	Bond	Culture	
	Diversity within culture	Culture	
Engagement	Engaged	Engagement	When given an opportunity, students gravitate to experiences where they connect classroom learning to the real world

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Required	Engagement	
	Optional	Engagement	
	New opportunity	Engagement	
	“Learning outside class”	Engagement	
	Learning for career	Engagement	
	Belonging	Engagement	
	Attraction to the institution	Engagement	
Transfer Success	Transfer Process	Processes	Hispanic students possess substantial capital and cultural wealth that leads them to overcome barriers and successfully transfer
	Transfer Choice	Processes	
	Transfer success	Processes	
	Transfer plans	Processes	
	Transfer shock	Processes	
Faculty-student Interaction	Faculty-student	Benefits	Students have emotional, life-changing, and transformational experiences
	Advisors	Benefits	
	Benefits	Benefits	
	Persistence	Benefits	

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Helping	Benefits	
	Affecting others	Benefits	
	Independence	Benefits	
	Communication skills	Benefits	
	Academic knowledge	Benefits	
	Community	Benefits	
	Unexpected impact	Benefits	
	New cultures	Benefits	
	Quality HIPs	Benefits	
	No impact	Benefits	
	“Great experience”	Benefits	
	Making impact	Benefits	
	Personal growth	Benefits	
	Perspective	Benefits	
	Academic success	Academic success	Hispanic students possess substantial capital and cultural wealth that leads them to overcome barriers and successfully transfer
	Academic struggles	Academic success	

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Barriers	Barriers	Institutions have systems in place that limit student participation in HIPs
	HIPs barriers	Barriers	
	COVID	Barriers	
	Competition	Barriers	
	HIPs burnout	Barriers	
	No barriers	Barriers	
	Work	Barriers	
	Challenging classes	Barriers	
	Recommendations	--	
	Fun	Emotions	Students have emotional, life-changing, and transformational experiences
	Happy	Emotions	
	Love(d)	Emotions	
	Gratitude	Emotions	
	Fears	Emotions	
	Overwhelmed	Emotions	
	“Felt abandoned”	Emotions	

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	“Fulfillment”	Emotions	
	Lacking confidence	Emotions	
	Confidence	Emotions	
	“Pride in self”	Emotions	
	Meaning	Emotions	
	Passion	Emotions	
	Awe & wonder	Emotions	
	“Alienating”	Emotions	
	Emotional health	Emotions	
	Emotional memory	Emotions	
	“Skeptical”	Emotions	
	Stressful	Emotions	
	Inspired	Emotions	
	Discouraged	Emotions	
	Sad	Emotions	
	Uncertainty	Emotions	
	Anxiety	Emotions	

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Embarrassed	Emotions	
	Champion	Structuring	When given an opportunity, students gravitate to experiences where they connect classroom learning to the real world
	Ambassador	Structuring	
	Standards	Structuring	
	Relationships	Structuring	
	Community partnerships	Structuring	
	Faculty impact	Structuring	
	Connect it	Structuring	
	Support faculty	Structuring	
	SA structures	Structuring	
	Mentors	Structuring	
	Process	Structuring	
	Orientation	Structuring	
	Participant manuals	Structuring	
	Implementing HIPs	Implementing	Strong high-impact practice programs have strong resources and supports.
	Integrated SL	Implementing	

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Academic SL	Implementing	
	Civic engagement theory	Implementing	
	HIPs @ university	Implementing	
	Post-COVID	Implementing	
	Not participating	Implementing	
	Co-curricular SL	Implementing	
	Faculty-led SA	Implementing	
	Outside programs SA	Implementing	
	Semester abroad (RVU)	Implementing	
	Closed SA program	Implementing	
	Independent SL course	Implementing	
	Virtual	COVID	Colleges that resisted the “business-as-usual” mentality during COVID developed strong programs that reached more students.
	Emotional impact	COVID	
	Transfer impact	COVID	
	“Business-as-usual”	COVID	
	Changes made	COVID	

