



# The Black and Hispanic/Latino Male Teacher Networked Improvement Community: Promising Practices to Recruit and Retain Male Teachers of Color

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## Phase I: Exploring New Pathways to Recruit and Retain



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## ABOUT AACTE: The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

AACTE is a national alliance of educator preparation programs dedicated to high-quality, evidence-based preparation that assures educators are profession-ready as they enter the classroom. Nearly 800 member institutions include public and private colleges and universities in every state, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. Through advocacy and capacity building, AACTE promotes innovative and effective practices that strengthen educator preparation.

AACTE members are committed to increasing the diversity of their faculty and the educators they prepare so that they more accurately reflect the diversity within PK-12 schools. As AACTE looks ahead to the future, this report documents promising practices and significant challenges that all schools, colleges, and departments of education around the country will face as they prepare professionals for increasingly diverse and complex educational environments. AACTE’s goal as an association is to build a portfolio of programs, products, and services to help educator preparation leaders thrive in this dynamic environment, and this report is an installment in that growing portfolio. Learn more at [www.aacte.org](http://www.aacte.org)

# INTRODUCTION

## Why is Workforce Diversity Important?

Research scholars (Gay, 2010; Gorski, 2013; Howard, 2014; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Noguera, 2008) assert that traditionally marginalized children suffer academically within educational systems that (a) refuse to acknowledge culturally-based epistemologies of students of color and (b) fail to create educational curricula and pedagogies responsive to students' experiences and cultural knowledge. The cultural dissonance that exists between educators and students of color impacts (1) achievement rates (Burchinal et al., 2011); (2) representation in gifted and talented programs (Peters & Engerrand, 2016); (3) access to college preparatory programs (Farmer-Hinton, 2011); (4) access to advanced placement coursework (McBride Davis, Slate, Moore, & Barnes, 2015); (5) discipline rates including suspensions and expulsions (Skiba & Losen, 2015); and (6) the school-to-prison pipeline (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). On far too many occasions, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds feel isolated, misunderstood, or treated as "other," leading to lower graduation rates (Au, 2001; Gorski, 2013), and higher dropout rates (Fine, 1991).

While it is important to advocate for all teachers to engage in creating equitable and culturally-inclusive classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1994), recent research revealed that when teachers who are not familiar or do not have experience with people who are different from themselves, they may perceive difference as less valuable or deficient (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015). Teachers who identify with their students may therefore see certain characteristics as attributes to embrace rather than as deficits. For example, findings from an impact study in North Carolina and Tennessee conducted by Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, and Papageorge (2017) indicate that Black primary school students demonstrated lower high school dropout rates when matched with a same-race teacher. Additionally, when measured over time, Black students in North Carolina have increased self-reported college aspirations, and Black students in Tennessee were more likely to complete a college entrance exam. Ultimately, increasing the number of teachers of color in schools provides students of color with role models, offers opportunities to culturally connect, sets high expectations, and reduces implicit bias (Givens, Nasir, Ross, & de Royston, 2016; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

## How Close Are We Toward Realizing A Diversified Teacher Workforce?

Although research and experience substantiate the need for a more diverse teacher workforce, educator preparation programs (EPPs), along with other alternate route programs, are not producing male teachers in proportion to the number of males in public schools (Ingersoll & May, 2011). According to data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS), women earned 81% of undergraduate degrees and certifications awarded by colleges of education in 2015-2016, and the deficiency of racial/ethnic diversity is even greater (AACTE, 2018).

Current research on teachers of color indicate that the teacher workforce does not mirror that of the students they teach. The Shanker Report (2015) reviewed data on teacher diversity from 1987 to 2012 in nine U.S. cities and found that the representation of teachers of color in public schools grew from 12% to 17%. The findings, however, also indicated that the progress toward reducing the substantial representation gaps between teachers of color and students has been very limited; teachers of color remain significantly underrepresented relative to the students they serve. According to the authors, while teachers of color are being hired at higher

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proportional rates than other teachers, teachers of color are leaving the profession at a higher rate than their counterparts and this is especially evident in urban districts (Albert Shanker Report, 2015). This accounts for the continued disparity between students of color and teachers of color.

