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Research Title:

Demystifying the college-going culture: A qualitative approach for understanding the impact of dual credit participation on low-income, first-generation students of color from urban and rural communities

Abstract of Proposed Plan of Research:

It has been noted for years that the academic achievement of students of color from low socioeconomic backgrounds who are also first-generation college students are well below that of Whites and other students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. Many are not graduating from high school, and schools are failing to adequately prepare those who do graduate to gain admission to our nation's most selective postsecondary institutions. This low academic achievement in the K-12 system propels students of color, especially first-generation, to enroll in open admission community colleges resulting in their overrepresentation in two-year institutions.

Furthermore, the scant body of literature on dual credit programs states that these programs promote postsecondary participation. However, no study has examined the influence of dual enrollment participation on working-class, first-generation, students of color from urban and rural setting on college matriculation, transition, and persistence. By providing a clearer picture of the structured inequalities in the educational pipeline and how dual credit can circumvent these artificial educational systems within a student of color context, policy makers and educators can enhance college participation and completion rates.

Using a qualitative research design, I intend to interview one-on-one and/or focus groups with at least 64 participants: 40 students, 16 teachers/instructors, and 8 staff/administrators at four high schools and four community colleges. I will conduct focus groups, one-on-one interviews, review documents pertaining to dual credit, sit in class to observe the interaction of dual credit students with their peers, and explore the high schools' websites. I use Stanton-Salazar's social capital and funds of knowledge to guide my study. Students in my study will describe how dual credit motivated them to enroll and eased their transition to college after high school. Results from this study will inform policy makers and educators on how dual credit may serve as a vehicle to ensure all students in Texas have the opportunity to enroll, and succeed, in college.