USING A FACILITATED COLLABORATIVE TO BUILD RACIAL EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Proposal to the William T. Grant Foundation
Reducing Inequality Priority Area

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Institutions of higher education often perpetuate racial inequalities by instituting policies and practices that inadvertently serve their affluent White students (Carnevale & Strohl 2013; Williams, 2019) and result in much lower graduation rates for their Black and Latinx students. This discrepancy may be particularly hard to address because the remedy is likely embedded within unobserved racialized organizational beliefs and actions. Instead of attending to these inequities, higher education practitioners and scholars often employ colorblind frameworks or focus their interventions at the student level, potentially missing the embedded organizational ideologies that entrench these inequalities (Harper, 2012; Ray, 2019).

> *The Foundation welcomes descriptive studies that clarify mechanisms for reducing inequality. This is an excellent example of a study that uses interpretive methods to examine a strategy to reduce racial inequalities. Note that in these first few paragraphs, the proposal lays out the basis of inequality (race), introduces how outcomes are unequal (graduation rates), and describes a strategy for addressing that inequality (a policy and practice collaborative).*

Promising new research studies suggest that policy and practice collaboratives—i.e., groups of colleges and universities that collaborate on policy and practice improvements—can improve completion rates, but success requires an explicit focus on race (Jones & Nichols, 2020), organizational change (Center for Urban Education, 2019; May & Bridger, 2010), a commitment to equity-focused policies and plans, and cross-institutional partnerships that can help manifest systemic change (May & Bridger, 2010).

Our study aims to build on this work by surfacing the mechanisms that build practices within colleges and universities to better serve Black and Latinx students and the ways that facilitated collaboratives can foster equitable change. We propose a two-pronged approach. First, we will examine how a statewide, facilitated policy and practice collaborative—the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative (ILEA)—is supporting the graduation outcomes of Black and Latinx students. Second, we will apply a racialized organizations framework (Ray, 2019) across multiple member colleges and universities to examine the macro, meso, and micro variations in institutional response to participation in ILEA.

ILEA was created in 2018 by Partnership for College Completion (PCC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the college and career aspirations of low-income, first- generation, and/or Black and Latinx students in Illinois. As the program facilitator, PCC recruited colleges and universities across the state to participate in ILEA and provided a cross- college and university collaborative learning structure. ILEA's 26 members include public and private bachelor's degree–

granting institutions and nonprofit community colleges of various sizes. Together, they enroll 40 percent of all undergraduates in Illinois, including 68 percent of all Latinx undergraduates and 42 percent of all Black undergraduates.

PCC developed ILEA to be a facilitated policy and practice collaborative that supports its members' college completion efforts. To enroll, members must publicly commit to eliminating racial and socioeconomic disparities and create equity plans that both articulate their policy goals and how they will achieve their goals by 2025.

The Foundation encourages applicants to richly conceptualize inequality. This proposal stands out to us as one that uses a strong theoretical framework to conceptualize how racial inequality is perpetuated at institutions of higher education, as well as how it can be changed.

Using a racialized organizational lens, we study ILEA and its college and university members' responses over two phases. First, we study colleges' and universities' equity plans to learn if and how racial equity is articulated in the plans and the types of institutional changes members develop to ameliorate inequality. Then, we explore equity plan implementation to learn if and how equity plans are implemented, how implementation varies by institutional context, and the degree to which racial equity is embedded in implementation. Throughout these two phases, we explore the role that the facilitated collaborative plays in how colleges and universities make and carry out policy decisions.

Specifically, we hypothesize that institutionalized racial ideologies, organizational structures (e.g., routines and resource allocation), and individual actors' schemas influence how colleges and universities develop and enact their equity plans. We also propose to study the role ILEA plays in individuals' schemas and how ILEA's member institutions make and implement their policy decisions. We do this by examining how ILEA guides the creation of equity plans and tailors its curriculum and support to its members. We compare where and when member institutions mimic one another's routines and explore administrator, faculty, and staff schemas to identify beliefs and practices that support Black and Latinx students, as well as locating those that impede progress.

We ask the following global question: *How can colleges and universities implement organizational change to better support Black and Latinx students?* Answering this question has far-reaching implications for both higher education and for the students who attend those institutions.

Note that the central research question is explicitly focused on <u>change</u>. This is a clear indicator that the study is poised to offer insights on how to <u>reduce</u> inequality rather than describe or explain what inequality looks like.

The current moment of "racial reckoning" in response to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black Americans demands that institutions interrogate the systematic ways in which they perpetuate racial inequality. Research on social and political movements suggests that collective action about race can occur when the "right conditions exist" (Wooten, 2019, p. 6). This moment suggests the right conditions may be now: colleges and universities across the country have made public commitments toward becoming more equitable. However, a public commitment and the creation of equity plans in itself is not enough to create change (Thomas, 2018). Colleges and universities must match their

rhetoric with resources and action (Felix & Fernandez Castro, 2018). This study can help identify organizational factors associated with persisting past implementation challenges toward real change. As institutions within shared fields mimic one another to gain legitimacy, adaptation and innovation within member organizations can influence the broader field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Wooten & Hoffman, 2008). Our study is poised to contribute critical and practical insights into the often-unobserved mechanisms for equitable change and would enable effective replication of a potentially transformative statewide initiative to eradicate racial disparities in postsecondary graduation.

Theoretical and Empirical Rationale

Earning a postsecondary degree is tied to a host of positive economic and social outcomes (Hout, 2012; Ma et al., 2019). Because of the strong correlation between educational attainment and labor market outcomes, increasing college retention and degree completion rates offers one way to improve social mobility (Schudde & Goldrick-Rab, 2015). Beyond improving economic prospects, attending 2- and 4-year postsecondary schools is also associated with better health outcomes (Herd et al., 2007; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003) and greater civic participation (Ma et al., 2019). Due to the strong connections between education, social mobility, civic engagement, and health, improving the college completion rates for Black and Latinx students represents one powerful way by which colleges and universities can reduce inequality.

Yet, despite institutions' verbal commitments to equality and expanded enrollment, racial disparities in college completion persist (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Thomas, 2018). White students continue to obtain college degrees at much higher rates than Black and Latinx students, even as rates of college attendance have increased for the latter (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Rothwell, 2015; Thomas, 2018). The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) reported that six years after enrolling, more than 52 percent of Black students and 43 percent of Latinx students had not yet graduated versus 28 percent of White students (Shapiro et al., 2019). The federal educational attainment rates tell the same story: 32 percent of Black, 23 percent of Latinx, and 47 percent of White students enrolled in postsecondary education graduated with an associate's degree or higher (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). Illinois, the state context for our study, parallels this national pattern. Only 29 percent of Black students and 20 percent of Latinx students in Illinois earned an associate's degree or higher in six years versus 47 percent of White students (Ostro, 2020). So, *how can colleges and universities implement organizational change to better support Black and Latinx students?*

This section of the proposal makes a compelling case for how racial outcomes are unequal and why those outcomes matter. We encourage applicants to draw on extant literature to document unequal outcomes and why they exist, but focus on how the study will examine programs, practices, or policies to address those unequal outcomes. This is a particularly rich, well integrated literature review.

One major driver of unequal college completion is that, on average, Black and Latinx students attend substantially different colleges and universities than White students (Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Rothwell, 2015). Much attention has been paid to the extreme racial and socioeconomic segregation of K-12 schools, but there has been less discussion regarding colleges and universities in these terms. In the United States, colleges and universities are also highly segregated and fractionalized by race and class (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Posselt et al., 2012). Black and Latinx students attend institutions that receive less state and private funding (Hamilton

& Darity, 2017; Wooten, 2015), are lower ranked (Espeland & Sauder, 2016; Smith, 2019), and have different missions and ideological commitments (Bailey & Morest, 2004; Bastedo & Gumport, 2003; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006) than those attended by White students.

College completion at 2-year institutions varies widely from that of 4-year colleges (Long & Kurlaender, 2009; Whitaker & Pascarella, 1994). Highly selective, well-funded, 4-year colleges enroll the majority of White college students. In contrast, Black and Latinx students are concentrated in the least selective and least-funded 2-year schools. Recent national data confirm that Black students make up a larger share of community college students compared with 4-year public colleges and universities (13.8 versus 12.2 percent; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020b). The results are starker for Latinx students, who compose 23.1 percent of community college students but just 14.3 percent of 4-year public college and university students (NCES, 2020b). The additional funding that elite colleges receive allows them to spend more money on their (predominantly White) students; the most selective colleges spend two to five times more money on each student than the least selective ones, leading to higher graduation rates and labor market outcomes and resulting in a $2 million lifetime cumulative advantage for White graduates (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013).

These funding and attendance discrepancies by institutional type mean that to understand and address inequalities in degree attainment, we must examine college and university level (2- year/4-year) and control (public/private), along with their commitments to racialized student bodies. Although community colleges may spend less money per student, their mission statements often place more emphasis on racial and cultural diversity (Wilson et al., 2012). This ideological emphasis on diversity matters because students whose goals align with their institutions' missions are more likely to graduate (Flowers & Pascarella, 2003). Moreover, research demonstrates that when colleges and universities make a commitment to equalizing outcomes and instantiate those values in equity plans with measurable targets and a clear implementation plan, they can improve college completion (Ching et al., 2015; May & Bridger, 2010). Examining the level and control of the college or university, along with its racial ideologies, is an important first step in understanding college completion.