Additional research from The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) found that less than 2% of public school teachers are Black males and fewer are Hispanic/Latino males. Over the

course of their public school experiences, White female teachers will teach the majority of Black and Latino/Hispanic male students. This disparity has significantly impacted our public school system and the education of Black and Hispanic/Latino male students. The education community is compelled to seek meaningful methods to increase the recruitment and retention of Black and Hispanic/Latino male candidates of color into preparation programs in order to realize a diversified teacher workforce.

## Addressing a Diversified Teacher Workforce through a Networked Improvement Community

AACTE identified a Networked Improvement Community (NIC) as a pathway to examine and act upon the overwhelming absence of teachers of color in our public schools. In spring 2013, AACTE issued a request for proposals from member institutions to join its first NIC with the specified aim of increasing the diversity of our nation's teacher candidate pool by focusing on the recruitment of Black and Hispanic/Latino men into EPPs. It was the hope that by preparing diverse learner-ready teachers, a secondary outcome to increasing the number of Black and Hispanic/Latino male teacher candidates would be an increase in the success of all students in their classrooms. Increasing the racial diversity of the teacher workforce is a major step toward ensuring all students have a diverse learner-ready teacher (CCSSO, 2019).

The AACTE Committee on Professional Preparation and Accountability completed a rigorous review of over 50 applications and selected 10 universities to join the new NIC. Numerous criteria guided their decision-making process including evidence of

- Great diversity within the school districts and community served;
- Alignment of NIC goals to existing strategic initiatives and mission of the institution; and
- Strategic attention to enrollment trends and retention of subgroups of male candidates by race/ethnicity within their perspective EPPs.

### Building the AACTE Networked Improvement Community

- Boston University
- California State University, Fullerton
- Florida Atlantic University
- Mid-America Nazarene University (KS)
- Northeastern Illinois University
- University of Arkansas at Little Rock
- University of Connecticut
- University of Saint Thomas (MN)
- Western Kentucky University
- William Paterson University (NJ)

The universities selected by AACTE reflected EPPs of various sizes, geographic locations, and program types. The initial proposals toward increasing recruitment and retention of male teachers of color from each EPP varied. Through careful discussion, the NIC member institutions agreed to move forward with an overall aim of increasing the number of Black and Hispanic/Latino males admitted as teacher candidates into their EPPs by 25% per program by September 2016. The goal is being measured in the second phase of work.





# METHODOLOGY

## What is a NIC?

In the most comprehensive text to date on the NIC, *Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better*, Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu (2015) describe a NIC as combining the analytical discipline of improvement science with the capability of networked communities to innovate and learn together around a shared problem of practice. Today's educational institutions are complex and nested in larger interconnected systems, and thus result in natural variations in performance across institutions. When introducing change to the daily practices of complex systems, it is imperative for stakeholders to agree that resulting consequences cannot be identified prior to its implementation. Additionally, introducing change that results in quality outcomes, at scale, requires attention to solving local issues. By centering the focus on variations in performance within and across systems, Bryk et al. (2015) compel education leaders, researchers, and policymakers to avoid *solutionitis*—the tendency to solidify beliefs “based on an incomplete analysis of the problem to be addressed and without full consideration of potential problem-solving alternatives” (Bryk, 2015, p. 468).

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Through improvement science, which aims to address specific tasks, processes, policies, structures, and norms within the larger interconnected system, a NIC can capitalize on the value of social learning in a group context, thereby increasing the capacity of the collective group to improve. Accordingly, a NIC, through the use of improvement science, requires participating members to shift away from implementing processes and procedures for the sake of promised outcomes to a more systematic approach that improves outcomes (Bryk et al., 2015). While potential changes introduced into a system should be grounded in empirical evidence, NIC member institutions must learn how to apply those changes to various contexts in order to produce reliable results at scale. To guide this work, Bryk et al. (2015) outlined six principles of improvement, which are foundational elements for how improvement science can be used in networked communities as shown in **Figure 1**.

Throughout the NIC process, member institutions continuously asked three core improvement questions: (1) What is the specific problem I am now trying to solve? (2) What change might I introduce and why? and (3) How will I know if that change is an improvement? (Bryk et al., 2015). To test potential changes to the system, NIC member institutions used the *Plan→Do→Study→Act* (PDSA) cycle, which is considered the engine of change in improvement science.