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Cancellations	COVID	
	COVID policies	COVID	
	COVID	COVID	
	Recruiting for HIPs	Recruiting	Strong high-impact practice programs have strong resources and supports.
	Recruiting faculty	Recruiting	
	Optional	Recruiting	
	Race/ethnicity	Recruiting	
	Scholarships	Recruiting	
	Info sessions	Recruiting	
	Campus partners	Recruiting	
	When to SA	Recruiting	
	By major	Recruiting	
	Recruiting families	Recruiting	
	Resources	Recruiting	
	Dedicated office	Recruiting	
	Marketing	Recruiting	
	Brochure	Recruiting	

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Website	Recruiting	
	Recognitions	Recruiting	
	Flyers	Recruiting	
	Civic action scorecard	Recruiting	
	Enrollment status	Student capital	Hispanic students possess substantial capital and cultural wealth that leads them to overcome barriers and successfully transfer
	PT	Student capital	
	FT	Student capital	
	Familial capital	Student capital	
	Support lacking	Student capital	
	Support present	Student capital	
	Transformation	Student capital	
	Cultural background	Student capital	
	SA destinations	Student capital	
	Low-income	Student capital	
	Equity	Student capital	
	Engaged	Student capital	
	Sense of belonging	Student capital	

<i>a priori</i> Codes	Codes (184)	Clusters (17)	Themes (9)
	Transfer successfully	Student capital	
	Transfer pipeline	Student capital	
	Social capital	Student capital	
	Navigational capital	Student capital	
	Aspirational capital	Student capital	
	Student reactions	Student capital	
	Scary	Student capital	
	Huge shock	Student capital	
	Anxious	Student capital	

*Note.* The nine themes in this table were coalesced into the five themes presented in the manuscript: (a) “Family first” for pre-transfer Hispanic students: highly supportive, (b) HIPs experiences for pre-transfer Hispanic students: emotional, life-changing, and transformational, (c) Successful transfer for post-transfer Hispanic students: overcoming barriers with substantial capital and cultural wealth, (d) HIPs participation for Hispanic students: institutions have systems in place to elevate participation, and (e) HIPs programs for Hispanic students: institutions have strong resources and supports in place to ensure strong programs.

## Appendix J

### Artifact Rubric

Artifact Rubric for: \_\_\_\_\_ (artifact) at: \_\_\_\_\_ (institution)

	<b>Beginning 1</b>	<b>Developing 2</b>	<b>Accomplished 3</b>	<b>Exemplary 4</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Perspective of participation could be life-changing, transformational, meaningful, relevant</b>	makes little or no reference to the perspective of participation could be life-changing, transformational, meaningful, relevant	vaguely represents the perspective of participation could be life-changing, transformational, meaningful, relevant	provides a basic representation of the perspective of participation could be life-changing, transformational, meaningful, relevant	clearly and thoroughly represents the perspective of participation could be life-changing, transformational, meaningful, relevant	1    2    3    4
<b>Details of the experience</b>	provides an inaccurate or little to no details of the experience	provides a limited and somewhat accurate details of the experience	provides a basic, yet accurate, details of the experience	thoroughly and accurately reflects the details of the experience	1    2    3    4
<b>Reference to educational value</b>	makes little or no reference to educational value	vaguely reflects educational value	makes a basic reference to educational value	clearly and thoroughly reflects educational value	1    2    3    4

	<b>Beginning 1</b>	<b>Developing 2</b>	<b>Accomplished 3</b>	<b>Exemplary 4</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Appearance, creativity, quality, and mechanics</b>	not authentic looking, sloppy, an obvious lack of creativity and effort, of low quality, and, if applicable, poor grammar and spelling	attempt to make product authentic, some creativity and demonstration of effort, average quality, and, if applicable, some grammar and spelling errors	mostly authentic-looking, demonstrates basic creativity and effort, above average quality, and, if applicable, proficient grammar and spelling	very authentic-looking, demonstrates strong creativity and effort, is of high quality, and, if applicable, contains proper grammar and spelling	1    2    3    4
<b>Alignment with institutional goals/strategies</b>	Unclear, vague, and demonstrates a lack of alignment with institutional goals/strategies	Unclear, lack of detail, and provides limited alignment with institutional goals/strategies	Mostly clear, somewhat aligned with institutional goals/strategies	clear, detailed, and provides strong alignment with institutional goals/strategies	1    2    3    4
<b>Overall Score</b>					/5 =

Qualitative data: