Chapter 1
The Heart of Our Work

Equitable Engagement for Students in US Higher Education

Sumun L. Pendakur, Stephen John Quaye, and Shaun R. Harper

In the fraught summer of 2019, we brought this third edition to life under difficult circumstances—rising inequality, emboldened White supremacy, a climate crisis, and so much more, all under the ominous eye of an oppressive political administration. These circumstances, however, provide a clarion call for all in staff, faculty, and administrator roles in higher education to do better by students, particularly those who experience the range of exclusion and harm embedded in their collegiate environments. This is the practitioner's locus of control, the sphere of influence, and practitioners must act. Colleges and universities are diversifying at the fastest rate in history, reflective of broader demographic changes. The student activism that emerged in 2015 around identity and campus sexual violence is a powerful reminder that students still face oppression on their campuses and beyond. In addition, the student protests were powerful reminders that the original demands of the 1970 Black Action Movement at the University of Michigan are, as yet, largely unmet. And yet, many campuses operate via traditional forms of student engagement, with narrow visions of the dynamic and intersectional needs, assets, and opportunities presented by today's and tomorrow's students. None of these statements is intended to induce hopelessness. On the contrary, our writing here speaks to an opportunity: a chance to learn more, transform one's knowledge and skills, equitably alter institutions of higher education from the inside out, and meaningfully impact the experiences and futures of all the students educators serve.

We posit that developing a nuanced, specific understanding of community-based needs and assets is essential for the 21st-century student affairs educator or faculty member. Simply having broad-stroke knowledge about minoritized communities is not enough. Specificity is essential for faculty and student affairs educators' ability to be strategic and intentional about fostering conditions that compel students to make the most of college, both inside and outside the classroom. In their 1991 book, *Involving*

Colleges: Successful Approaches to Fostering Student Learning and Development Outside the Classroom, Kuh and colleagues concluded:

> *Involving Colleges* are committed to pluralism in all its forms, and they support the establishment and coexistence of subcommunities that permit students to identify with and receive support from people like themselves, so they can feel comfortable in becoming involved in the larger campus community.
>
> (p. 369)

This declaration and subsequent related perspectives guided the conceptualization and writing of the first and second editions of this book. Although we differentiate involvement from engagement later in this chapter, transforming today's campuses into *Involving Colleges* for all students is very much the vision with which this work was undertaken. This third edition draws from that wellspring and also broadens the boundaries of student engagement considerations through an intersectional and anti-deficit lens. Intersectional, in that each author in this edition has attempted to articulate the social, economic, and political ways in which identity-based systems of oppression connect, overlap, and influence each other (Crenshaw, 1989). Anti-deficit, in that while the authors present the very real and complex challenges populations of students face, this does not mean they are operating from deficits. The question the authors answer is "Where are the challenges placed?" In this book, authors ask readers to take an equity-minded approach to systems, institutional mechanisms, and educator gaps in knowledge as the problem, not the students (Bensimon, 2007). By looking at the problem systemically, educators can better engage and honor students because they are addressing the root of the problem, not the symptoms.

In this third edition, we amplify the specific challenges faced by diverse populations on college campuses and offer guidance for accepting institutional responsibility for the engagement of students. We trust that readers will be moved to respond with deliberation through conversations, collaborative planning, programs, services, curricular enhancements, and assessment. A cursory scan of the table of contents will confirm that this book is not exclusively about "minority students." Rather, authors focus on a range of populations for whom the published research confirms that engagement, sense of belonging and affirmation, and connectivity to the college experience are in various ways problematic. Emphasis is also placed on enhancing outcomes and development among different populations. New for this volume is the inclusion of chapters on student activists, formerly incarcerated/justice-involved students, parenting students, undocumented students, first-generation college students, transracial Asian American adoptees, and Native and Indigenous students.

The practical implications presented at the end of each chapter are in response to issues noted in the literature, informed by relevant theories, and based on the collective professional wisdom of those who have written. The authors bring to this book decades of full-time work experience in various capacities (faculty, student affairs educators, academic affairs administrators) at a wide range of two-year and four-year institutions

of higher education. Indeed, they are experts in the field who have taken an intricate look at the various populations represented in this book and have devoted a large part of their careers to understanding the needs of these students. Notwithstanding, we neither claim to furnish all the answers nor contend that this book contains prescriptive solutions for all engagement problems facing every student population. Instead, experienced educators and scholars have collaborated to produce a resource for the field of higher education and the student affairs profession that will hopefully ignite dialogue, agency, and strategic thinking and action on behalf of undergraduates who should be at the heart of the work.

The remainder of this chapter sets the stage for the population-specific chapters that follow. We begin by making clear what we mean by "student engagement" and synthesizing what decades of empirical research contend about the associated gains, educational benefits, and outcomes. Next, we discuss the importance of shifting the onus for engagement from students to educators and administrators, as we advocate strategy, intentionality, and reflective action. We then justify the role of theory in this book and in engagement practice. The chapter concludes with an urgent note for campuses to better align espoused values of equity and inclusion with concrete institutional actions.

Understanding the Landscape and Significance of Engagement

Student engagement is simply characterized as participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the classroom, which leads to a range of measurable outcomes. We borrow this operational definition from Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2007), who also note:

> Student engagement represents two critical features. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. . . . The second component of student engagement is how the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum, other learning opportunities, and support services to induce students to participate in activities that lead to the experiences and desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, learning, and graduation.
>
> (p. 44)

We are persuaded by a large volume of empirical evidence that confirms strategizing ways to increase the engagement of various student populations, especially those for whom engagement is known to be problematic, is a worthwhile endeavor. However, the gains and outcomes are too robust to leave to chance, and social justice will not ensue if some students come to enjoy the beneficial byproducts of engagement, but others do not.

Engagement and Student Outcomes

"The impact of college is largely determined by individual effort and involvement in the academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings on a campus" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 602). However, as the authors of this book elucidate in myriad ways,

countless cultural and contextual obstacles exist on the path of students being able to fully engage with all the campus offerings. That disparity is especially sharp, given that researchers have found that educationally purposeful engagement leads to the production of gains, benefits, and outcomes in numerous domains. These include: cognitive and intellectual skill development (Anaya, 1996; Baxter Magolda, 1992); college adjustment (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Kuh, Palmer, & Kish, 2003); moral and ethical development (Evans, 1987; Rest, 1993); practical competence and skills transferability (Kuh, 1993, 1995); the accrual of social capital (Harper, 2008); and psychosocial development, productive racial and gender identity formation, and positive images of self (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Okello, 2018; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). In addition, Tross, Harper, Osher, and Kneidinger (2000) found that students who devote more time to academic preparation activities outside of class earn higher grade-point averages. While all these benefits are important, the nexus between engagement and persistence has garnered the most attention.

Engagement and Persistence

As noted in the first edition of this book (and elsewhere), differences in first- to second-year persistence, as well as in four-year and six-year graduation rates, continually disadvantage many Students of Color, undergraduate men, lower-income students, first-generation college-goers, undergraduates who commute to their campuses, and a handful of other student populations. While the reasons for student persistence through degree attainment are multifaceted and not easily attributed to a narrow set of explanatory factors (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004), we know one point for certain: Those who are actively engaged in educationally purposeful activities, both inside and outside the classroom, are more likely to persist through graduation. This assertion has been empirically proven and consistently documented by numerous higher education researchers (e.g., Astin, 1975, 1993; Bean, 1990, 2005; Berger & Milem, 1999; Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000; Bridges, Cambridge, Kuh, & Leegwater, 2005; Milem & Berger, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Peltier, Laden, & Matranga, 1999; Stage & Hossler, 2000; Tinto, 1993, 2000, 2005). Museus (2014) expands on this body of research by describing the *site* of student engagement through the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments Model, which focuses on cultural relevance and cultural responsiveness.

Tinto, the most frequently cited scholar on college student retention, contends that engagement (or "academic and social integration," as he called it) is positively related to persistence. In fact, his research shows that engagement is the single most significant predictor of persistence (Tinto, 2000). He notes that many students discontinue their undergraduate education because they feel disconnected from peers, professors, and administrators at the institution. "Leavers of this type express a sense of not having made any significant contacts or not feeling membership in the institution" (Tinto, 2000, p. 7). In his 1993 book, *Leaving College: The Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, Tinto argues that high levels of integration into academic and social communities

on campus lead to higher levels of institutional commitment, which in turn compel a student to persist (Tinto, 1993).

Similarly, Bean (1990, 2005) proposes that students leave when they are marginally committed to their institutions. Institutional commitment is strengthened when undergraduates are actively engaged in educationally purposeful endeavors that connect them to the campus and in which they feel some sense of enduring obligation and responsibility (Bean, 2005; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003; Tinto, 1993). Those who hold leadership positions in student organizations, for example, assume responsibilities in their groups and know that others depend on them for service, guidance, and follow-through on important initiatives. Thus, they feel committed to their respective organizations and the institution at large and are less likely than students who are not engaged to leave. The same could be applied to a student who feels like an important contributor to learning and discussions in their classes. While the relationships between engagement, student outcomes, and retention are powerful, it is important to acknowledge the conditions under which these are likely to occur.

Distinguishing Educationally Purposeful Engagement

Over 30 years ago, Astin defined student involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (1984, p. 297). Astin's conceptualization of involvement refers to behaviors and what students actually do, instead of what they think, how they feel, and the meanings they make of their experiences. His theory of student involvement is principally concerned with how college students spend their time and how various institutional actors, processes, and opportunities facilitate development. "The extent to which students can achieve particular developmental goals is a direct function of the time and effort they devote to activities designed to produce these gains" (p. 301). This theory is among the most frequently cited in the higher education literature.

While conceptually similar, there is a key qualitative difference between involvement and engagement: it is entirely possible to be involved in something without being engaged. For example, a student who is present and on time for every weekly meeting of an organization but sits passively in the back of the room, never offers an opinion or volunteers for committees, interacts infrequently with the group's advisor or fellow members outside weekly meetings, and would not dare consider running for an office could still legitimately claim that she is involved in the group. However, few would argue this student is actively engaged, as outcomes accrual is likely to be limited. The same could be said for the student who is involved in a study group for his psychology class but contributes little and asks few questions when the group meets for study sessions. Action, purpose, and cross-institutional collaboration are requisites for engagement and deep learning (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005; Kuh et al., 2007).

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), an instrument through which data have now been collected from approximately four million undergraduates at more

than 1,500 different four-year colleges and universities since 2000, is constructed around ten engagement indicators and a set of high-impact educational practices:

Academic Challenge—Including Higher-Order Learning, Reflective and Integrative Learning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Learning Strategies.

Learning with Peers—Including Collaborative Learning and Discussions with Diverse Others.

Experiences with Faculty—Including Student-Faculty Interaction and Effective Teaching Practices.

Campus Environment—Including Quality of Interactions and Supportive Environment.

High-Impact Practices—Special undergraduate opportunities such as Service Learning, Study Abroad, Research with Faculty, and Internships that have substantial positive effects on student learning and retention.

Student engagement in the activities associated with each NSSE indicator is considered educationally purposeful, as it leads to deep levels of learning and the production of enduring and measurable gains and outcomes (Kuh et al., 2005). This focus on student learning and outcomes creates another distinction between involvement and engagement. We offer one additional defining characteristic: the dual responsibility for engagement. As Tanaka (2002) writes, the major works by scholars on engagement and persistence all have in common "(1) an interest in measuring the impact of student participation in the institution and (2) a tendency not to examine the underlying cultures of that institution (often Western European, straight, upper middle class, and male)" (p. 264). Patton, Harper, and Harris (2015) expand this critique by noting that the most-cited scholars of student engagement are "unlikely familiar with particular activities and practices in which minoritized students are engaged that bolster their sense of belonging and keep them (and their same-race peers) engaged and retained" (p. 208). Therefore, while we see the critical need for the full engagement of all students, particularly those who experience minoritization, the extant literature often employs frameworks that place the majority of the burden for involvement and engagement on students, without regard for the historical ways in which engagement has been structured to be more readily available for some, but not all.

In the next section, we argue that students should not be chiefly responsible for engaging themselves, but that faculty and student affairs educators must foster the conditions that enable diverse populations of students to be engaged, persist, and thrive.

On Whose Shoulders? Shifting the Onus of Engagement

Put simply, institutional leaders ought not to expect students to engage themselves. Kuh (2001) suggests student engagement is a measure of institutional quality. That is, the more engaged its students are in educationally purposeful activities, the better the

institution. Similarly, Pascarella (2001) maintains, "An excellent undergraduate education is most likely to occur at those colleges and universities that maximize good practices and enhance students' academic and social engagement" (p. 22). Given this, we deem it essential for faculty and student affairs educators to view engaging diverse populations as "everyone's responsibility," including their own. Student affairs educators and faculty must alter the structure of the institution (e.g., their department, program) to best meet the dynamic needs of today's students, rather than continuing to operate from deficit-minded frameworks. Additionally, engagement does not occur in a vacuum. The "what" and "how" of students' experiences are dramatically shaped by multiple factors, some of which are outside the institutions—market forces, the sociopolitical landscape, key legislation, the defunding of higher education by the state, and history. Without a strong historical and political lens, it is easy for educators to lose sight of how their campuses have evolved and, yet, continue to fail students. Presidents, deans, and other senior administrators must also hold themselves and everyone else on campus accountable for ensuring institutional quality in this regard. A clear signal of institutional deficiency is when there are few ramifications for those who either blatantly refuse or unintentionally neglect to enact the practices known to produce rich outcomes for students.

From Negligence to Intentionality

Quaye and Harper (2007) describe the ways in which faculty neglect to incorporate culturally-relevant perspectives into their class discussions and assigned materials. The onus is often placed on students with minoritized identities to find readings that appeal to their unique backgrounds and to bring up topics related to their sociocultural identities in class discussions. There is little accountability for ensuring that professors are thoughtful and strategic about creating classroom experiences that enable students to learn about differences. Interactions with peers across differences inside and outside of class have been positively linked to benefits and outcomes in the following domains: self-concept (intellectual and social), cultural awareness and appreciation, racial understanding, leadership, engagement in citizenship activities, satisfaction with college, high post-baccalaureate degree aspirations, and readiness for participation in a diverse workforce (Antonio et al., 2004; Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004; Chang, Denson, Sáenz, & Misa, 2006; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Harper & Antonio, 2008; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Villalpando, 2002). "Knowing that students and society could ultimately benefit from new approaches to cross-cultural learning, but failing to take the necessary steps to intentionally create enabling conditions [inside and] outside the classroom is downright irresponsible" (Harper & Antonio, 2008, p. 12).

The negligence described here is partially explained by the "magical thinking" philosophy that often undergirds practices of student engagement:

> The [magical thinking] rationale provides no guidance for campuses on assembling the appropriate means to create environments conducive to realization of the benefits of diversity or on employing the methods necessary to

> facilitate the educational process to achieve those benefits. Under this rationale, the benefits will accrue as if by magic.
>
> (Chang, Chang, & Ledesma, 2005, pp. 10–11)

Negligence is synonymous with magical thinking; simply providing services for students is not sufficient to enrich their educational experiences. Rather, we defend a position of intentionality where faculty and student affairs educators are conscious of every action they undertake and are able to consider the long-range implications of decisions.

Across the collegiate landscape, relations across various forms of difference are often inequitable and serve to reinscribe forms of hierarchy. Minoritized students often report there is infrequent interaction between them and their peers in dominant groups, and that there is a lack of attention paid to improving the climate (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Cabrera et al., 1999; Garvey, Sanders, & Flint, 2017; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Rockenbach, Mayhew, & Bowman, 2015; Wells & Horn, 2015). When campus climates are hostile and antagonistic toward certain students, disengagement, dropping out, and maladjustment are likely unintended, yet nearly inevitable, outcomes.

As Chang et al. (2005) and Harper and Antonio (2008) note, an erroneous assumption is often made that students will naturally learn about their peers simply by coming into contact with those who share different views, experiences, and identities. For example, simply increasing the numbers of queer and trans students on campus will not automatically create more opportunities for cisgender heterosexual students to interact with them. Rather, as authors of chapters throughout this book maintain, educators must facilitate structured opportunities for these dialogues to transpire. Meaningful strategies are necessary that enable institutions to realize the benefits of engaging the full swath of college-goers today. These solutions must be grounded in students' actual experiences, reflective of their unique backgrounds and interests, and designed with both broad and specific implications in mind.

The insights presented in this book are consistent with Strange and Banning's (2001) design vision for postsecondary institutions. They call for campuses that are "intentionally designed to offer opportunities, incentives, and reinforcements for growth and development" (p. 201). Such a philosophy of engagement responds to the multifaceted and complex needs of campus populations today. When an institution provides reinforcements for students, it means educators have envisioned and enacted the types of learning opportunities that will contribute to student development and engagement. This, of course, requires knowing who students are and understanding their prior knowledge and experiences, the types of educational contexts from which they have come, and what they view as necessary for enabling engagement (Harper, 2007, 2011). Devoting attention to those students who are not as engaged in educationally purposeful activities is an important way to be deliberate in one's practices.

Understanding Before Acting

Creating optimal learning environments in which all students feel connected is difficult, but nonetheless important. Educators must have the requisite skills and expertise to analyze the campus environment and determine where gaps in engagement and

achievement exist. More importantly, they must resist the urge to act without considering the effects of potential solutions and instead, spend time understanding the obstacles facing students who are not as engaged. Otherwise, creating programs, mentoring, or teaching without a knowledgeable, strategic, and equitable approach to engagement only serve to reify the dominant norms of the institution (which reflect the centrality of White, cisgender male, middle-class norms) (Pendakur, 2016).

Faculty who are interested in providing avenues for Students of Color to be engaged in predominantly White classroom contexts might decide to incorporate readings that reflect the scholarly contributions of Writers of Color. On the surface, this practice seems logical and consistent with research that demonstrates the influence of culturally-relevant literature on student learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, what this professor might fail to consider is the reactions of White students to these readings. How might the faculty member deal with White students who believe the course is primarily focused on Students of Color and accuse the instructor of attempting to indoctrinate them with a politically liberal agenda? After thinking about this practice, the faculty member might still decide to proceed in the same manner, but the outcomes will be different since they have considered not only the needs of Students of Color, but also the reactions of and growth opportunities for White students in the course.

Repeatedly emphasized throughout this book is the importance of listening to students in order to understand how to enhance their educational experiences. Since September 11, 2001, and again under the Trump administration, we have seen the documented rise in hate crimes and everyday forms of hostility and violence toward Muslim and Arab students. Seeking to improve engagement among these students, institutional leaders might plan campus-wide programs that include cross-cultural dialogues, Arab and Muslim speakers, and panels comprised of religious minority students sharing their experiences on campus. As educators strive to determine why these hateful behaviors persist, they may gradually learn that religious minority students are not only experiencing prejudice and oppression from their peers, but also in their courses from professors. The decision to incorporate a wide array of programs aimed at students is often missing in trainings for faculty and student affairs educators on teaching about difference in all its forms. In the current example, if educators failed to ask Arab and Muslim students about their needs and developed interventions to improve their experiences based on assumptions about the issues students face, such efforts would be void of a complex understanding of the challenges confronting these students and would likely be, at best, marginally effective. As alluded to earlier, situating student engagement at the confluence of history, institutional practices, practitioner efforts, and sociopolitical pressures is highly necessary; otherwise, student affairs educators run the risk of problematizing the population, rather than the structures and systems that surround them.

This example demonstrates the importance of analyzing problematic trends and outcomes from students' vantage points. One of the most effective ways to improve student engagement is to invite those who are the least engaged to share their knowledge and experiences (Harper, 2007, 2011). As the authors of *Learning Reconsidered*

recommend: "All institutions should establish routine ways to hear students' voices, consult with them, explore their opinions, and document the nature and quality of their experience as learners" (ACPA & NASPA, 2004, p. 33). When educators speak with students from diverse backgrounds, they will begin to see patterns in their stories emerge and gain a more nuanced understanding of their needs. In addition, educators can observe the particularities in students' experiences and begin to develop customized services to improve student outcomes.

Barriers to achievement and engagement can result from making decisions without qualitative input from students (Harper, 2007, 2011). Strange and Banning (2001) discuss how a renovation project of a campus building should include insights from multiple people (including students) prior to the construction. Allowing future users of the facilities to comment on its accessibility and openness to multiple groups enables students to feel included in the decision-making process. This sense of ownership can facilitate engagement for various campus members. Some chapters in this book explore the impact of space and campus design on student engagement. For instance, providing opportunities for students with disabilities and Students of Color to share their opinions about the physical design of a building as well as select potential artwork for the walls, confirms that educators are taking their needs into consideration prior to proceeding. This practice will facilitate the construction of buildings that align with students' needs and interests, thereby leading to a campus environment that is emblematic of the varied experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives of students.

In an era in which student engagement is receiving increasing attention, providing undergraduates with numerous, sustained opportunities to actively participate in determining the appropriate methods for enriching their academic and social experiences in higher education cannot be overstated. Several scholars (e.g., Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Harper, 2007, 2011; Harper & Antonio, 2008; Kuh et al., 2005, 2007; Strange & Banning, 2001) propose educational practices that are student-centered, well-planned, researched, and guided by student input and assessment data. As Freire (1970) notes, acting without reflecting on why people are oppressed can lead to further oppression. He advises that educators utilize praxis—combining reflection with action. Throughout the book, authors write in this manner and advocate inviting students into dialogues about improving their engagement.

Theory, Practice, Praxis

One of the primary premises of *Student Engagement in Higher Education* is that educators make informed decisions when they utilize relevant theories to guide practice. As such, theories related to identity development, racial/ethnic awareness, stereotypes, deconstructing Whiteness, and others are tied to the needs of the populations considered in each chapter that follows. "Theory is a framework through which interpretations and understandings are constructed. Theory is used to describe human behavior, to explain, to predict, and to generate new knowledge, [practices], and research" (McEwen, 2003,

p. 166). In this book, authors use theories to frame the issues students face and to inform the strategies they propose. In essence, there is interplay between theory and practice, as theory is used to recommend tentative solutions to educational disparities, keeping in mind that those approaches should be continually assessed and revised given the learners and institutional context. Similarly, alternative theories are available as one evaluates the effectiveness of interventions intended to improve engagement. Reason and Kimball (2012) cite Schön (1987) in order to amplify this approach by offering a powerful theory to practice framework that embeds institutional context and feedback loops such that the educator is deeply situated in the knowledge of the field and is able to apply theory effectively in practice, through reflective learning in action. Authors in this edition of *Student Engagement in Higher Education* also utilize a variety of critical theoretical frameworks and lenses to make their cases: theories of indigeneity, critical race theory, critical Whiteness studies, queer theory, feminist theory, and more. As indicated by Abes, Jones, and Stewart (2019), the educator's ability to fluidly navigate and integrate the praxis emerging from both the "canon" of student development theory, as well as critical, cutting-edge frameworks is paramount to today's equity-minded student affairs educator.

The use of theoretical frameworks in each chapter is consistent with current student affairs expectations. Moreover, as detailed in ACPA's Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization (Quaye, Aho, Beard Jacob, Domingue, Guido, Lange, Squire, & Stewart, 2019), educators must openly name the myriad ways racism, White supremacy, and colonization, continue to manifest in the theories that guide their practice to the structures of their institutions. The Strategic Imperative pushes educators to employ liberatory practices that yield outcomes related to critical consciousness, radical democracy, and humanization (Aho & Quaye, 2018). It also emphasizes the importance of educators working to heal from their own trauma so that they can best support students in doing the same.

For decades, there has existed a superficial separation between faculty and student affairs educators, as the former were thought to be responsible for students' classroom learning, while the latter group focused on students' involvement in co-curricular activities (ACPA, 1994). Even though student affairs educators have sought to challenge and transform this demarcation between students' academic and personal selves, there still continues to be an expectation that professors focus on theory and research, while student affairs educators devote their time to practice (ACPA & NASPA, 2004; Harper & Antonio, 2008). Authors in *Student Engagement in Higher Education* reject this false dichotomy and show how educators in both areas are responsible for facilitating a holistic learning environment. The authors model this by using, for example, psychological, environmental, and student development theories to guide the interventions proposed at the end of each chapter. They share concrete strategies for how faculty and student affairs educators can build on each other's expertise to improve the educational experiences of students.

We recognize that educators are often busy and must react quickly to crises that occur on campus. Decisions can still be made promptly and effectively if one keeps current

with theory and reflectively strives to understand the changing needs and demographics of today's college students. Linking theory with practice is not simple; it requires a willingness to rethink one's assumptions about classroom and out-of-class learning and embrace a holistic approach to education that places students' needs at the forefront. One of the central aims of the book is to offer a wealth of examples where theoretical insights converge with practical solutions.

Purposeful Engagement: Cultivating an Environment of Thriving

Diversity, multiculturalism, pluralism, equity and equality, inclusiveness, and social justice are among the many buzzwords used to espouse supposed institutional values. Colleges and universities use these terms liberally in mission statements, on websites, and in recruitment materials. Consequently, various groups of students show up expecting to see evidence of what they have been sold. The most obvious contradiction to these espoused values is the carelessness with which engagement is treated. Students of Color and White student participants in Harper and Hurtado's (2007) study expressed extreme disappointment with the institutional rhetoric concerning diversity and inclusiveness. The misalignment of espoused and enacted institutional values must be addressed if students across various groups are to equitably accrue the full range of benefits associated with educationally purposeful engagement—there must be a greater demonstration of institutional seriousness.

"At-risk students" is perhaps one of the most unfair terms used in American education, in P–12 and higher education alike. This suggests that some students are in jeopardy of not succeeding. Our view is that students are *placed* at risk for dropping out of college when educators are negligent in customizing engagement efforts that connect them to the campus. While some may enter with characteristics and backgrounds that suggest they need customized services and resources, we maintain that student affairs educators and faculty should be proactive in assessing those needs and creating the environmental conditions that would enable all students to thrive (Love, 2019). They are placed at risk when engagement is treated the same and population-specific efforts are not enacted. Concerning the engagement of diverse populations of college students, our position is very much consistent with the title of Manning, Kinzie, and Schuh's (2006) book, *One Size Does Not Fit All*. In the chapters that follow, authors advocate moving beyond sameness to customize educational practices and maximize meaningful, intentional engagement and outcomes for all.

Finally, while the goal may seem lofty, learning to transform institutions and engagement practices through theoretically-grounded, praxis-oriented, equity-minded lenses is a skill that all educators can develop, no matter where they sit in their colleges and universities. When the larger landscape seems hopeless at times, this point should serve as a motivator for all: that the capacity to be agents for justice-centered engagement, the heart of our work, lies within us all.

References

Abes, E. S., Jones, S. R., & Stewart, D-L. (2019). *Rethinking college student development theory using critical frameworks*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Aho, R., & Quaye, S. J. (2018). Applied critical leadership: Centering racial justice and decolonization in professional associations. *The Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, *3*(3), 8–19.

American College Personnel Association. (1994). *The student learning imperative: Implications for student affairs*. Washington, DC: Author.

American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. (2004). *Learning reconsidered: A campus-wide focus on the student experience*. Washington, DC: Authors.

Anaya, G. (1996). College experiences and student learning: The influence of active learning, college environments, and cocurricular activities. *Journal of College Student Development*, *37*(6), 611–622.

Ancis, J., Sedlacek, W., & Mohr, J. (2000). Student perceptions of campus cultural climate by race. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *78*(2), 180–185.

Antonio, A. L., Chang, M. J., Hakuta, K., Kenny, D. A., Levin, S., & Milem, J. F. (2004). Effects of racial diversity on complex thinking in college students. *Psychological Science*, *15*(8), 507–510.