**Figure 1: The Improvement Principles**

## The Six Core Principles of Improvement

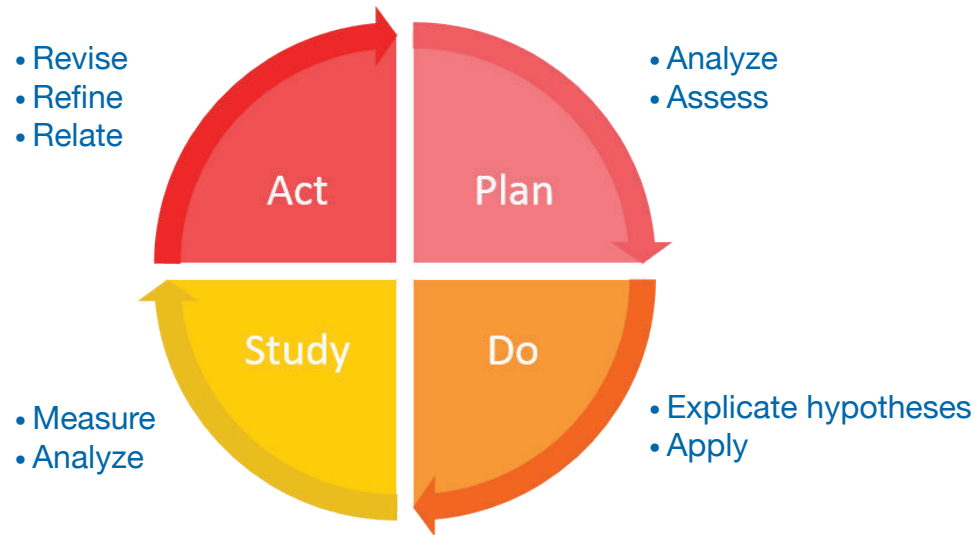
1. **Make the work problem-specific and user-centered.**
2. **Focus on variation in performance.**
3. **See the system that produces the current outcomes.**
4. **Improve at scale what you can measure.**
5. **Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry.**
6. **Accelerate improvements through networked communities.**

## What are PDSA Cycles?

PDSA cycles are methods of inquiry that follow “the logic of systematic experimentation common to scientific endeavors, now applied to everyday practices” (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 121) as illustrated in **Figure 2**. Each PDSA cycle must contain a plan of action, implementation of that plan, a study of how that plan progressed (including measurement data), and actions to be taken based on what was learned for the next cycle. The cycles are continuous, one following the other, and build on one another to “answer new questions as the scope on inquiry expands” (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 121). The intent behind PDSA cycles is to aid a network in learning fast and moving from a small-scale test to a large-scale improvement.

# METHODOLOGY

Figure 2: PDSA cycle



While Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow (2011) established a networked improvement science around 90-day cycles of *Plan→Do→Study→Act*, developing a NIC for institutions of higher education (IHEs) requires noting challenges specific to the university setting. One of those challenges relate to faculty contracts. Faculty representatives are typically contracted around semester schedules, which exceed 90-days. As a result, several cycles of our NIC had to be extended by a few weeks to allow for their continuous engagement. In addition, faculty are often 9-month employees and NIC member institutions exceeded their contracted time by engaging in the work outside of the semester schedule, often in the summers. The members of the participating institutions, therefore, volunteered their time to engage fully with the problems of practice.

## AACTE's NIC: Process Description

As referenced above, the overall aim of the AACTE NIC was to increase the number of Black and Hispanic/Latino males admitted as teacher candidates into participating member institutions' EPPs by 25% per program by September 2016. In keeping with Bryk and colleagues' (2015) concept of the NIC, member institutions studied the problem of practice through a collaborative process that looked collectively and individually at four assigned focal points or drivers: initially, the four drivers were identified as: (1) recruitment strategies; (2) incentives to pursue a career in teaching; (3) equity-based admissions policies; and (4) support for Black and Hispanic/Latino males. After a second stage of review, NIC member institutions determined that all aspects of these drivers could be meaningfully consolidated into two primary drivers: (1) recruitment, and (2) retention. Each member institution divided its representation into both drivers. The recruitment driver addressed aspects of attracting more Black and Hispanic/Latino males into EPPs, while the retention driver addressed programs and initiatives to retain teacher candidates through program completion and graduation.