Organizational factors that better serve White students than Black or Latinx students are an additional driver of college completion. Since the 1980s, accepted models of college completion concentrate on ways in which individual students become disaffected and disengaged from the institution (Astin, 1984; Bean, 1980, 1982; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Tinto, 1975), but they fail to consider how colleges and universities themselves may be responsible for this disaffection (see Bensimon, 2005, for an exception). Moreover, these theories of retention overlook race, class, and culture, thereby making their findings potentially problematic when studying students whose cultures differ from the Eurocentric one embodied in most colleges and universities (Guiffrida, 2006; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000; Tierney, 1999).

Higher education literature continues to focus on the norms and values associated with White, middle-class, 4-year students, leaving undertheorized the experiences of students who do not fit that mold (Yosso, 2005)—particularly, students who are from non-White and low-income backgrounds who are more likely to attend 2-year colleges (Rothwell, 2015). However, more recent research into the racial discrepancy in college completion has challenged these assumptions. Higher education scholars now suggest that a student's culture should be considered when addressing students'

"motivational orientation" (Guiffrida, 2006, p. 452).

Critical race scholars take a different tack, contending that postsecondary education was developed within a racist/White supremacist framework and thus, rather than serving as a "great equalizer," it instantiates racial inequality (Patton, 2016, p. 318; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998) and situates people of color as outsiders from higher education (Iverson, 2007). In both cases, the focus remains on characterizing individual students and their engagement with those institutions, rather than addressing college and university organizational structures that impede student success (Bensimon, 2005). Instead of solely focusing on improving student engagement, colleges and universities need to reform their organizational routines (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Pentland & Feldman, 2005; Sherer & Spillane, 2011) and resource use (Levin, 1975; Rice, 1997) to better meet the needs of Black and Latinx students (Hoover, 2017).

Colleges and universities also should address the role that individual institutional actors play in implementing new directives. Administrators, faculty, and staff working on the ground within colleges and universities may have commitments that conflict with equity goals (McLaughlin, 1990); may interpret policy in ways harmful to Black and Latinx students (Berrey, 2011; Lipsky, 1980); or may be evaluated on metrics that do not align with efforts to equalize completion rates (Ozga, 2013). As a result, practices may be decoupled from policy (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). For example, in her study of equity-plan enactment, Bensimon (2005, p. 100) found that individual actors' beliefs about race and equity can create unequal outcomes for students and can feed back into the organizational culture. That is, even when colleges and universities put equity-focused policies in place, if individuals who carry out the policies hold deficit views of students, those views can hamper implementation. Bensimon (2005) leverages the concept of cognitive frames to elucidate how institutional actors use existing cognitive frames as a filter to organize new information in relation to existing beliefs. She argues that deficit cognitive frames may attribute a student's disaffection as a lack of socialization or motivation (Bensimon, 2005). We extend the work done by Bensimon (2005) by continuing her use of cognitive frames, which we refer to as *schemas*, and by wrapping her views on equity within a racial lens. In addition to deficit cognitive frames, we locate where and when racial stereotypes, racial evasion (Hughey, 2015, p. 859), and colorblind schemas (Bonilla-Silva, 2002; 2012) emerge to stymie equity plan implementation, as well locating schemas supportive to Black and Latinx students.

Applying a Racialized Organizational Approach to Higher Education

We draw on theories from organizational studies, specifically racialized organizations, and higher education to build a conceptual framework to study how colleges and universities improve college completion. We hypothesize organizational structures impede or advance the creation and implementation of policies designed to achieve equitable rates of college completion between Black and Latinx students and White students. We define equity as the actions necessary to create equal outcomes. Therefore, we refer to the lower college completion rates for Black and Latinx students as unequal educational outcomes and consider policies and

In 2020, the Foundation encouraged researchers to address the structural roots that underlie inequalities. While this study does not take on macro-structural factors, it is laudable for shifting the lens away from strategies that try to change individuals (e.g., by, boosting academic preparedness, etc.) to strategies that try to change organizations themselves by addressing the organizational dynamics and processes that contribute to unequal college experiences between Black, Latinx, and White students (described in the section above).

adaptations that are racially explicit and equity minded and aligned across an institution's ideology, organizational structures, and schemas as the equitable steps needed to address these differential educational outcomes.

Organizational theory illuminates how organizational structures influence the uptake of policies and practices and how the people involved in organizations shape, and are shaped by, those organizations (Spillane et al., 2011; Weick, 1995). This work demonstrates how institutional structures—as organizational routines—can have unintended effects, such as privileging the most financially secure by allowing students who have paid tuition to register first for classes. Organizational theorists remind us that organizations are actors and "the organization is a social entity in and of itself" (Wooten & Couloute, 2017, p. 10), encouraging researchers to focus on multilevel inequality regimes within organizations and not just the people who populate them.

A critical insight from organizational institutionalism is that organizations exist in fields with others that share a common meaning system (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1991; Wooten & Hoffman, 2008). To survive in the field, organizations conform or mimic one another by attempting to adhere to shared understandings of what constitutes a proper organization. In effect, "institutionalized ideas pressure organizations to adopt similar structures and forms, and as a result they become increasingly similar" (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017, p. 4). However, organizations do not always live up to their stated beliefs, and sometimes encounter competing motivations. Instead of conforming, they may decouple their actions from structures and only claim to uphold their stated goals (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Because organizations are nested within fields with shared institutional logics, adaptation and innovation within one organization can influence the broader field (Ray, 2019; Wooten & Hoffman, 2008).

Despite these critical insights, higher education researchers typically focus on student experiences and outcomes rather than on organizational structures, thereby missing how routines and resource allocation contribute to inequality. In addition, except for a few notable studies (Bensimon, 2005; Kezar & Holcombe, 2020), when colleges and universities are studied organizationally, the focus is most often on one elite college or university, rather than on community colleges or the broader field, making it hard to replicate or transfer positive changes, especially to 2-year schools where Black and Latinx students predominate.

Furthermore, higher education organizations are often treated as race-neutral (e.g., Meyer et al., 2007) and studied as places where preexisting racial orders—created through housing, primary schooling, and state policies—play out, rather than sites of creating and re-creating racial meaning (Smith, 2019). However, organizations are not colorblind (Ray & Purifoy, 2019), and colleges and universities have long racial histories (Wilder, 2014) that inform admissions, hiring, and academic life (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Thornhill, 2019; Wooten & Couloute, 2017). Many of the best-known U.S. colleges and universities are direct beneficiaries of slavery (Wilder, 2014). Beliefs about racial "fitness" have long served as a basis of college and university admissions criteria (Karabel, 2005; Thornhill, 2019) and

A 2016 article by Prudence Carter and colleagues argues that "to effectively address inequity, the role of race must be explicitly acknowledged." Foundation staff appreciated how this proposal centers attention to race and racism in its theoretical framework and research design.

faculty hiring (White-Lewis, 2020).

That colleges and universities often recruit a racialized student body and actively work to have students understand themselves as racialized beings is apparent in institutions designated as "historically Black colleges and universities" (HBCUs) and "Hispanic-serving institutions" (HSIs). But racialization processes occur in all colleges and universities, including "predominantly White institutions" (PWIs), like state flagships and private liberal arts colleges, where Whiteness is unmarked but no less present (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Lewis et al., 2000). Moreover, colleges and universities are often active participants in producing new racial categories and meanings (Smith, 2019). Who is included in categories such as "underrepresented minority (URM)" shifts and changes within and between institutions and over time. Therefore, colleges and universities are racial organizations and a key site where racial meanings can be dismantled, reshaped, or institutionalized—prime places to address institutionalized racism.

Creating change requires attending explicitly to race and shifting organizational behaviors across systems. This means addressing the racial ideologies that exist within the organization (macro), how these ideologies permeate the organization's routines and resource use (meso), and the ways these practices maintain or shift individual schemas (micro) (Table 1). We apply the theory of racialized organizations to higher education to locate the typically hidden organizational beliefs about race and to identify how ideas and actions about race interact with the policies designed to improve the Black and Latinx campus experience. We focus on the college and university as our unit of analysis because this helps identify features within the institution and because it helps us leverage the cross-college and university variation within ILEA.

Summary figures and tables, when used judiciously, can be very helpful for reviewers. For example, this proposal uses a figure to illustrate the theory of change and a table to highlight central constructs and data sources. This proposal also features a table that clearly show how research questions, data collection strategies, and analyses are aligned.

As shown in our theoretical framework in Figure 1, we posit that colleges' and universities' ability to make substantial, lasting change to their college completion rates depends on the degree to which their ideologies, organizational structures, and individual schemas are aligned, equity-minded, and racially explicit, and supported through their collaboration with ILEA. The nature of the messages transmitted from ILEA and filtered through the colleges and universities has consequences for their college completion goals. Studying change efforts and the potential uneven nature of their implementation offers an opportunity to observe practices that may reproduce or dismantle inequalities (Acker, 2006). Applying these theoretical tools to the ILEA collaborative allows us to uncover routines and resource distribution that would otherwise remain hidden with race-neutral organizational theories that may not trace resources directed specifically to Black and Latinx students.

The strongest proposals usually have clear and well-supported contributions not only to policy and/or practice but also to academic literature. Note from our website: "Proposals for studies are evaluated based on their fit with our interests in reducing inequality; the strength and feasibility of their designs, methods, and analyses; the potential to inform change, and their contribution to theory and empirical evidence."

By joining theories of racialized organizations and higher education, this work can contribute to both fields by offering insights into how colleges and universities can reform not only routines and resource allocation but also the ideologies and pervasive systems that may inadvertently perpetuate racial inequality even as these colleges and universities explicitly seek to reduce it. Therefore, this study will contribute key insights, including the types of initiatives that can be successfully replicated and the types of systemwide actions and ways of thinking needed to address unequal completion on their campuses.

Levers for Reducing Racial Inequality in College Completion

This study relies on two levers of change—one at the programmatic level and one at the organization level—to reduce inequality among Black and Latinx students in postsecondary education (Figure 1). The first lever, ILEA, directly addresses the unequal outcomes in college completion by helping colleges and universities create, implement, and measure policies designed to "eliminate their institutional degree completion gaps," (Partnership for College Completion [PCC], n.d.b). The second lever, the alignment of organizational constructs in ways that institutionalize racial equity, is novel. As Bensimon (2005) notes and we reiterate throughout this proposal, addressing college completion inequalities needs to be done at the organizational level. We have argued that only recently has the field of higher education shifted away from placing responsibility for organizational engagement on students and toward investigating the institutional practices that could be perpetuating discrepancies.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework and Levers of Change
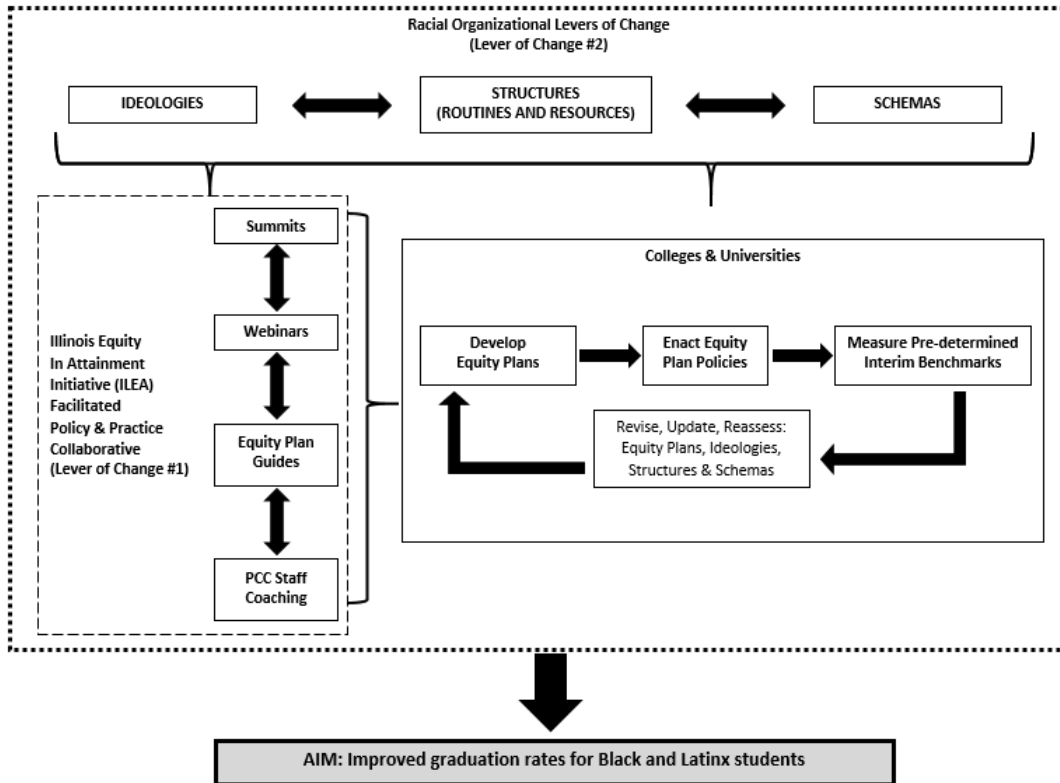
Change Lever #1: Illinois Equity Attainment Initiative (ILEA)

PCC developed ILEA based on the theory of change that achieving equitable college completion rates requires an institutional response—specifically, that "equity gaps will be eliminated through: (1) deliberate, committed, and coordinated action; (2) sustained focus over time; (3) the establishment of interim benchmarks in service of the ultimate goal; and (4) the regular use and sharing of disaggregated data" (PCC, n.d.a). These tenets align with equity practices endorsed by the Center for Urban Education (2019), including extra support, data sharing, equity plans, and cross-institutional learning. ILEA aims to engage member institutions in cycles of change by publicly setting goals for inequality reduction, acting on those goals, and evaluating their success (by regularly reviewing data disaggregated by race and income). Together, these actions outlined in equity plans are designed to develop institutional knowledge, create a culture of continuous improvement, and disseminate ideas across the institution (ILEA theory of change, internal document, n.d.). That is, these actions are meant to create organizational change (Figure 1).

ILEA offered semiannual summits that gathered member colleges and universities into facilitated professional development sessions designed to expose them to research-based ideas from the field and offer concrete solutions to institutional challenges. There have been four PCC Summits since the collaborative began: one in fall 2018, two in 2019, and a virtual summit in fall 2020; the spring 2020 summit was canceled due to COVID-19. Summits were primarily designed to support the creation of equity plans. Now that members have developed them, summits occur annually. To ensure both ongoing compliance and durability of policy changes, ILEA requires each member to create an Equity Team on which its president and other senior leaders serve.

Although this proposal does not include a program intervention study, it clearly describes the logic and theory at the center of the role of the policy and practice in changing inequality. Proposals should take care to clearly explain a proposed intervention, such as key components, staffing, and delivery.

Each Equity Team is tasked with developing an equity plan that addresses the institution's unique constellation of factors. For example, an Equity Team may recommend improving an existing campus tutoring program, including ways to identify measurable solutions and then measure them, such as requiring any student with below a C course grade to enroll in tutoring. The institution can then use data from benchmarked intervals to gauge program success. ILEA also requires colleges and universities to publicly track their progress as a way to encourage transparency and goal attainment.

PCC has three staff members who support the ILEA members as they continue to implement their equity plans. Each PCC staffer manages between eight and nine colleges or universities with whom they communicate regularly. They serve as thought partners to institutional leadership and spend time gathering and delivering tailored resources based on the institutions' needs and requests.

Although the idea of a policy and practice collaborative is becoming more common (American Talent Initiative [ATI], 2020; May & Bridger, 2010), ILEA is unique in its facilitated nature and its cross-collaboration between 2-year and 4-year institutions and public and private institutions, with all implementing policies that have the same aims. Past programs have concentrated on a single level (e.g., 2-year or 4-year) or control (e.g., public and private) (ATI, 2020; Ching et al., 2015; Kezar & Holcombe, 2020; May & Bridger, 2010; Witham et al., 2015). ILEA and similar entities believe that these collaborations create lasting, systemic improvements. Therefore, we take the entire program,

from the ideas disseminated to the group to equity plan evaluation and readjustment, as our first lever of change in reducing inequality.

Our specific study of ILEA can demonstrate how a singular organization disseminates ideas across a set of colleges and universities, how those ideas are picked up by those institutions, and the normative role ILEA may play through dissemination of its ideas. For example, member institutions may mimic one another, adopting similar practices that could result in organizational isomorphism across these varied colleges and universities (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hoover, 2017; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Or internal structures could challenge recommendations even as these colleges and universities create and enact their equity plans. We investigate the adoption of equity plans through our second lever of change, which examines how organizational constructs within colleges and universities can promote or inhibit the implementation of equity plans.

Change Lever #2: Alignment across Organizational Constructs toward the Institutionalization of Racial Equity
We hypothesize that these constructs—ideologies, organizational structures, and routines— support and constrain the creation and implementation of policies designed to improve college completion for Black and Latinx students (Figure 1). Therefore, our second lever is the equity- minded and racially explicit alignment of these constructs to guide institutional change. The benefit of our comparative study design is the ability to compare macro, meso, and micro processes across colleges and universities to determine how different ideologies, structures, and schemas operate as levers for change (Table 1).

We hypothesize that the change efforts will have made a difference in improving college completion rates when there is alignment across routines, resources, policies, and ideologies and schemas. By alignment, we mean that equity plan content must be consistent with how institutional leaders and staff speak and that the ways in which they speak reflects assets-based thinking about Black and Latinx students and people more broadly and does not shy away from frank discussions of race. When there is not alignment, or only partial alignment across some of our identified organizational structures (e.g., leaders all talk in the same way, but we don't see the resources), then that will be indicative of places where a college or university is not fulfilling its goal of racial equity.

Racial Ideology. Ideologies provide common sense structures and meaning about how the world works (Saunders, 2015). These meanings manifest themselves in practices that create accepted ways of doing and thereby exclude alternative ways (Apple, 2004; Saunders, 2015). Ideologies therefore by their nature "obfuscate the embedded assumptions" situated within processes (Saunders, 2015, p.394). We will study ideology at the macro-institutional level by examining both PCC's and members' beliefs about what is needed to improve college completion. We will capture messages about ideologies through equity plans, mission statements, and interviews with college and university presidents.

Whether a study uses interpretive or statistical methods, the proposal should clearly identify and explain key constructs. This study draws on relatively complex concepts from organizational theory and offers both narrative and examples to explain how the team will operationalize those concepts in the research design.

Whether they are "color-conscious" or "colorblind," racial ideologies tend to be applied in ways that favor

Whites (Hughey, 2015, p. 859)—much the way racial ideologies in crime emphasize the threatening nature of non-White suspects and are less likely to humanize non-White than White suspects (Hughey, 2015). In education, even as we serve to alleviate "the gap," we still refer to the educational attainment discrepancy between White students and non-White students in ways that hold White student achievement, and the practices that led to this outcome, as the standard.

