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LEVERAGING HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS TO PROMOTE INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE FOR EQUITY AND THE PUBLIC GOOD

Michele Tyson *	University of Denver, Denver, CO, USA	michele.tyson@du.edu
Cecilia Orphan	University of Denver, Denver, CO, USA	cecilia.orphan@du.edu
Judy Marquez Kiyama	University of Denver, Denver, CO, USA	judy.kiyama@du.edu
Chris A. Nelson	University of Denver, Denver, CO, USA	chris.nelson@du.edu

* Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	Neoliberal ideology in U.S. society and globally is transforming post-secondary institutions into economic drivers of their public purposes, that of promoting societal betterment and educational opportunity. Attendant with the neoliberal transformation of higher education's purposes has been an erosion of the equity pursuits of postsecondary institutions as they privilege enrolling less diverse students more likely to persist and graduate.
Background	Neoliberalism has also distorted the college access imperative and divorced it from addressing historic inequities and marginalizations present in higher education. Instead, the college access imperative is largely situated in the need to meet workforce development needs. The purpose of this paper is to increase awareness about how Higher Education preparation programs resist the neoliberalism transformation to higher education by describing how one specific such program, the Higher Education Department at the University of Denver, is actively resisting the influence of neoliberal ideology in campus life.
Methodology	We offer examples drawn from our curricula and co-curricula in which departmental faculty, staff and students embody and enact grassroots leadership focused on advancing equity and the university's public purposes.

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Recommendations for Practitioners	We conclude by describing recommendations for other Higher Education departments interested in promoting their institution's public purposes and equity pursuits while resisting neoliberalism. We also offer reflections intended to encourage other Higher Education departments to take up this vital work
Keywords	equity, public purposes, higher education, neoliberalism, institutional change, civic engagement

INTRODUCTION

Neoliberal ideology in U.S. society and globally has threatened higher education's ability to contribute to the public good (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Neoliberalism is a political rationality that submits "every action and policy to considerations of profitability, equally important is production of human and institutional action as rational entrepreneurial action" (Brown, 2003, p. 4). In a postsecondary context, neoliberalism has transformed students into customers buying a service to improve their employability, faculty members into academic capitalists responsible for generating institutional resources, and administrators into chief executive officers charged with securing their institution's financial future (Berman, 2012; Gildersleeve, 2016; Orphan, 2018; Slaughter, Slaughter, & Rhoades, 2004).

Attendant with the neoliberal transformation of higher education's purposes has been an erosion of the equity pursuits of postsecondary institutions as they privilege enrolling less diverse students more likely to persist and graduate who will strengthen the institutions financial standing (Axelrod, 2002; Berman, 2012; Bunds & Giardina, 2017; Orphan, 2018). Neoliberal ideology has also distorted the college access imperative and divorced it from addressing historic inequities and marginalizations present in higher education (Wells & Ramdeholl, 2015). Instead of moral reasons for promoting educational opportunity and equity, policymakers and campus administrators increasingly situate the need to expand college access within an economic imperative to create an educated workforce for employers (Orphan & Robert, 2019).

Higher Education departments are potential sites of resistance for the neoliberal transformation to higher education. Focused on the case of the Higher Education Department at the University of Denver (DUHigherEd), the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how Higher Education departments might be leveraged to resist neoliberalism's incursion into higher education and strengthen the equity pursuits of postsecondary institutions. Put simply, Higher Education departments are powerful resources for resisting neoliberalism across academe. This paper describes how the Higher Education department at a mid-size, private research intensive Institution (DUHigherEd), actively resists the incursion of neoliberal ideology into campus life (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). Building on the self-ethnographic case study conducted by Danowitz and Tuitt (2011), we show how DUHigherEd, achieves this goal by practically and theoretically promoting the institution's goals of being a "private university dedicated to the public good," and an inclusively excellent institution (University of Denver, n.d.). As background for our field and department, we first explore research on Higher Education degree programs. We then describe how DUHigherEd's grassroots leadership through departmental administration, pedagogy, campus leadership, and community engagement resists neoliberalism and promotes the equity goals of our university (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011; Kezar, Gallant, & Lester, 2011). We conclude with recommendations for other Higher Education departments interested in providing grassroots leadership to their institutions focused on promoting equity and resisting neoliberalism. While this paper is situated in the U.S. context, Higher Education departments around the world could borrow lessons from what we have learned about how to resist the neoliberalization of the academy and promote equity.

OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAMS

Research about Higher Education departments is limited. Thus far, research has examined Higher Education degree program requirements and student experiences. As we describe each area of research to provide background for our field and department, it is important to note that existing research has primarily been situated in the United States. Furthermore, no research or writing we could find has explored how Higher Education departments lead or influence their institution's equity pursuits while responding to the influence of neoliberal ideology on campus.

Higher education degree program requirements

Higher Education degree programs and departments serve practical and theoretical purposes. There are 242 Higher Education departments across the U.S. (Association for the Study of Higher Education [ASHE], 2016). Initially, Higher Education degree programs were created to train postsecondary administrators (Dressel & Mayhew, 1974). As the field evolved, Higher Education departments increased scholarly activity and added Ph.D. programs for people interested in researching higher education. Currently, Higher Education degree programs prepare campus personnel including administrators, student affairs professionals, faculty members, researchers, and public policymakers in the "art and politics" of higher education (Mortimer & Sathre, 2010, p. 1). Higher Education degree programs also equip individuals with scholarly, administrative and policy analysis skills, and promote the theorization and understanding of higher education's purposes by generating new knowledge (ACPA College Student Educators International & NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2015).

Despite the growing number of Higher Education departments globally, there is no standard curriculum or accrediting body that governs degree programs. Rather, programs are guided by and voluntarily follow the standards set forth by various professional organizations. The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), the field's major disciplinary association, issued the following voluntary content areas for master's degree programs: the history and philosophy of higher education; administration and leadership; economics and finance; law; and organizational development, leadership and change. ASHE identified multiculturalism as "another content area appropriate to a well-rounded" program (p. 3). ASHE also described the importance of providing "students with opportunities to demonstrate the integration of practice and theory" (Council for the Advancement of Higher Education Programs [CAHEP] 2010, p. 3), which Bell Hooks (1996) and Paulo Freire (2000) – two leading pedagogical scholars defined as the art of practice. Additionally, the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS), an organization that promotes best practices for higher education programs identified the following standards for Higher Education master's degrees: foundational courses (including the history and philosophy of higher education), professional development experiences (including student development theory, interventions that support student success, organization and administration, and assessment and research), and supervised practice (including practicals and internships) (Dean, 2006). Finally, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and American College Personnel Association (ACPA) published a joint list of competencies for student affairs educators which includes: social justice and inclusion; ethical foundations; governance and policy; and leadership, among others (ACPA College Student Educators International & NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2015).

The standards advanced by these organizations are reflected in the degree program requirements of many Higher Education Departments. Research has found that the following coursework is typical in Higher Education programs: history, organization and governance, law and legal issues, finance, current issues, student affairs administration, and public policy (Arellano & Martinez, 2009; Demuth, 1990; Freeman, Chambers, & Card, 2016; Valerin, 2011). Although there is commonality in courses offered that maps onto CAS, ASHE, and ACPA/NASPA requirements, the Higher Education field lacks broad consensus about what should be required in graduate programs (Wright & Miller, 2007).

As such, aside from professional guidelines for the Higher Education master's degree programs, departments have latitude in determining the design and delivery of their programs. Notably, none of the aforementioned professional organizations nor their standards for higher education curricula specifically calls out or addresses the influence of neoliberal ideology on higher education. Nonetheless, administrators, policymakers and student affairs professionals holding Higher Education degrees report that they developed important knowledge and competencies during their graduate training (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009; Freeman, 2011; Mason, 2011).

Recently, there has been movement across the Higher Education field to incorporate both social justice and multiculturalism into program curricula (Wilson & Meyer, 2011). While multiculturalism is a celebration of diverse cultures that encourages cultural integration, social justice concretely works to rectify historic inequities and dismantle systemic oppression (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011; Lewicki, 2014). Incorporating social justice into the curriculum of higher education degree programs yields social justice learning outcomes for students, with students reporting higher levels of knowledge about and commitment to addressing inequities within higher education (Wilson & Meyer, 2011). Deal (2016) analyzed how higher education/student affairs graduate programs engage students in racial learning and development, offering the following pedagogical implications:

The task of racial learning for critical practice in student affairs is a complex and fluid process. The routinization of the profession, in alignment with larger higher education regimes of practice makes the ability to shift and mobilize for new ways of being and doing student affairs seem nearly impossible. Broadly speaking putting into practice racial learning and development for the creation of more racially equitable college environments is both a question and a clarion call for pedagogy. Student affairs as a profession of practice has largely moved in to the realm of management, leaving behind the potential to be a space of teaching and learning; to be a hub for critical, emancipatory, inclusive pedagogy. (Deal, 2016, p. 228)

There is some evidence that higher education curricula have incorporated multicultural pedagogy (Freeman, Chambers, & Card, 2016), however, there is a lack of research investigating the degree to which social justice goals are incorporated across Higher Education curricula. Service learning and experiential learning have been pointed to as pedagogical strategies that create opportunities for students to develop social justice skills and efficacies (Mitchell, 2008). That said, Townsend (1995) found that despite claims to be equity-focused, the hidden curricula of many Higher Education departments included a large focus on scholarly works by White men, which devalued the scholarly contributions of women, queer scholars, and people of Color.

Student experiences in higher education degree programs

Some scholars have explored how the curricula of Higher Education programs prepares graduates for administrative leadership roles as well as when program have not adequately addressed the professional goals of their students. Graduates of education doctorate programs who have gone into administration roles report that curricular foci on theory, application, practical experiences and mentorship effectively prepared them for their roles (Demuth, 1990; Freeman, 2011). Doctoral students of Color also report developing and leveraging social networks outside of campus to support their progress in graduate programs and receive socialization from these networks about how to be effective scholars (Jordan, 2017; McGaskey, Freeman, Guyton, Richmond, & Guyton, 2016). These networks were particularly important to students because they addressed inadequacies in curricular offerings, faculty mentoring and support, and lack of clarity in socialization processes of Higher Education degree programs. Additionally, African American women students in Jordan's (2017) study experienced tokenization by campus admissions and marketing offices. As this research demonstrates, while Higher Education programs seem to create professionally enriching experiences for students, there is room for improvement for ensuring all students have culturally enriching and affirming experiences.

Increasingly, college campuses are working to create a culture of care for students (Reynolds, 2013) that simultaneously increases social support and other protective factors, while also decreasing risk factors such as depression and negative relationships (Owen & Rodolfa, 2009). Culture of care were first conceptualized in the nursing field as a theory and practice that encourages medical professionals to assist patients from diverse cultures through culturally competent and congruent healthcare (McFarland & Wehbe-Alamah, 2014). This culture can be created and applied in all educational environments to create supportive environments for students. In particular, postsecondary institutions have begun to create cultures of care in order to address the changing personal needs students bring when they enter college and to recognize and honor their lived experiences. Given that research (Reynolds, 2013) demonstrates the benefits created by cultures of care for undergraduate students, Higher Education master's students assigned to on-campus assistantships may also play an important role in creating cultures of care. The growth in the need to both prevent and intervene as students experience distress and stressful situations has outpaced the growth in counseling professionals on most college campuses (Owens & Rodolfa, 2009). This imbalance has created a gap in the traditional and formal methods to meet student needs, which has then forced many institutional representatives (both faculty and staff), including graduate students positioned in helping roles, to take on responsibilities supportive of students' overall welfare. Institutions have expanded this culture of care to understand and better meet the growing needs of college students, to include students with mental health needs, physical and learning challenges, those experiencing food and housing insecurities and students who do not experience feelings of belonging with their institutions. The outcomes-based focus of neoliberal ideology leaves little room for supporting the holistic wellbeing of students (Cain, 2018).

Given that graduates of Higher Education degree programs become student affairs practitioners, campus administrators, faculty members, and policymakers who shape campus culture, practice and policy, the experiences of students facilitated through the curricula of Higher Education degree programs are important sites for promoting equity and a culture of care that resists neoliberalism within postsecondary education. Research to date has examined the course requirements of Higher Education degree programs and explores how students in Higher Education departments experience their program of study. As demonstrated, prior research and writing have yet to explore how Higher Education departments lead their institution's equity pursuits while resisting neoliberal ideology on campus. As such, there remains a gap in our understanding about how to reshape and leverage Higher Education departments and degree programs to embody equity and democratic goals. Our paper is intended to provide an example of one Higher Education department engaged in this work.

HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

The Higher Education Department at the University of Denver (DUHigherEd) was established in the 1960s and underwent a major curricular change in the early-2000s focused on increasing its commitment to diversity, equity, and social justice (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). Danowitz and Tuitt (2011) first examined the program with a focus on administrative actions, curricular change, and pedagogical change in order to describe a change process which incorporated diversity and inclusivity into the program. The current faculty continue with this focus, while also introducing and calling out instances of neoliberalism in higher education and its effects on institutions, faculty and student bodies.

In 2014, DUHigherEd evolved from being a program within an academic department to being a standalone department within the college. DUHigherEd has been guided by its mission in resisting neoliberalism and leading its campus' equity commitment (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). Mission-centered organizations align their organizing values and purpose in day-to-day operations and long-term vision and strategy (Hartley, 2002). The early DUHigherEd faculty were intentional about emphasizing the systems, structures and policies in place that restrict educational access and erode higher education's public purposes (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). Additionally, these leaders incorporated Critical Race Theory and feminist pedagogical approaches into the curricula in order to promote equity. As

DUHigherEd evolved, faculty members infused a focus on interrogating systems that structure opportunity throughout their teaching, college and university service, public engagement and research.

Faculty members in the newly created department crafted a mission to encapsulate what had been occurring organically and to intentionally communicate a clear direction for the future. The Higher Education Department at the University of Denver's mission is threefold:

1. conduct equity-based research about persistent and/or timely problems facing postsecondary education;
2. prepare social justice professionals for careers in postsecondary education related to administration, policy, teaching, and research, as well as careers in public and private agencies of higher education, for-profit and not-for-profit settings, and in a diverse and changing world; and
3. provide meaningful service to the university and broader community in matters pertaining to postsecondary education, especially related to equity, diversity, and social justice.

DUHigherEd, in enacting this mission, acknowledges and interrogates how it is emplaced in larger neoliberal contexts manifested in college, university, and broader community. The values guiding DUHigherEd's mission allows us to collectively and individually examine neoliberalism and systems of oppression both within and external to the higher education system while promoting social justice. However, DUHigherEd faculty believe a mission and values statement has little meaning if there is not documented actions demonstrating the lived embodiment of those values on a day-to-day basis. A commitment to DUHigherEd's mission and values pushes us to leverage our commitment to equity and resisting neoliberalism by retooling the scholarship, teaching and service triad of faculty work. We recognize the privilege our faculty titles hold, particularly as we are situated within a well-resourced private institution and through critical reflection, we remain committed to tethering our work to support broad access postsecondary institutions (including Minority Serving Institutions, Community Colleges, and Regional Comprehensive Universities) and nonprofit organizations promoting college access.

Grassroots tactics used by DUHigherEd to promote equity and resist neoliberalism

Kezar, Gallant, and Lester (2011) described nine grassroots tactics that staff and faculty within universities can use to align stated mission and values with programmatic leadership, implementation and outcomes. These tactics include creating venues for dialogue that grapple with values and ideals, designing professional development experiences for faculty and staff, reshaping curricula and creating forums for discussion in classrooms, forming mentoring relationships with students, hiring individuals who share organizational values, securing funding, leveraging data to tell stories, participating in existing shared governance bodies (e.g., faculty senate), and partnering with external stakeholders. In our efforts to leverage DUHigherEd as a site of resistance to neoliberalism that promotes higher education's public purposes and equity pursuits, we used the following tactics: creating venues for dialogue, offering professional development, hiring with intentionality, leveraging data, reshaping curricula, partnering with external stakeholders, and participating in shared governance. Table 1 provides a quick overview of each tactic and how each action resist neoliberalism and promotes equity. We describe how we used each tactic and then conclude by describing future directions for our department.

Table 1: HED Department's Grassroots Tactics to Promote Equity & Resist Neoliberalism

TACTIC	HOW THE TACTIC RESISTS NEOLIBERALISM & PROMOTES EQUITY
Creating venues for dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inviting guest scholars & activists, who protect higher education's equity pursuits and public purposes
Offering professional development & mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitate praxis-oriented lunch and learns ● Offer ad hoc mentoring with guest scholars & activists

TACTIC	HOW THE TACTIC RESISTS NEOLIBERALISM & PROMOTES EQUITY
Hiring with intentionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit & hire diverse candidates for faculty lines • Holistic admissions process to have diverse pool for graduate assistantships
Leveraging data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create reports that highlight the engaged work happening within DUHigherEd • Opt-out of participating in ranking systems
Reshaping curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center community engagement & praxis-centered assignments and activities in student learning • Offer critical service learning opportunities • Conclude the master’s program with a portfolio project
Partnering with external stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share networking opportunities among faculty & department • Maintain collegial relationships with community partners to engage a co-curricular experience
Participating in shared governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend our faculty presence in other campus-wide spaces • Serve on campus- and college-wide committees and task forces to influence institutional action

Institutional culture heavily influences departmental administration and implementation (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Tierney, 1988). For DUHigherEd, our culture is intertwined with equity, diversity and social justice. We identify four dimensions, which are dialogue, professional development, hiring practices, and data use, and briefly discuss each dimension by providing examples.

Creating venues for dialogue. DUHigherEd hosts multiple public venues to engage in topics that critically assess structures and practices found in higher education. Beginning in 2014, DUHigherEd began hosting an annual Leadership Speakers Series, during which we invited scholars and activists working to protect higher education’s equity pursuits and public purposes to dialogue with faculty, staff and students to share lessons learned. To date, we have hosted Gary Rhoades, Professor in the Center for the Study of Higher Education, University of Arizona, who spoke about moving beyond an individualized professoriate into a new, collective academy, Jonathan Butler, the graduate student who led the hunger strike to protest racism at the University of Missouri, Patricia McDonough, Professor, Higher Education, University of California Los Angeles, who described her research on first-generation students and college access and Michelle Fine, Distinguished Professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center who both spoke about the systematic and persistent barriers to college facing underrepresented students. We are intentional about continuing the conversation about the ideas sparked through these annual events in our department meetings, class sessions, and program development.

Offering professional development. Each quarter DUHigherEd hosts a Lunch and Learn for graduate students and faculty. The praxis-oriented Lunch and Learn encourages attendees to learn about a current event topic and participate in an activity that allows community members to engage in topics related to DU’s public good and inclusive excellence mission. Past Lunch and Learns include: How to effectively partner with community-based organizations; How to foster inclusive pedagogies in teaching and program development; and How critical policy analysis can scrutinize public policies, like 529 College Savings Plans, to improve college access. These gatherings are informal and give graduate students a less formal space to engage with faculty members, as well. DUHigherEd faculty also participate in professional development opportunities to sharpen their pedagogic skills related to facilitating dialogue, praxis-focused learning, and inclusive classroom spaces.

Hiring with intentionality. An important strategy for institutionalizing organizational values is to embed them into the hiring and socialization processes for new members (Austin, 2002; Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011; Kezar, Gallant, & Lester, 2011; Pratt, 2000; Schein, 2004). Socialization processes signal to faculty members what they need to do to be successful and begin during the hiring process for new faculty and continue throughout a person's tenure. We ensure that job announcements include descriptions of our department's mission and values. We ask each candidate to reflect via a written statement on how their research and teaching address the issues of equity, inclusive excellence, social justice, and the influence of neoliberal ideology on higher education. During the candidate selection process, we screen for individuals who evidence a commitment to equity and praxis and have expertise in how systems and policies either promote or impede higher education's equity pursuits and public good mission. During the interview process, we ask candidates to reflect on higher education's public purposes and equity pursuits. Once hired, we evaluate faculty and staff on how they are promoting the department's mission and values. In their annual reviews, DUHigherEd faculty and staff are required to reflect on how they have personally advanced the public good mission and equity pursuits and goals of the department, the college, and the institution.

Leveraging data. DUHigherEd's biennial report, "Engaged", details the equity-focused and engaged activities of the department (Higher Education Department [HED], 2017). In this report, we used quantitative and qualitative data to tell the story of our department's efforts to resist neoliberalism and promote higher education's public purposes and equity pursuits. The quantitative data we use include the number of journal articles and conference presentations that promote greater understanding of higher education's public purposes and equity pursuits, departmental partnerships with community-based organizations, and community-based courses taught. The qualitative data we use include community partner testimonials of their engagement with our department, descriptions of student praxis projects, and student spotlights. Ultimately, the departmental administration of DUHigherEd continues to evolve to adopt grassroots leadership tactics focused on ensuring that students, staff and faculty are equipped with the skills, knowledge and efficacies necessary for resisting neoliberalism and promoting equity. One important way DUHigherEd resists neoliberalism is through abstaining from reporting departmental and student data to higher education ranking systems such as *U.S. News and World Report* which has been shown to exacerbate neoliberalism's influence on higher education (Saunders & Blanco Ramirez, 2016).

Reshaping the curriculum. The curriculum is an important site for transmitting the mission and values of an academic department and promoting grassroots leadership (Kezar, Gallant, & Lester, 2011). As part of its evolution into a standalone department, DUHigherEd revised its curriculum to promote its mission and values (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). As a result of this revision process, DUHigherEd created a curriculum that (re)politicizes higher education's public purposes and equity pursuits through praxis-oriented teaching, community-based learning, a focus on systems of higher education policy, (in)equity and social justice, neoliberalism's influence on higher education, administration, and societal engagement, and asset-based as opposed to success-in-work understandings of student life (Gildersleeve, Kuntz, & Pasque, 2010; Hursh & Wall, 2011; Morgridge College of Education, n.d.).

In redesigning the curriculum, DUHigherEd faculty relied on scholarship exploring how curricula might promote social justice and higher education's public purposes (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). Specifically, the faculty relied on seminal works by Bell Hooks (1996) and Paulo Freire (2000) exploring how teaching and learning might be a liberatory practice of freedom aimed at advancing democratic society and equity while resisting neoliberal practices. Additionally, DUHigherEd faculty consulted research by Tania Mitchell (2008) describing critical service learning as a strategy for providing meaningful and reciprocal community engaged learning experiences for communities and students. Finally, the DUHigherEd faculty drew upon the various cultural knowledge of students to transform oppressive systems and encourage students to identify an individual purpose within their work that goes beyond simply getting a job in the field. The DUHigherEd faculty ensured that each course examined

the systems and ideologies that structure educational access to education and higher education's ability to enact its public purposes.

Within the masters-level curriculum, community engagement and praxis-centered assignments and activities are central to student learning. Required and elective courses address theories and research on a variety of issues related to college preparation, education systems and structures, inequities in college access, neoliberal theory and student retention, persistence, and success. Each year, students engage in critical service-learning projects (Mitchell, 2008) with community partners during which they complete 30 hours over two quarters and put into practice the theories and concepts they have learned in class. Our partners have included several college access organizations such as the Denver Scholarship Foundation, Bridge Project, Aurora Public Schools, and the American Indian College Fund. Students often continue their community engagement after the course ends through ongoing internships, individual projects, and full-time positions. To ensure we are embodying the goals of critical service-learning, we create opportunities for students to examine the structures that create the need for service in the community and also encourage them to interrogate how their own identities are or are not reflected in community-based learning. We also encourage students to examine existing biases they may have about communities being served.

All students enrolled in the Masters program demonstrate their learning and commitment to equity and higher education's public purposes through the completion of an ePortfolio that serves as a dynamic, visual representation of the students' growth in terms of skill sets, professional competencies and experiences throughout the program. Portfolios, which has been identified as a high-impact practice for asset-based student life (Hubert, Pickavance, & Hyberger, 2015) contains artifacts that the student selects and reflections to represent their individual development. High-impact practices are defined as educational practices that require time and effort, facilitate learning both in and out of the classroom, encourage meaningful interactions with faculty and peers and encourage collaboration with diverse groups of people (Kuh, 2008). Artifacts and reflection in the DUHigherEd ePortfolio are intended to facilitate praxis by identifying how theories learned in class apply to policy and practice, specifically as they relate to higher education as a system that is both affected by and has effects on other social systems, using social justice as a framework to make those connections. The public-good mission of DUHigherEd is demonstrated through these culminating projects as they focus on the praxis-centered curriculum within the program. Finally, our syllabi and pedagogical practices are reflective of social justice values in that we assign readings by diverse scholars and require that students build skills and knowledges that assist them in addressing systemic oppression (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011).

Partnering with external stakeholders. DUHigherEd is an engaged academic department that maintains a number of community and institutional partnerships with external stakeholders that yield research, pedagogical and critical service-learning opportunities for students, faculty and staff that are essential to the department's academic mission and values (Kecskes, 2006). These partnerships are largely maintained by individual faculty members who share research and pedagogical interests and goals with partners. While the partnerships largely operate at the individual faculty level, they are intended to expand the department's overall commitment to praxis and facilitating higher education's public purposes. In total DUHigherEd has over 35 partnerships that include public policy, k-12, philanthropic and civic engagement organizations and agencies. In addition, DUHigherEd maintain partnerships with multiple departments at approximately 10 broad access institutions across the state, including many community colleges, MSIs and regional comprehensive universities. These partnerships create critical service-learning opportunities for students and community-based participatory action research opportunities for faculty and students. In 2016, DUHigherEd was awarded the "Community-Engaged Department of the Year" from the institutions' Center for Community Engagement to advance Scholarship and Learning (CCESL). The award recognized the efforts of the department and honored our dedication to enhancing innovative and rigorous public good scholarship. Faculty engagement with campus partners had been instrumental in creating a co-curricular experience for

many of the students enrolled in DUHigherEd, which is demonstrated through graduate assistantships and internship that allow students to further connect theory from class to practical experiences, using the institution as a living case study.