## INITIAL OUTCOMES

### Promising Practices in the Areas of Recruitment and Retention of Male Teachers of Color

The NIC process allowed each member institution to quickly assess the current nature of their EPP, their institution, and the recruitment of males of color. The evaluations, along with the collaborative discussions across the NIC membership, spurred new partnerships and the development of new strategies.

#### RECRUITMENT

Over the course of the NIC, member institutions created and reviewed an inventory of individual recruitment practices across the 10 participating member institutions. At the finale, the inventory included 126 partnerships or initiatives across graduate, undergraduate, and precollege (high school, middle school, and elementary school) levels focused on the recruitment and retention of Black and Hispanic/Latino males in EPPs. The inventory data demonstrated an overall increase in the number of partnerships and collaborations addressing the recruitment and retention problems of the teaching practice. Fifty-one of these partnerships or



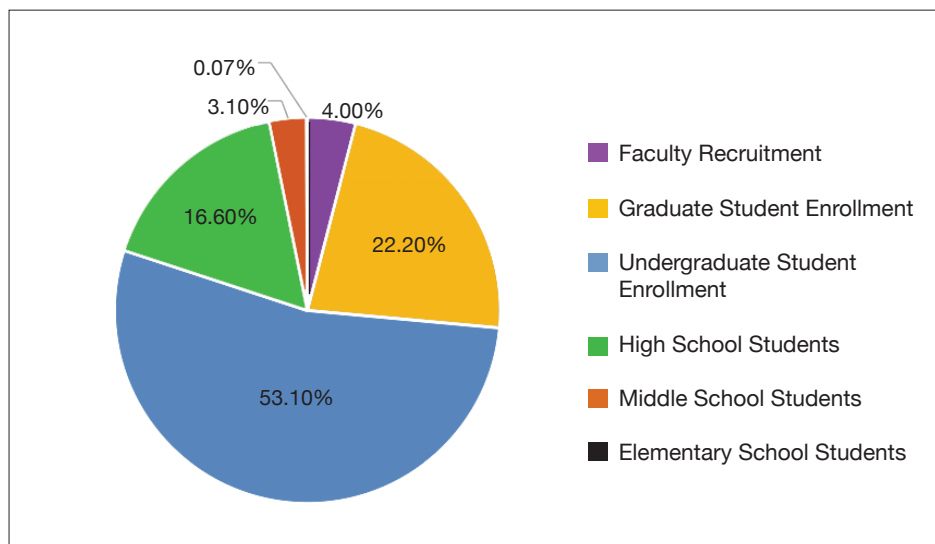
# INITIAL OUTCOMES

initiatives existed prior to the start of the NIC (September 1, 2013) with 75 being implemented after the launch of the NIC (see **Figure 3**). The collection of this data ensured members would look at recruitment initiatives created and enacted within PDSA cycles and across the 10 NIC EPPs and consider the practices that would lead to long-term outcomes at their institutions.

Two areas proved essential to improving the recruitment of Black and Hispanic/Latino male teacher candidates into EPPs: (1) developing tools for collecting data on recruitment efforts and (2) identifying teacher candidates as resources to better understand their experiences. For the NIC member institutions, tools for gathering data included surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups with prospective, current, and alumni students. Although general data collection tools existed within the university offices, NIC member institutions engaged the stakeholders in these offices to request the topics, questions, and sessions that specifically addressed male teachers of color. NIC member institutions also developed focus groups for the teacher candidates, providing them with the opportunity to discuss their experiences as male teachers of color in EPPs.

NIC member institutions learned that recruiting males of color to their EPP was a goal shared by their universities. However, the EPPs at the NIC member institutions often reported feeling isolated from the general university setting. It was also reported that initiatives of the EPPs, although similar to the entire university, could be scaled and amplified if communication and partnerships within the university were increased. Ultimately, EPPs that began communicating and collaborating with different entities at their university increased their teacher candidate pools.