In our tutoring example, ideologies about race or about what it means to be an ideal college student could come into play. Colleges could implement their tutoring policies by recommending anyone who received an "A" in a course to be a tutor, relying upon the belief that grades signify excellence. However, such a policy may result in a majority White tutoring force hired and paid to tutor Black and Latinx students who are not paid during the tutoring exchange.

Structures. At the structural level, we focus on routines (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Pentland & Feldman, 2005; Sherer & Spillane, 2011) and resource use (Levin, 1975; Rice, 1997) because racialized organization theory suggests that these organizational structures reify racial ideologies (Ray, 2019; Wooten, 2019). We rely on the college and university policies and practices to serve as the markers for capturing these hidden organizational structures.

Routines. We focus on routines because, as repetitive, recognizable interactions among organizational members (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 95; Hoover, 2017; Pentland & Feldman, 2005), they can constrain or enable individual racial attitudes and discrimination (Ray, 2019), making them of particular interest as we investigate how colleges and universities create equity at their institutions. Routines are notable for their "hidden in plain sight" quality. As mechanisms that shape how work gets done, people communicate and transmit information, routines have the power to facilitate some efforts and sideline others. They are knowable and thus not invisible in the sense that actors are unaware of their existence. Rather, their ubiquity and regularity make them part of the landscape of this-is-how-we-do-things-here, and as such, actors typically fail to pay attention to them or the influence they have on the workplace.

For example, the abstracted, idealized, *ostensive* routine could reveal the process for how students are identified for tutoring while the *performative* or enacted routine could show how only a handful of identified students are actually provided tutors (Feldman & Pentland, 2003).

Organizational routines in secondary education are well documented (e.g., Diamond & Lewis, 2019; Sherer & Spillane, 2011; Spillane et al., 2011). The primary argument for using routines has been to capture how messages—racial messages, in particular—from the environment spread across an organization and become more durable over time. We follow the work of Diamond and Lewis (2019), who observed that how individuals apply their existing schemas of race influences the performative aspect of a routine, or how it is experienced. They tracked high school disciplinary routines, which while race neutral in their ostensive state, become racialized in their performative aspect. That is, while discipline policies did not suggest that Black students should be over-identified for disciplinary infractions, in reality, they are (Diamond & Lewis, 2019).

In addition to how existing routines play out, we will look for new routines because they may be one way by which organizations alter their existing norms and cultures (Hoover, 2017; Sherer & Spillane, 2011). New routines may be developed through either innovation or mimicry (DiMaggio & Powell,

1983; Hoover, 2017; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Innovation enables organizations to tailor new routines to their specific needs, although they also inject uncertainty into the organization because their outcomes are unknown (Hoover, 2017). Mimicry, on the other hand, as one organization's adoption of routines from another organization, may reduce the unknown element (Hoover, 2017). Due to their between-member contact, we expect ILEA colleges and universities to mimic each other. However, because of COVID-19, it is unclear whether this will occur directly through institution–institution contact or through their relationships with PCC.

In addition, routines act as a bridge, connecting racial schemas and resources. We will uncover data regarding routines through multiple interviews that ask participants to describe policy implementation in detail. Observations from Equity Team meetings will also capture information on the enactment of routines. By looking across member colleges and universities, we will be able to see which racial structures are replicated across organizations and have thereby become institutionalized (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Ray, 2019) and which disappear, helping point to possibilities for change (Feldman & Pentland, 2003).

Resources. Resources are the physical embodiment of a community's values. Resource use reveals actual rather than aspirational (or budgeted) priorities because resource allocation depicts where entities have chosen to direct their limited money, time, and materials (Kolbe & Feldman, 2018; Kolbe & Rice, 2012; Ray, 2019). For this project, they represent the physical embodiment of the member colleges' and universities' stated ideologies. We document resources because they "help clarify how a theory of change is operationalized in concrete … terms," (Hollands et al., 2020, p. 2) by offering a tangible link between the policies and practices that colleges and universities articulate as their priorities and the actual ways they implement them.
Resources are typically measured to determine which program yields the highest impact for the lowest cost. However, we apply this analysis in an underutilized way, i.e., to understand the equity priorities of colleges and universities (see Kolbe & Rice, 2012, for a similar use).

We will explore the extent to which resources are directed toward the enactment of policies and programs detailed in the equity plans and whether they are directed toward Black and Latinx students. Resources include the combination of material and nonmaterial assets measured in specific quantities that produce a program (Levin, 1975; Levin et al., 2017; Rice, 1997).
Resources can include physical space, human capital, and time, among other things. Measuring resources is important both for naming assets that may otherwise remain hidden (e.g., Acker, 2006) and for calculating expenditures. Using data from equity plans, interviews, and financial documents, resource analysis will identify the action steps articulated in the equity plans and will catalog the resources allocated toward those aims (Levin et al., 2017; Levin & McEwan, 2001; Rice, 1997, 2001). In our tutoring example, we will track, among other things, the time administrators spend identifying students in need, the number of and cost for the tutors, and their use of facilities, including rooms and technologies.

Schemas. We define schemas as efficient mechanisms for taking in and organizing information. But they do more than just store ideas and concepts—they create subjective "mental maps" that tell a story about how the world works. That story helps us think about and respond to new information and situations (Harris, 1994). In these new situations, schemas direct knowledge acquisition by pairing new information with selected, existing knowledge. Although schemas facilitate the assimilation of new

information, they also privilege some ideas over others, creating a cognitive shorthand (Cantor, 1990; DiMaggio, 1997), such as notions that college students will seek out help when they need it or that White students perform better than Black or Latinx students. Often unconscious, schemas become both a filter through which individuals simplify the world and a "filler-in," as information present in our schemas inserts itself into situations where it is nonexistent, thereby confirming existing expectations. In situations where different schemas could be applied to the event, the most salient schema will likely be "cued for sense-making use" (e.g., a person looking for threats will find them; [Harris, 1994, p. 314]). Schemas become more entrenched over time, thus becoming less likely to allow in disconfirming evidence (e.g., Harris, 1994; Labianca et al., 2000; Lord & Foti, 1986). Yet, schemas are dynamic and can be modified as the result of new information. For this project, we are interested in schemas' ability to organize new information and experiences within existing conceptual templates and how those templates are employed for solving problems (Taylor & Crocker, 1981, as cited in Harris, 1994.

Organizational schemas. Although there is some debate about whether organizational schemas occur *in* individuals within an organization (Harris, 1994) or within an organization and communicated *to* individuals (Labianca et al., 2000), in either case the end result is a schema or set of schemas that creates shared expectations of an organization's behavior. In this way, organizational schemas are self-perpetuating across individuals and over time (Harris, 1994).

However, individuals with different organizational responsibilities and levels of power, such as administrators who make decisions versus implementers who carry out decisions, may apply a different schema to the same situation (Labianca et al., 2000).

Race-based schemas. Schemas based on race may perpetuate beliefs about the deficits of Latinx students and serve as a default organizing principle to maintain racial hierarchies, even as new policies and practices seek to remedy them. Such practices may create durable, racialized structures as schemas connect with resources in ways that differentially advantage particular racial groups (Ray, 2019, pp. 8-9).

Race-based organizational schemas. When Labianca et al. (2000) investigated how organizations implemented a new organizational structure, they found that there were "cognitive barriers" (p. 250) that created individual resistance to new ways of doing things. They found these barriers—i.e., schemas—may limit an individual's support for the very policies they wish to implement. These schemas will likely vary by type of college or university, in particular between 2- and 4-year institutions whose institutional missions vary widely (Bailey et al., 2005). These existing schemas may be active in ways that run counter to the goals of ILEA or counter to the intentions of the individuals involved. Failure to revise existing schemas and enact new ones during such a pivotal time of change may create resistance to that change (Labianca et al., 2000). That is, just as organizational culture differs between college and university, so too will individuals' schemas. In the case of an administrator at an ILEA member college or university, we will explore their mental maps of racial equity and how their conceptualizations of Black and Latinx students may imply a deficit model (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Patton, 2016) and how these schemas about equity, Black and Latinx students, and the college or university's responsibility for promoting equity shape their institutional response. To capture schemas, we will use elicitation techniques (Barton, 2015; Johnson & Weller, 2002) during interviews and use emotion coding to analyze transcripts.

Table 1. Connections across Organizational Level, Key Constructs, and Data Sources

Organizational Level	Key Constructs	Data Sources
Superstructure (Macro)	Racial ideology (college- and university-wide beliefs/PCC beliefs)	• Interviews with PCC and college and university leaders • *Artifacts:* PCC equity plan guide, college and university equity plans, college and university mission statements, PCC webinars
Structure (Meso)	Structures (resources, routines)	• Interviews with PCC and across colleges and universities • Observations (PCC Summits, Equity Team meetings) • *Artifacts:* college and university annual progress reports, college and university equity plans, budgets, job descriptions, shared governance documents, core curriculum guides
Substructure (Micro)	Schemas (implicit mental maps)	• Interviews across colleges and universities • Observations (PCC summits, Equity Team meetings)

Organizational level & constructs adapted from Ray, 2019

Research Questions (RQs)

RQ1. How are colleges and universities building racially equitable practices at their institutions?
   A. What are the institutions' racial ideologies?
   B. How do equity plans align with known benchmarks of equity?
   C. What resources do colleges and universities direct toward equity policies? What resources are earmarked for Black and Latinx students?
   D. How are colleges and universities applying routines in service of racial equity? To what extent is racial equity embedded in institutional routines?
   E. How do individuals implement equity plans in relation to their schemas?