Participating in shared governance. Due to our grassroots organizing, DUHigherEd has become a campus resource for promoting institutional action for democracy and resisting neoliberalism through participating in shared governance. By extending our faculty presence in other campus spaces, DUHigherEd faculty are engaging other campus communities in conversations that critically assess what it means to be equitable, decolonial, or social-justice oriented in campus leadership. For example, DUHigherEd faculty have encouraged the use of best practices for equity-focused leadership and engagement with communities surrounding the university (Mitchell, 2008). Additionally, DUHigherEd faculty members routinely serve on campus-wide and College committees and task forces that promote equitable admissions and financial aid processes; provide expertise to campus groups and administrators focused on infusing evidence-based practices for supporting faculty and students of Color and protecting the university's public good mission; consult the faculty senate on effective strategies of encouraging grassroots leadership of faculty; and assist with revising the general education curriculum to strengthen its emphasis on equity and higher education's public good mission. The reach of DUHigherEd faculty continues to grow across campus, thus furthering our commitment to equitable institutional change.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR HED DEPARTMENT

Although DUHigherEd has made significant progress in reshaping itself to resist neoliberalism and promote equity on our campus, we have identified the following areas of growth and future directions. First, DUHigherEd would like to provide community partners with an opportunity to assess our engagement with them (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2011; Mitchell, 2008; Srinivas, Meenan, Drogin, & DePrince, 2015). Clayton and colleagues (2010), described three possible campus/community partnership types: exploitive in which campuses benefit more than partners and emphasize student and faculty needs over community needs; transactional, in which campuses address short-term needs for organizations; and transformational, in which campuses establish sustained, long-term relationships with partners that address social problems and provide mutual benefit. Our goal is to foster transformational partnerships like the one led by a faculty member in collaboration with a current DUHigherEd student and community partner, who led a participatory community based research project in which three regional comprehensive universities worked with their community partners to design assessment tools to evaluate community/university partnerships. We plan to adopt the findings from this study and work to improve our working partnerships and to design culturally- and community-oriented assessment tools.

A second future direction for DUHigherEd is to invite more student assessments and feedback into the overall administration of our department and within the curriculum. Currently we largely rely on student course evaluations to understand how the curriculum is supporting student development. Given that student evaluations of teaching often reveal racial and gender bias and homophobia (Boring, Ottoboni, & Stark, 2016), we are developing alternative assessment models for students to provide feedback about pedagogy. We also issued a survey to understand how students experience our department, the findings of which we have begun to incorporate into the curriculum and plan to expand this practice. Our department recently participated in a college-wide gathering in which students shared feedback and concerns based on racialized experiences that occurred on campus and within the college. As a result, DUHigherEd faculty in partnership with current students are hosting additional student forums, open department meetings, and an annual town hall to provide opportunities for students to offer feedback about the inclusivity of the department. Additionally, we are engaging in a curricular audit in partnership with the university's Office of Teaching & Learning to assess how

we can more intentionally incorporate inclusive excellence, social justice, and a deeper sense of criticality and transformation across our curriculum. These curricular audit sessions are facilitated in partnership with current DUHigherEd students.

A final future direction for our department concerns includes strengthening our understanding of the role of settler colonialism in higher education. Historically, U.S. – based institutions have been driven by the displacement and erasure of Indigenous populations, with the physical enactment of settler colonialism (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Though our colonial interrogation is at its infancy, we recognize two opportunities to engage in this important work. First, to support our decolonial values, we are beginning to fine-tune our Indigenous land acknowledgement practices and policies. This includes beginning all events and courses with an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement to recognize that our learning and research take place on Indigenous land (“Land Acknowledgement,” 2018) and to assess how we, collectively and individually, gain from settler colonialism through higher education (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Second, to improve our curriculum and programmatic offerings, we are intentionally and cautiously exploring how an international focus interrogating neoliberalism and colonialism as global phenomena can further our mission and values. To this end, we seek to build international partnerships that do not perpetuate settler colonialism and are equally focused on promoting equity and resisting neoliberalism in international contexts. We aim for our partnership to yield research, teaching and community engagement opportunities that reflect our cross-cultural and international exchange.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Kezar, Gallant, and Lester (2011) found that grassroots leadership can provide an effective antidote to neoliberalism’s influence on higher education. We agree with this assertion given how we have observed our own institution respond to DUHigherEd’s efforts to protect the public good mission and equity pursuits of our university. Given how pervasive neoliberal ideology is, Higher Education departments have a unique opportunity to provide equity and democracy-focused leadership to college campuses and society. We believe that this is particularly the case considering that many campus administrators, staff and faculty in campuses across the U.S. and globe are educated in Higher Education departments. Through the examples provided above and with consideration of the directions we would like to continue to move, we offer the following recommendations for Higher Education departments interested in promoting institutional change for equity and the public good.