Astin, A. W. (1975). *Preventing students from dropping out*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, *25*(2), 297–308.

Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (1992). Cocurricular influences on college students' intellectual development. *Journal of College Student Development*, *33*, 203–213.

Baxter Magolda, M. B., & King, P. M. (Eds.). (2004). *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Bean, J. P. (1990). Why students leave: Insights from research. In D. Hossler & J. P. Bean (Eds.), *The strategic management of college enrollments* (pp. 147–169). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bean, J. P. (2005). Nine themes of college student retention. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention: Formula for student success* (pp. 215–244). Washington, DC: ACE and Praeger.

Bensimon, E. M. (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in the scholarship of student success. *The Review of Higher Education*, *30*(4), 441–469.

Berger, J. B., & Milem, J. F. (1999). The role of student involvement and perceptions of integration in a causal model of student persistence. *Research in Higher Education*, *40*(6), 641–664.

Braxton, J. M., Hirschy, A. S., & McClendon, S. A. (2004). *Understanding and reducing college student departure. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report* (Vol. 30, No. 3). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Braxton, J. M., Milem, J. F., & Sullivan, A. S. (2000). The influence of active learning on the college departure process: Toward a revision of Tinto's theory. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *71*(5), 569–590.

Bridges, B. K., Cambridge, B., Kuh, G. D., & Leegwater, L. H. (2005). Student engagement at minority-serving institutions: Emerging lessons from the BEAMS project. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 125*, 25–43.

Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E. T., & Hagedorn, L. S. (1999). Campus racial climate and the adjustment of students to college: A comparison between White students and African American students. *Journal of Higher Education*, *70*(2), 134–202.

Chang, M. J., Astin, A. W., & Kim, D. (2004). Cross-racial interaction among undergraduates: Some consequences, causes, and patterns. *Research in Higher Education*, *45*(5), 529–553.

Chang, M. J., Chang, J. C., & Ledesma, M. C. (2005). Beyond magical thinking: Doing the real work of diversifying our institutions. *About Campus*, *10*(2), 9–16.

Chang, M. J., Denson, N., Sáenz, V., & Misa, K. (2006). The educational benefits of sustaining cross-racial interaction among undergraduates. *Journal of Higher Education*, *77*, 430–455.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139–167.

Evans, N. J. (1987). A framework for assisting student affairs staff in fostering moral development. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *66*, 191–193.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Garvey, J. C., Sanders, L. A., & Flint, M. A. (2017). Generational perceptions of campus climate among LGBTQ undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development, 58*(6), 795–817.

Gurin, P., Dey, E. L., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, *72*, 330–366.

Harper, S. R. (2007). Using qualitative methods to assess student trajectories and college impact. In S. R. Harper & S. D. Museus (Eds.), *Using qualitative methods in institutional assessment*. New Directions for Institutional Research (No. 136, pp. 55–68). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Harper, S. R. (2008). Realizing the intended outcomes of *Brown*: High-achieving African American male undergraduates and social capital. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *51*(7), 1–24.

Harper, S. R. (2011). Strategy and intentionality in practice. In J. H. Schuh, S. R. Jones, & S. R. Harper (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (5th ed., pp. 287–302). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Harper, S. R., & Antonio, A. L. (2008). Not by accident: Intentionality in diversity, learning, and engagement. In S. R. Harper (Ed.), *Creating inclusive campus environments for cross-cultural learning and student engagement* (pp. 1–18). Washington, DC: NASPA.

Harper, S. R., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. In S. R. Harper, & L. D. Patton (Eds.), *Responding to the realities of race on campus* (New directions for student services, No. 120) (pp. 7–24). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (2007). Student organizations as venues for Black identity expression and development among African American male student leaders. *Journal of College Student Development*, *48*(2), 133–159.

Hu, S., & Kuh, G. D. (2003). Diversity experiences and college student learning and development. *Journal of College Student Development*, *44*(3), 320–334.

Hurtado, S. (1992). The campus racial climate: Contexts for conflict. *Journal of Higher Education*, *63*(5), 539–569.

Kinzie, J., & Kuh, G. D. (2004). Going deep: Learning from campuses that share responsibility for student success. *About Campus*, *9*(5), 2–8.

Kuh, G. D. (1993). In their own words: What students learn outside the classroom. *American Educational Research Journal*, *30*(2), 277–304.

Kuh, G. D. (1995). The other curriculum: Out-of-class experiences associated with student learning and personal development. *Journal of Higher Education*, *66*(2), 123–155.

Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the National Survey of Student Engagement. *Change*, *33*(3), 10–17.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J. A., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2007). *Piecing together the student success puzzle: Research, propositions, and recommendations*. ASHE Higher Education Report (Vol. 32, No. 5). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J., & Associates (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G. D., Palmer, M, & Kish, K. (2003). The value of educationally purposeful out-of-class experiences. In T. L. Skipper, & R. Argo (Eds.), *Involvement in campus activities and the retention of first-year college students*. The First-Year Experience Monograph Series (No. 36, pp. 19–34). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, *32*(3), 465–491.

Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Manning, K., Kinzie, J., & Schuh, J. H. (2006). *One size does not fit all: Traditional and innovative models of student affairs practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

McEwen, M. K. (2003). The nature and uses of theory. In S. R. Komives, & D. B. Woodard (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (4th ed., pp. 147–163). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Milem, J. F., & Berger, J. B. (1997). A modified model of college student persistence: Exploring the relationship between Astin's Theory of Involvement and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure. *Journal of College Student Development*, *38*(4), 387–400.

Museus, S. D. (2014). The culturally engaging campus environments (CECE) model: A new theory of college success among racially diverse student populations. In M. B. Paulsen (Ed.), *Higher education: A handbook of theory and research* (pp. 189–227). New York, NY: Springer.

Okello, W. K. (2018). From self-authorship to self-definition: Remapping theoretical assumptions through Black feminism. *Journal of College Student Development*, *59*(5), 528–544.

Pascarella, E. T. (2001). Identifying excellence in undergraduate education: Are we even close? *Change*, *33*(3), 19–23.

Pascarella, E. T., Edison, M., Nora, A., Hagedorn, L. S., & Terenzini, P. T. (1996). Influence of students' openness to diversity and challenge in the first year of college. *Journal of Higher Education*, *67*, 174–195.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students, Volume 2: A third decade of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, L. D., Harper, S. R., & Harris, J. (2015). Using critical race theory to (re)interpret widely-studied topics related to students in US higher education. In A. M. Martínez Alemán, E. M. Bensimon, & B. Pusser (Eds.), *Critical approaches to the study of higher education* (pp. 193–219). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J. (2016). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pendakur, S. L. (2016). Empowerment agents: Developing staff and faculty to support students at the margins. In V. Pendakur (Ed.), *Closing the opportunity gap: Identity-conscious strategies for retention and student success*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Peltier, G. L., Laden, R., & Matranga, M. (1999). Student persistence in college: A review of research. *Journal of College Student Retention*, *1*(4), 357–375.

Quaye, S. J., Aho, R. E., Beard Jacob, M., Domingue, A. D., Guido, F. M., Lange, A. C., Squire, D., & Stewart, D-L. (2019). *A bold vision forward: A framework for the strategic imperative for racial justice and decolonization*. Washington, DC: ACPA.

Quaye, S. J., & Harper, S. R. (2007). Faculty accountability for culturally-inclusive pedagogy and curricula. *Liberal Education*, *93*(3), 32–39.

Reason, R. D. and Kimball, E. W. (2012). A new theory-to-practice model for student affairs: Integrating scholarship, context, and reflection. *Education Publications, 21*.

Rest, J. R. (1993). Research on moral judgment in college students. In A. Garrod (Ed.), *Approaches to moral development* (pp. 201–213). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Rockenbach, A. N., Mayhew, M. J., & Bowman, N. A. (2015). Perceptions of the campus climate for non-religious students. *Journal of College Student Development, 56,* 181–186.

Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Stage, F. K., & Hossler, D. (2000). Where is the student? Linking student behaviors, college choice, and college persistence. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 170–195). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Strange, C. C., & Banning, J. H. (2001). *Educating by design: Creating campus learning environments that work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Swail, W. S., Redd, K. E., & Perna, L. W. (2003). *Retaining minority students in higher education: A framework for success*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report (Vol. 30, No. 2). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tanaka, G. K. (2002). Higher education's self-reflexive turn: Toward an intercultural theory of student development. *Journal of Higher Education*, *73*(2), 263–296.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2000). Taking retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of college. *NACADA Journal*, *19*(2), 5–10.

Tinto, V. (2005). Moving from theory to action. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention: Formula for student success* (pp. 371–333). Washington, DC: American Council on Education and Praeger.

Torres, V., Howard-Hamilton, M. F., & Cooper, D. L. (2003). *Identity development of diverse populations: Implications for teaching and administration in higher education*. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report* (Vol. 29, No. 6). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tross, S. A., Harper, J. P., Osher, L. W., & Kneidinger, L. M. (2000). Not just the usual cast of characteristics: Using personality to predict college performance and retention. *Journal of College Student Development*, *41*(3), 325–336.

Villalpando, O. (2002). The impact of diversity and multiculturalism on all students: Findings from a national study. *NASPA Journal*, *40*, 124–144.

Wells, A. V., & Horn, C. (2015). The Asian American College experience at a diverse Institution: Campus climate as a predictor of sense of belonging. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *52*(2), 149–163.