RQ2. What role does a facilitated collaborative play in fostering racial equity within colleges and universities?
   A. How do colleges and university equity plans align with the ILEA program?
   B. How is PCC tailoring its delivery of ILEA toward member colleges and universities? What resources does PCC direct toward members?
   C. In what ways do ILEA members' equity plans and equity plan implementation mimic one another? To what extent are members mimicking equitable processes?

A Comparative Case Study Design

We propose to address these questions through a two-and-a-half-year, comparative case study (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). This design compares multiple cases at the same unit-of-analysis (i.e., ILEA member colleges and universities) and investigates how similar forces (e.g., college and university relationships with PCC) results in similar and different actions (e.g., implementation practices, routines, and use of resources). The benefit of this design is that by holding the ILEA policy messages constant, we are able to expose variation in organizational practices across the colleges and universities. Such a design lends itself to interview and observation data collection because these methods capture the rich descriptions necessary to explore the similarities and differences across sites. The study is designed to be both exploratory and theory-building. Answering our research questions will provide greater insight into identifying which practices work for improving racial equity on campuses and under which conditions.

We plan to conduct this study in two phases. During Phase I, from May 2021 through December 2021, we will examine the existing equity plans developed by ILEA member colleges and universities. These will be used to identify racial ideologies, to select potential policies for further investigation in Phase II, to develop a typology of equity-based policies, and to determine how equity plans compare to equity benchmarks (Center for Urban Education, 2020). These policies, such as a tutoring policy, will serve as the tangible discussion point around which to investigate routines and resources, ideologies, and schemas. In Phase II, from June 2021 through November 2023, we will study the enactment of policies identified in Phase I through site visits to the selected colleges and universities. There we will look for institutional changes that colleges and universities are making in response to their participation in ILEA. The first 19 months will include data collection, and the final 11 months will be dedicated to analysis and writing.

Two things are of note here. First, reviewers look to see how effectively a research design aligns with the questions asked. This study's design – a comparative case study – allows for the kind of in-depth qualitative data collection that aligns with exploratory research questions. Second, reviewers also want to be convinced that a study will provide robust evidence on responses to inequality, without overpromising. The proposal clearly states that this is an exploratory study to identify practices and uncover mechanisms that can improve racial equity on college campuses – and backs this up with fully elaborated data collection and analysis plans.

Phase I: Methods, Data Sources, and Analysis Plan

From project onset in May 2021 through December 2021, we will conduct a Critical Frame Analysis (Bacchi, 1999; Dombos et al., 2012) examining how problems and solutions are represented in existing college and university documents from all 26 institutions involved in ILEA (see Appendix B for the list of institutions). These include their equity plans and mission statements as well as PCC guidance. We will map college and university equity plans against the PCC guidance, paying particular attention to where included policies and "evidence-based strategies" align with ILEA recommendations, how plans compare across colleges and universities, and the language used to discuss race (e.g., an asset-based view of students and explicit mentions of race). Equity plans will be compared for internal alignment (i.e., whether the chosen policies align with their stated goals) and cross-college and university alignment (i.e., whether colleges and universities adopt the same/similar policies).

We will analyze the equity plans alongside the mission statements to: 1) inductively develop a set of

codes with which to analyze the rest of the equity plans, and 2) identify the policies to discuss within our interview protocols.

Data Sources
ILEA Equity Plan Webinars and Field Guides
PCC publishes equity plan training, including field guides and recorded webinars, which will be used to capture ILEA policy recommendations. Through these recommendations, we can trace policy implementation upstream to learn the level of influence that ILEA yields across its member colleges and universities. In particular, we can compare the ways in which ILEA describes its policies, and methods of implementation to learn how closely colleges and universities align themselves with ILEA recommendations and ideologies.

Equity Plans
Colleges and universities have created equity plans to articulate their vision of postsecondary success for themselves and their students and to map the path to achieve those goals. Equity plans contain details on the current state and future vision of colleges' and universities' efforts, institutional strategies for achieving these goals, an evaluation plan, budget, resource allocation, and timelines for how the strategies will be enacted. Plans also include a list of Equity Team members (e.g., college or university president, provost, and others), annual growth targets, and annual reports toward their college-completion goals.

As documents co-created among team members, equity plans can communicate negotiated meanings and legitimize particular ways of thinking (Vaara et al., 2010). In this way, they will serve to record institutional ideologies. Equity plans will also be used to guide interviews by identifying the policies and practices around which to shape our conversations. Identified policies will be traced through interviews to uncover routines and identify resources.

Mission Statements
Mission statements play an instructional and normative role in communicating a college or university's ideology and serve as an artifact of a broader institutional discussion about its purpose (Lake & Mrozinski, 2011). Instructionally, they may guide institutional members' actions (Morphew & Hartley, 2006), and, normatively, they can serve to inspire members and create a shared sense of purpose (Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Taylor & Morphew, 2010). They also act to signal externally— e.g., to accreditors or prospective students—that they conform to expectations of what a college or university is supposed to be and do (Lake & Mrozinski, 2011; Morphew & Hartley, 2006). In particular, the variation between community colleges' (i.e., 2- year public colleges) and 4-year colleges' and universities' mission statements will be a useful source of information on how college and university level is relevant to college and university ideology and policy formation.

Phase I Analysis Plan
From May to December 2021, we will analyze ILEA equity plan artifacts (e.g., webinars and guidance), institution equity plans, and mission statements to operationalize key constructs, surface racial ideologies, develop a typology of equity policies, and thereby develop and refine our interview protocols.

Operationalize Key Constructs, Develop a Typology of Equity Policies, and Compare Equity Plans to Benchmarks

We will review all equity plans and catalog their policies to develop a typology. We will operationalize key constructs by comparing all 26 college and university equity plans across their aims, policies, and practices to catalog similar practices across colleges and universities for the overall group, and by college and university level (i.e., 2- and 4-year) and by public and private college and university. This process will create a library of existing policies and practices. After we develop this typology, we will develop our codebook. Coding will first occur inductively to create a list of emergent codes (Miles et al., 2019). We will combine our emergent codes with an adapted list of critical policy frames developed by Dombos and colleagues (2012), including inclusive policymaking, race-explicitness, structural understanding of race, intersectional inclusion, and commitment to racial equality (research questions 1a and 2a). Finally, we will compare individual equity plans to equity benchmarks established by the Center for Urban Education (2020). We will iteratively search for themes across our descriptive codes to aggregate into more theoretical codes until we complete our final codebook.

> *Qualitative coding plans should always be fully explained. Mixed methods studies that use quantitative and qualitative methods sometimes give short shrift to details about the qualitative approach. We encourage applicants to fully elucidate all elements of the proposed qualitative work. This study – which is fully qualitative – does a nice job using plain language to explain how data will be collected and analyzed.*

After completing equity plan coding, we will use our codebook to code mission statements as well as PCC-related documents. The typology of equity plans and analysis of mission statements will structure responses to our research questions. Specifically, they will help us understand the institutions' existing racial ideologies (research question 1a); how equity plans align with known equity benchmarks (research question 1b); and how equity plans align with the ILEA program (research question 2a) and mimic one another (research question 2c). The typology will also frame our study by identifying the policies to be used in data collection. We will select policies based on their salience across colleges and universities and within PCC so we can trace macro ideological differences by holding policy content constant.

Develop Data Collection Instruments

We will use the policies from the college and university equity plans and PCC artifacts described above to guide development of our interview and observation protocols (Appendix D). Protocols will be developed for all three rounds of interviews and for observations of PCC summits and college and university Equity Team meetings. We will tailor interview protocols to college and university policy context because we will use college- and university-specific policies and policy language (from the equity plans) as a concrete exemplar through which to explore our multiple theoretical levels through ideologies, routines, resources, and schemas. Later protocols will be informed by earlier ones, so later protocols will not be finalized until preliminary data analysis from the earlier interview round occurs.

> *It is not unusual for studies using qualitative methods to lack protocols at the time of application, especially when participatory methods are used. In such cases, reviewers will want to see a clear plan for how protocols will be developed. It can also be helpful to share protocol drafts, even if they will change as the study develops.*

The observation protocols we develop at this time will be

used to observe PCC summits (PCC- led Equity Team professional development sessions), which occur every six months, and internal   college and university Equity Team meetings. We will pilot our observation instrument using existing PCC webinar videos. The protocol will be designed to capture race-based language and potential resources and resource use and to discuss particular routines. By September 2021, when we begin data collection for Phase II, we will have developed a set of instruments designed to capture data on institutional policies that reveal college and university ideologies, catalog resources, investigate individual schemas, and follow routines across positions and time.

Phase II: Methods and Analysis Plan

In July 2021, we will identify our sample. Then from September 2021 through June 2023, we will collect interview and observational data and will analyze the data based on our multilevel constructs of ideology, structure, and schemas. The goal for Phase II is to investigate at the organizational level how these constructs act to promote or hinder racial equity.

Sample

We will purposively sample one-quarter of the member institutions, i.e., seven cases, for their variability across a breadth of features that research has shown to affect college completion. We identify cases by first classifying colleges and universities by institutional control (i.e., public or private) and by level of instruction (i.e., BA-granting or AA-granting institutions [Velez, 1985]). Both categories typically attract students interested in different types of educational experiences   and are known to serve Black and Latinx students at differential rates (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Posselt et al., 2012; Wassmer et al., 2004).

This first stratification creates three groups of schools (private 4-year, public 4-year, and public 2-year; see Table 2). To ensure nationwide representativeness, we will select two colleges or universities from each 4-year group and three colleges from the 2-year group. Nationally, 65 percent of students attend 4-year institutions and 35 percent attend 2-year colleges (NCES, 2020a). Thus our approach privileges 4-year institutions by mirroring national rates, even though community colleges are strongly represented in ILEA. We slightly oversample the 2-year group
(43 percent of our sample is 2-year) both because of the size of the two-year group (17 versus 11, more than twice the combined size of the 4-year groups) and because this will create more parity between the number of 2-year and the number of 4-year colleges and universities in the study.