Our first recommendation is to consult existing models for promoting equity and higher education’s public purposes and adapt them to the unique needs, goals and culture of your department. The DUHigherEd faculty have been and continue to be influenced by several models (Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011), such as the Inclusive Excellence Change Model (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005), Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model (Museus, 2014), the Five Principles for Enacting Equity (Bensimon, Dowd, & Witham, 2016); and the principles informing community-based research, scholarship, and teaching (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). While the foundational principles from each of these models guided the initial conceptualization and administration of our department, no individual model addresses the comprehensive elements of DUHigherEd. Neither equity audits nor the CECE model’s Indicators of Change include an evaluation that focus on the redefining of an academic program’s purpose; discuss the histories of oppression and settler colonialism in higher education beyond surface level treatments; explicitly resist the neoliberal direction within higher education; or include the shared learning that can occur when faculty and students challenge one another. As such, we borrowed from multiple models to reshape our department.

Our second recommendation is to evaluate the structures in which Higher Education departments are administered in terms of hiring practices, strategies for retention of faculty and students, and pedagogy. DUHigherEd examples provided demonstrate actionable practices that other Higher Educa-

tion departments can feasibly accomplish. For example, when developing Lunch and Learn curriculum, we not only challenged the banking model delivery (Freire, 2005), we now offer all our Lunch and Learns via an online platform. This encourages our learning community to engage in live or recorded sessions, when physical presence is not possible. Another example is conducting a syllabi audit and modify curriculum where needed. DUHigherEd faculty often engage in peer review with other colleagues at other institutions to lessen the chance of missing marginalized perspectives. Some faculty also share their syllabi on open-access websites and encourage colleagues who share similar values across the country to co-create the syllabi and offer suggestions on ways to improve curricular foci on equity and resisting neoliberalism.

Finally, we suggest faculty within Higher Education departments expand the reach by embedding themselves in campus-wide shared governance and community organizations. Seizing opportunities to influence campus governance through committee involvement and faculty senate representation can allow the values of the department and individual faculty members within the department to guide and shape institutional decision making for higher education's public purposes. In addition, connecting to campus departments that are already similarly aligned with departmental values will strengthen programming and practices which could lead to institutionalization of values centered in a culture of care; the commitment to higher education's public purposes; and a collective resistance to neoliberal ideology in the academy.

Our hope is that this paper serves as a call to harness the power and expertise within Higher Education department to actively resist neoliberal practices and center equity and social justice in campus life. Our intent is to spark ideas, discussion, organizing practices, and research focused on examining the role of Higher Education departments and degree programs in leading postsecondary institutions in society.

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BIOGRAPHIES



Dr. Michele Tyson is a clinical assistant professor of higher education at the University of Denver's Morgridge College of Education. Dr. Tyson has professional experience in student affairs, enrollment management, and student services, which have informed her research interests of access and persistence for post-traditional students, adult educational opportunities, and organizational change. Her primary teaching interest is in the preparation and mentoring of new and developing professionals.



Cecilia Orphan, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of higher education at the University of Denver. Her research broadly examines the following question: "What are higher education's purposes in a society that aspires to be democratic?" Cecilia's research centers on the effects of neoliberal policy discourses on higher education's public purposes, the role of regional comprehensive universities in facilitating educational opportunity and civic life, and strategies used by administrators and policymakers to promote equity and higher education's public purposes. From 2006-2011, she directed the American Democracy Project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. Cecilia holds a Ph.D. in higher education from the University of Pennsylvania and a B.A. in political science from Portland State University.



Dr. Judy Marquez Kiyama is an associate professor and department chair of Higher Education at the University of Denver's Morgridge College of Education. Dr. Kiyama's research examines the structures that shape educational opportunities for underserved groups through an asset-based lens to better understand the collective knowledge and resources drawn upon to confront, negotiate, and (re)shape such structures. Her research is organized in three interconnected areas: the role of parents and families; equity and power in educational research; and underserved groups as collective networks of change.



Chris A. Nelson, PhD, (Diné and Laguna Pueblo) is an Assistant Professor at the University of Denver's Morgridge College of Education – Higher Education Department. The research she engages with challenges the status quo of higher education for Indigenous students and communities. Her primary research interest focuses on finance in higher education, which ranges from student experiences to policy.