Table 2. Sampling Frame of ILEA Institutions of Higher Education by Level and Control

Public, 2-year (17 ILEA colleges)	Public, 4-year (4 ILEA colleges and universities)
Private, 2-year (0 ILEA colleges)	Private, 4-year (7 ILEA colleges and universities)

As described previously, background characteristics are important in understanding how the institutions may vary. Therefore, to identify our seven cases, we look holistically within each of the three groups at a set of characteristics (many of which covary) known to influence college completion. These characteristics include: size of college and university (Bailey et al., 2005); institutional selectivity (e.g., Melguizo, 2008; Titus, 2004); religious affiliation (4-year only); minority-serving institution status (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015; Harper, 2012); endowment (Titus, 2006); percent of adult students over the age of 25; matriculation rates by racial subgroups (Bailey et

al., 2005); and completion rates by racial subgroups. We select our cases for variation across these characteristics, comparing each selection with other potential options until we agree that we have selected institutions representing a divergent constellation of characteristics (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

After selecting the seven participating institutions, we will obtain institutional review board (IRB) and other appropriate permissions. Colleges and universities have already agreed to be studied as part of their participation in ILEA (see letters of commitment in Appendix F).

Appendices to this proposal are not included in this file. Note that in cases where applicants are working with a community partner, like a school district or university, they often include letters of commitment or other written agreements.

Methods

At the selected sites, we will collect data for 16 months, beginning in September 2021. This time frame—spanning three semesters within two academic years—enables us to identify any changes that occur either across semesters or across years. To investigate our second lever of change, we address our research questions by drawing on interviews, observations, frame analysis, resource analysis, elicitation techniques, and artifact analysis (Table 3).

Reviewers really appreciate that clearly lay out the research questions alongside corresponding data sources and analytical approaches.

Table 3. Analytic Plan to Answer Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Source/Method	Analysis
1. How are colleges and universities building racially equitable practices at their institutions?		
A. What are the institutions' racial ideologies? Organizational level: macro Theoretical construct: ideologies	· *Interviews* with PCC and college and university leaders · *Observations* of PCC-college and university professional development and college and university Equity Team meetings · *Artifacts*: equity plans, mission statements, equity plan guide, webinars	· *Approach:* Qualitative coding of observations, artifacts, and interviews using a critical race theoretical lens and Critical Frame Analysis (Dombos et al., 2012) · *Lens:* asset/deficit language, inclusive policymaking, race-explicitness, structural understanding of race, intersectional inclusion, and commitment to racial equality

Research Questions	Data Source/Method	Analysis
B. How do equity plans align with known benchmarks of equity? Organizational level: macro Theoretical construct: ideologies	· *Interviews* with PCC and college and university leaders · *Observations* of PCC-college and university professional development and college and university Equity Team meetings *Artifacts*: equity plans, mission statements, equity plan guide, webinars	· *Approach:* Qualitative coding of observations, artifacts, and interviews in comparison with equity benchmarks (Center for Urban Education, 2020) · *Lens:* race and equity goals, clearly delineated goals and measures, alignment of ideologies across artifacts, interviews, and observations
C. What resources do colleges and universities direct toward equity policies? What resources are earmarked for Black and Latinx students? Organizational level: meso Theoretical construct: resources	· *Interviews* with PCC and college and university staff (Equity Team members, implementers, non-implementers) · *Observations* of PCC-college and university professional development and college and university Equity Team meetings · *Artifacts*: equity plans and budget information	· *Approach:* Resource cost analysis (Kolbe & Rice, 2012) using observations, artifacts, and interviews · *Lens:* cost templates that organize and catalog the resources, tracing resources directed toward policies that support Black and Latinx students

Research Questions	Data Source/Method	Analysis
D. How are colleges and universities applying routines to implement their equity plans? To what extent is racial equity embedded in institutional routines? Organizational level: meso Theoretical construct: routines	· *Interviews* with PCC and college and university staff (Equity Team members, implementers, non-implementers) · *Observations* of PCC-college and university professional development and college and university Equity Team meetings · *Artifacts*: equity plans and ongoing reports on completion, budget and webinars, equity plan guides, summit schedules	· *Approach:* Qualitative coding of observations, artifacts, and interviews · *Lens:* comparisons between ostensive routine and the performative aspects (Feldman & Pentland, 2003), concrete, clearly delineated processes and supports for Black and Latinx students

E. How do individuals implement equity plans in relation to their schemas? Organizational level: micro Theoretical construct: schemas	· *Interviews* with PCC and college and university staff (Equity Team members, implementers, non-implementers) · *Observations* of PCC-college and university professional development and college and university Equity Team meetings	· *Approach:* Comparative elicitation techniques (Barton, 2015; Johnson & Weller, 2002) triangulated with observation data and additional interviews · *Lens:* asset/deficit language, emotions (Saldaña, 2013), structural understanding of race, racially coded talk (Bonilla-Silva, 2002; 2012) and commitment to equity
2. What role does a facilitated collaborative play in fostering racial equity within colleges and universities?		
A. How do college and university equity plans align with the ILEA program? Organizational level: macro Theoretical construct: ideologies	· *Interviews* with PCC and college and university staff (Equity Team members, implementers, non-implementers) · *Observations* of PCC college and university professional development and college and university Equity Team meetings · *Artifacts*: equity plans and ongoing reports on completion	· *Approach:* Qualitative coding of observations, artifacts, and interviews · *Lens:* alignment between PCC artifacts, interviews, and observations of college and universities

Research Questions	Data Source/Method	Analysis
B. How is PCC tailoring its delivery of ILEA toward member colleges and universities? What resources does PCC direct toward members? Organizational level: meso Theoretical constructs: routines and resources	· *Interviews* with PCC and college and university staff (Equity Team members, implementers, non-implementers) · *Observations* of PCC-college and university professional development and college and university Equity Team meetings · *Artifacts*: equity plans and budget information, summit schedules, curricular guides	· *Approach:* Qualitative coding of observations, artifacts, and interviews, and resource cost analysis using observations, artifacts, and interviews · *Lens:* tracing PCC resources directed toward colleges and universities, differences in PCC inputs between colleges and universities

C. In what ways do ILEA members' equity plans and equity plan implementation mimic one another? To what extent are members mimicking equitable processes? Organizational level: meso Theoretical constructs: routines and resources	· *Interviews* with PCC and college and university staff (Equity Team members, implementers, non-implementers) · *Observations* of PCC-college and university professional development and college and university Equity Team meetings · *Artifacts*: equity plans and ongoing reports on completion, mission statements, budgets, resource cost templates	· *Approach:* Qualitative coding of observations, artifacts, and interviews · *Lens:* alignment between colleges and universities and comparisons to equity benchmarks

Interviews

Interviews will elicit responses across organizational levels. Interviews will occur twice with the seven staff members of PCC. At each institution, we will conduct three interviews each with five college and university Equity Team members, five college and university staff members implementing equity policies (implementers), and five administrators not directly involved in implementation (non-implementers, e.g., program chairs, school deans). We will conduct a total of 329 interviews across three time periods (Table 4). We will interview the presidents because participation in ILEA requires those individuals' involvement. In addition, we will interview other college and university leaders whose position in the organization matters for college and university policy creation and implementation, such as the provost, dean of students, chief diversity officer, vice president of academic affairs, and the director of institutional research. Their involvement or lack of involvement will be informative. Final participant selection will depend on PCC recommendations and the recommendations of college and university presidents. Appendix C contains a more detailed rationale for inclusion of each candidate.

For qualitative studies, reviewers appreciate clear descriptions about how many interviews (observations, etc.) will be conducted, who will be interviewed, what you plan to learn from the interviews, and so on.

Interview protocols will be semi-structured (Patton, 1990) and designed to take advantage of the longitudinal study design. We will visit each college and university once per semester for three semesters. Semi-structured protocols developed in Phase I will enable earlier interviews to inform later ones. Protocols will ask both process and opinion questions to get at ongoing routines and ideologies. Protocol 1 will set the stage, inquiring into the design and enactment of policies put forth in the equity plans. In our tutoring example, we could ask about the history of tutoring at the institution, what has and has not worked in the past, who is involved in ensuring that students receive tutors, and why they think tutoring is a good method to support college completion efforts.

We will identify policies for further exploration that explicitly discuss college completion. These will inform Protocol 2 that, in addition to asking about selected policies' routines (research questions 1c and 2b), will also focus on individual schemas (research question 1d) using comparative elicitation protocols (Barton, 2015; Johnson & Weller, 2002). Elicitation techniques draw out personal beliefs by asking informants to provide commentary on ambiguous, topically relevant scenarios. Therefore,

we might ask informants to theorize why, based on their expertise, a fictional college is having difficulty enrolling Black and Latinx students into its tutoring program. The aim, with this highly knowledgeable group of informants, is to move past a standardized response and toward their more deeply held beliefs.

Protocol 3 will continue to trace the particular policy or policies identified from Protocol 1 and will also ask more detailed questions about resource use (Kolbe & Feldman, 2018; Levin, 1975; Levin et al., 2017)—e.g., the number of tutors employed, their qualifications, and the hiring process, including the hiring personnel and the time spent in the interview room. Inquiring into resource use in Protocol 3 is valuable because we can rely on data from previous interviews to focus on outstanding resource-related details (research question 1b). All informants will be asked about their time use and level of involvement in the implementation of particular policies.

Existing informants with knowledge of college and university budgeting will provide more detail and direct us to additional documentation, as needed. For accuracy, we will record and transcribe all interviews.

Table 4: Interview Sampling Plan and Number of Participant Interviews

	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Totals
PCC Staff	7	7	0	14
Equity Team Members and President	35	35	35	105
Implementers	35	35	35	105
Non-Implementers	35	35	35	105
Totals	112	112	105	**329**

Observations

Ethnographic observations will focus on two types of interactions: those between PCC and colleges and universities (research question 2) and those between college and university staff members (research question 1). Observations document the "moments when belief and action come together," (Luker, 2009, p. 158). Or in our case, they locate in what instances macro- institutional ideologies intersect with meso-level organizational structures and possibly micro- individual level schemas. We will travel to each college and university three times across 16 months, as well as to three biannual PCC Summits. Observations will focus on type of talk and level of interaction. At PCC summits, we will concentrate on PCC and member-college and university staff interactions (e.g., ideologies invoked and both inter- and intra-college and university interactions; research questions 1a and 2a).

At college and university Equity Team meetings, we will concentrate on the quality of talk about race (research question 1a), discussion of resource use or allocation (research questions 1b and 2b), and routines (research questions 1c and 2b). Detailed field notes from observations of both Equity Team meetings and PCC summits will capture conversations on how to improve equity plans and how to communicate that information to

Note here how in the discussion of the observations, the proposal invokes the theoretical framework that guides data collection and analysis.

the school community. Specifically, PCC summits will illuminate routines and detail the transfer of messages from PCC to the colleges and universities by articulating PCC's recommendations for implementing policies. Observations will be documented using ethnographic field notes (Charmaz, 2006; Miles et al., 2019).

Observations will focus on the presence or absence of race-explicit or race-neutral language, the nature of the task between participants (e.g., discussing implementation issues or recommendations), and substance, such as how member institutions use ideas from PCC (research questions 1a and 2a) or descriptions of the roles that college and university staff play in implementing equity policies (research question 1c). Field notes will include both the notes taken in the field capturing the phenomena of interest as well as researcher positionality/impressions of the events (Emerson et al., 2011).

Artifact Collection
Mission statements are publicly available, and we will copy them into a repository so they can be compared during analysis. Per their agreement with PCC, college and university equity plans will be publicly available beginning in the fall of 2020. Additional internal documents, including PCC webinars, equity plan guides, summit schedules and content, and budget documents, will be requested during interviews and followed up with the appropriate contact for later retrieval. We will also collect any college and university documents related to policy development or implementation (e.g., email blasts advertising a program, calendars of a program rollout). These documents will help us understand the influence of PCC on member colleges and universities (research question 2a), the role routines play in how policies are implemented (research question 1c), any decisions about resource allocation (research question 1b), and how ideologies frame discussions (research question 1a).

Phase II Analysis Plan
We take the college and university PCC policy set as our unit of analysis. This means we pay particular attention to college and university policies that align with PCC recommendations or use PCC language. We investigate both interactions between organizational actors and within colleges and universities. Data analysis will be iterative, beginning with open coding and moving to closed codes (Miles et al., 2019). Once coders reach consensus, we will create a closed codebook of final themes with which to recode the data, after ensuring high inter-rater reliability ($\alpha \geq 0.80$). We will upload all textual and visual data into NVivo qualitative coding software to support a team-based analytic approach. In the following sections, we discuss specific analytic techniques by research question.

Research Question 1: How are colleges and universities building equitable practices at their institutions?
To address this question, we pay particular attention to the ways PCC and members think and talk about Black and Latinx students and the equity policies they develop, implement, and fund. One finding from previous work observed that policies that are explicit about race and racial outcomes may become less explicit in dialogue as administrators, equity team members, policy implementers—through their own discomfort—avoid talking explicitly about race and may move toward coded

> *For studies that examine ways to reduce racial or ethnic inequality, it is important to be very clear throughout about the groups on which you will focus.*

language such as "underrepresented" (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Ching et al., 2020). In addition to race-coded language, we are interested in understanding the organizational dynamics within these colleges and universities.

Research question 1a (institutions' racial ideologies). We will use Critical Frame Analysis (Dombos et al., 2012) to examine colleges' and universities' racial ideologies and theories of change by analyzing: 1) interviews with college and university leaders, 2) college and university equity plans that include measurable benchmarks, and 3) college and university mission statements. We will also ascertain PCC's beliefs about what is driving racial inequality, drawing from three forms of data: 1) interviews with PCC leaders, 2) PCC-generated equity plan guides, and 3) the Equity Webinar Series of programming designed to educate member colleges and universities about research-based interventions. We will move from inductive values coding (Miles et al., 2019) to closed coding of these documents. We will code for participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs, recording their theories of why colleges and universities perform better for White students and the perceived significance of the problem (Miles et al., 2019).

Research question 1b (alignment of equity plans and equity benchmarks). Ideologies will be initially identified through mission statements and equity plans during Phase I analysis. The messages contained will be compared to the equity benchmarks established by the Center for Urban Education (2020). In addition, we will look for the presence or absence of deficit language and racial stereotypes, racial explicitness, specific goals for Black and Latinx students, plans to allocate funds specifically to Black and Latinx students, and alignment between mission statements and equity plans.

Research question 1c (resources directed toward equity plans and earmarked for Black and Latinx students). We analyze resources using resource cost modeling (RCM), which enables us to trace a policy outlined in a college's or university's equity plan and its associated costs through implementation. Stemming from the field of economics, RCM has primarily involved determining the resources necessary to replicate a program or to calculate whether a program is more effective than a different program at producing a particular outcome (Hollands et al., 2020; Institute of Education Sciences, 2020; Levin, 1975). However, we apply RCM for different ends—e.g., to explicitly trace the ways in which fiscal and in-kind resources are allocated across the institution to support the equity policies and programs the college or university has adopted. To be clear: we are not recording the vast resources used to operate the college and university but rather following those resources that are allocated to enact equity plans.

Resources can be thought of as bundles of ingredients, including personnel and materials, measured in specific quantities that combine to produce the program (Kolbe & Feldman, 2019; Rice, 1997). To identify what resources are being invested to assist Black or Latinx students in completing college, we first identify the program components and catalog and triangulate across the resources as described in the equity plans, budget documents, and interviews with key staff (Kolbe &

This study proposes in-depth qualitative data collection and analysis to examine complex racialized dynamics and processes. Thus, reviewers appreciated how the applicants took care to clearly walk through how key analytical concepts are operationalized.

Feldman, 2018; Levin & McEwan, 2001). This will create detailed resource profiles for case study colleges and universities across preselected policies and programs. We will develop such profiles in

tandem to facilitate cross-college and university comparisons and in conjunction with the routines analysis, because resources are embedded in existing routines (Ray, 2019). Then, we assign monetary value to these resources (Chambers, 1999; Hartman et al., 2001) and aggregate costs over a program and across the college and university to calculate programmatic and institution costs, respectively (Kolbe & Feldman, 2018; Chambers, 1999; Levin & McEwan, 2001). Costs can be further broken down into per-student costs to help account for economies of scale and to aid in cross-college and university comparisons. A benefit of this approach is our ability to account for (and cost) hours volunteered or hours spent outside the business day to gain a more complete picture of whose resources are used and to what purpose.

Resources will be captured through interviews, observations, and artifacts. The resource analyses will likely capture different resource packages as we look cross-institutionally because the policies themselves are not directly comparable (e.g., implementing a "culture of care" versus an equity rubric for syllabi). We expect some institutions to provide a more global look at how resources are used across the institution while others will detail all of the resources for a particular program. Both types of information will be informative and will depend upon the artifacts (e.g., budget documents) the institution provides. Analysis will rely upon cost templates that organize and catalog the resources (Kolbe & Feldman, 2018). This is an iterative process, thus in our weekly meetings we will discuss which programs we wish to pursue, documenting our rationale, and organize our second and third protocols around those programs. We will ask for more detail on resources with each round of interviews. This means that the creation of resource templates and analysis will begin shortly after our first round interviews as we begin to identify the broad resource categories. Questions in later interviews will become more fine- grained as we build upon our prior knowledge.

Data for the resource analysis comes from equity plans, interviews with Equity Team members, and financial records. Resource calculations include measures of both quality and quantity. The former describes the substance of an item—such as the difference between using professional mentors compared to volunteer mentors—whereas the latter counts the amount of an item—such as the number of mentors necessary for program implementation. The ability to pre-identify college and university planned programs and policies will simplify interview protocols and data collection because we will be able to directly ask informants about planned and actual resource allocation. Cost analysis has historically been done as an afterthought, with data collection occurring after the fact, making it laborious to collect and retrospective and, therefore, potentially less accurate (Institute for Education Sciences, 2020; Hollands et al., 2020). That the ILEA community is an ongoing program also supports data collection because we can capture actual allocations rather than hypothetical ones (as we would have to do if the program were new). In addition, we may rely on financial documents (e.g., program budget requests and salary schedules) to calculate the actual monies spent on programs.

Research question 1c (college and university implementation of equity plans and embedding of equity in routines). To determine implementation of policies, we look to college- and university-centric routines. We will identify routines from Equity Team observations and from across our three interviews with both Equity Team and non-Equity Team members. We will identify if, when, and how equity policies move through the college and university and will determine where ideologies are invoked. We will identify the type of interaction, the roles taken by college and university members, and the rules that define the routine—e.g., by tracking which administrative and

non-administrative actors are involved in ensuring implementation of college tutoring. We will also compare routines across colleges and universities. Interviews with college and university administrators will provide information on how college and university routines operate and their experiences working within them.

Because we are not interviewing students nor observing the programs outlined in the equity plans, we will be relying upon leadership's descriptions of how they have implemented their equity plans. This means we will not directly observe the performative aspects of many routines. Instead, we will rely upon leadership interviews to describe routines processes (and identify the resources). By pairing conversations about routines with conversations about schemas and ideologies, both within and across institutions, we are able to begin to grasp how existing routines within the institution may be limiting or supporting Black and Latinx students.

We will track these policy discussions by first asking participants to describe the routine for a particular policy and in later interviews asking them to describe how the routines play out in practice. We will investigate the (racial) discrepancies in how institutional actors describe the ostensive routine and the performative aspects of the routine paying particular attention to structural aspects that could impact racial equity and the presence of asset-based language, for example, by inquiring if participants see any of these routines playing out differently for students of different races (Diamond & Lewis, 2019) and comparing the ostensive and performative aspects.

One aspect of this may be if routines are applied differentially (Diamond & Lewis, 2019). The sites of these routine fractures will be one of the ways we will be able to assist colleges and universities and the field in identifying sites for additional investigation while also offering locations for further theorizing. Where possible, we will seek to develop cross-institutional categories of routines to facilitate comparisons.

Research question 1d (the influence of individuals' schemas on equity plan implementation). Finally, to analyze the micro-level, we will examine the emotional and implicit aspects of member participation in ILEA. To do this, we will draw from interviews with PCC and college and university participants (across college and university levels), particularly from the second interview during which we applied elicitation techniques. We will also use emotion coding to capture the emotions participants recall or describe experience and the emotions inferred by the study team (Miles et al., 2019; Saldaña, 2013). Emotion coding is important because capturing emotive states provides "deep insight into the participants' perspectives [and] worldviews," (Saldaña, 2013, p. 106). We will start by inductively coding these data for participants' experiences, feelings, and language choices and will move to closed coding by iterative rounds of increasingly theoretical codes. As with other types of coding, we will engage in inter-rater reliability checks before coding the full compendium.

Research Question 2: What role does a facilitated collaborative play in fostering equity within colleges and universities?
To examine research question 2, we will repeat analyses techniques used in RQ1, focusing instead on comparisons between members' equity plans and implementation and between PCC and members.

In Phase I, we will compare member equity plans with PCC guidance and policy suggestions to

determine *how college and university equity plans align with the ILEA program (RQ-2a).* We will map college and university equity plans against PCC guidance, paying attention to where included policies and "evidence-based strategies" align with ILEA recommendations.

We will also trace the amount of time and resources PCC dedicates to members and their curricular changes to *ascertain how PCC is tailoring its delivery of ILEA and directing resources toward members (RQ-2b).* Finally, using Critical Frame Analysis and equity benchmarks, we will examine how equity plans compare cross-institutionally (i.e., whether colleges and universities adopt similar policies) and examine similarities between member routines and resource allocations to answer *RQ-2c: the extent to which members mimic each other across equity plans and the extent to which they mimic equitable practices*.

COVID-19

We plan to conduct interviews in person and to observe meetings in person. We feel that this is the best way to: 1) develop relationships with the informants whom we will interview multiple times; 2) observe the context within which the interview or observation occurs, as this may have bearing on the nature of the interview; and 3) capture those last-minute comments that tend to be rich for analysis. However, we will observe current health safety protocols, which may mean that interviews and observations occur via videoconference. It may also mean that college and university policy decisions made within equity plans are altered in ways that accommodate new teaching and learning structures set up in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we have not set out to study college and university responses to the pandemic, we recognize that the ongoing crisis will likely alter what is discussed from what had been previously expected.

> *Until no longer necessary, it is helpful for proposals to include how the team will handle COVID-related disruptions and challenges.*

Potential Impacts

This project combines theories from higher education, organizational studies, and race and ethnicity. By joining these theories, this work is equipped to contribute to the fields by offering insights into how colleges and universities can re-form not only the policies and practices but also the ideologies and organization wide systems (e.g., routines) that may inadvertently prevent them from achieving their goals of equitable college completion. With the current national focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the persistent lack of progress toward improving college completion rates, this project is positioned to offer organizational insights that will provide institutions with tools to address inequities from new vantage points. Furthermore, the facilitated nature of ILEA may induce members to mimic one another and support them in coupling goals with action, important for helping colleges and universities move past implementation barriers that have stymied well-intentioned interventions.

Although this research takes a broad approach and gathers extensive qualitative data, we recognize there are several limitations. First, by design there are a limited number of colleges   and universities in our sample. While this contributes to the depth at which we can investigate individual institutions, it necessarily means our findings are contingent upon those seven institutions. Second, all schools joined voluntarily and therefore may differ from other colleges and universities in Illinois. If nothing else, involvement suggests a level of commitment to racial equity strong enough to weather potential blowback should findings present a negative view of the institution. That an institution recused itself for this very reason suggests that the remaining institutions have fortitude. On one hand, these schools

may be similar to other institutions because despite their rhetorical commitments they have not successfully improved college completion for Black and Latinx students, something consistent for most colleges and universities in the United States. On the other hand, their participation may indicate a readiness for change that, while making them different than other colleges and universities, may make them ideal exemplars for what is possible. Third, our research focuses on specific policies related to equity plans but may not represent all of the equity-minded changes taking place within any one of these institutions. It is possible that additional efforts occurring outside the purview of the equity plan are altering institutional structures. Lastly, our focus on the organizational systems implementing change has excluded the voice of the students themselves. We believe keeping our scope narrowed to only institutional leaders maintains our research focus. Yet, it does leave the impact of the ILEA on student experience and outcomes unaddressed. Despite these limitations, our design enables us to uncover the racial organizational mechanisms that help and hinder Black and Latinx students' college completion, flipping the lens from student deficits onto institutional actors and organizational factors, where attention is urgently needed but has historically been lacking.

Our second lever, the process of organizational alignment viewed through a racialized lens, is novel and has the potential to lead to systematic transformation. College completion inequalities need to be addressed at the organizational level, and although there are promising studies in this direction, we emphasize this practice theoretically by taking a racial organizational lens to the issue of college completion, by examining equity-mindedness, racial explicitness, and alignment of our multilevel constructs of ideologies, organizational structures, and schemas toward the institutionalization of racial equity. Further, we reframe resource analysis from a method of efficiency to a method for understanding colleges' and universities' equity priorities, allowing them to see how their pocketbooks support their stated values (Kolbe & Rice, 2012). In doing so, we unearth whether and by how much resources are directed toward Black and Latinx students.

Understanding how colleges and universities enact policies to eliminate racial inequities has far-reaching implications for higher education and its students, affecting colleges and universities nationwide. As new directives call for explicitly naming race in policies designed to improve college completion (Jones & Nichols, 2020), learning how organizations develop and insert such policies systemwide will enable colleges and universities to align directives with twin goals of helping Black and Latinx students graduate and dismantling racist organizational structures.
Findings will inform our program partner, PCC, and other higher-education nonprofits about how to improve programs, evaluate equity plans, and locate tools for eradicating the status quo, thereby creating more equitable college outcomes.

Anticipated Products and Communication/Engagement Plan
This study can yield evidence of how best to scale statewide initiatives to eradicate racial disparities in postsecondary education, including collaborative structures and sites for internal growth. Our dissemination approach is informed, in part, by NORC's expertise in using social science research to inform and support public action. As such, we are committed to ensuring that the findings are disseminated in ways digestible for the anticipated audience.

Our plan for dissemination focuses on three audiences who each have an investment in improving college outcomes for Black and Latinx students: 1) PCC staff and their college and university members for program improvement; 2) the broader research community invested in equity; and 3)

program developers and policymakers interested in transferring such a facilitated collaborative to their communities and contexts.

Firstly, we will present findings to our PCC and institutional colleagues, tailored to each audience. Because conversations about race can be personally vulnerable (Fox, 2009), the NORC–Fordham team will lead a conversation about the findings—translated into concrete, actionable steps—and will build in time for reflection and conversation. To guide conversations, the team will develop slide decks of their results and conclusions, which will be available for PCC and member colleges and universities to use in future conversations with their own staffs.

Secondly, for academic audiences, dissemination activities will include presentations at two relevant conferences—e.g., Association for the Study of Higher Education (higher-education focused), Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (policy-focused), or American Educational Research Association (research-focused)—and W.T. Grant Foundation grantee meetings. These conversations will be leveraged to further refine our thinking, the culmination of which will be submitting at least an outcomes paper and best-practices/lesson-learned manuscript to strategic, peer-reviewed journals (e.g., *Sociology of Education*, *American Educational Research Journal,* or *The Review of Higher Education*).

Thirdly, we will transfer key findings into practice- and policy-based briefs, infographics, social media posts (e.g., *The Chronicle of Higher Education)*, and layperson presentations (e.g., TedX, Facebook Live) to relay these findings to the broader public. The study's findings will also be featured on the NORC website. In addition, we have partnered with The Education Trust to relay findings to a policy audience (Appendix F). The Education Trust is interested in promoting depictions of colleges and universities that have developed strategies that support Black and Latinx students' completing postsecondary education. We have agreed to submit blog posts for publication on their highly frequented website. Because of the national conversation about race in the United States, we will draft op-eds and engage NORC's communications department to communicate findings through known media outlets, particularly those in Illinois.

Redacted from the proposal are a brief discussion of the study timeline and a summary of key staff (including an advisory board) and partnerships.

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