**Figure 3. Recruitment initiatives**



## RETENTION

The retention team identified three promising practices to increase the retention of male teacher candidates of color: (1) mentoring programs; (2) coursework grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy; and (3) financial assistance. Research indicates that mentoring programs are highly effective ways to meet the needs of underrepresented student populations who experience varied levels of marginalization on their campuses (Phillips Joplin, Orman, & Evans, 2004). Black and Hispanic/Latino male teacher candidates at the participating NIC member institutions indicated that mentoring was important to their enrollment, entrance, retention, persistence, and development as they navigated through EPPs. They also emphasized the importance of having opportunities to see, witness, and fully engage with education professionals who looked like them and who may have encountered similar cultural and gender challenges during their academic and professional journeys. Mentors can consist of Black and Hispanic/Latino male faculty and staff members, K-12 teachers, members of fraternal/civic organizations, local religious entities, and other community-based professional groups.

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Therefore, NIC member institutions recruited mentors from university and K-12 settings and provided comprehensive and culturally-based mentor training to all current and prospective mentors.

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) played a significant role in mentorship training and in the EPP classrooms. Ladson-Billings (1994) defines culturally relevant pedagogy as curriculum and instruction that empowers “students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17-18). Gay (2010) suggests that practitioners practicing culturally responsive pedagogy teach “to and through [students’] personal and cultural strengths,” and reject the deficit perspective; but instead they recognize that teacher candidates of color “come to school having already mastered many cultural skills and ways of knowing” (p. 213). This mindful practice requires educators to engage in critical self-reflection through the examination of one’s own biases and stereotypes;

and to deepen one’s cultural competence in order to validate and affirm teacher candidates and their communities (Gay, 2010). As NIC member institutions focused on the tenets of CRP, many opportunities arose to examine its integration within and across EPPs. Member institutions began to address the general lack of CRP in numerous critical areas of their programs, such as mentor and faculty training.

Overall, the thoughtful integration of CRP practices were both beginning and continuing steps toward creating EPP environments capable of sustaining Black and Hispanic/Latino males. Moreover, financial resources were allocated systematically to support men of color within EPPs—such as facilitating new workshops focused on passing program entrance and exit exams. The NIC member institutions also developed new student groups aimed at supporting teachers of color. These student groups only included Black and Hispanic/Latino males and proved instrumental for the teacher candidates.

## Recommendations from NIC Members

In addition to the aforementioned promising practices to address the recruitment and retention of male teachers of color, the NIC member institutions identified emerging practices due to early stage success. NIC member institutions recommend that EPPs consider the emerging practices shown in **Figure 4**.

Additionally, faculty in EPPs must evaluate their curricula and course delivery in order to meet the needs of our diverse teacher candidates. NIC

member institutions recommend that faculty and staff receive formal professional development in CRP. As faculty in EPPs evaluate their program curricula and course delivery methods in order to meet the needs of our diverse teacher candidates, NIC member institutions encourage faculty and staff to follow steps shown in **Figure 5**. Through these and other efforts, the authors contend that male teacher candidates of color will increasingly come to the profession and stay in the profession.

# INITIAL OUTCOMES

**Figure 4: Promising practices for recruitment**

## Five Recommendations from NIC Members

1. Host information sessions at local, community colleges and within the community such as cultural centers.
2. Recruit paraprofessionals.
3. Expand K-12 partnerships to attend schools, host information sessions, facilitate high school future teacher programs, and foster relationships with K-12 students through mentoring and advisement.
4. Continue to support the work of “Grow Your Own” teacher programs focusing on recruiting men of color at the high school or freshmen levels from communities with large populations of students of color who might be interested in teaching, and especially, returning to their communities once they enter the profession.
5. Collaborate with university academic admissions and advising offices to make a concerted effort to reach potential candidates.

**Figure 5: Promising practices for retention**

## Seven Recommendations from NIC Members

1. Give voice to each group separately (Black males and Hispanic/Latino males) and do not converge them as one culture group.
2. Understand cultural background and identity of each individual as a Black and/or Hispanic/Latino man.
3. Avoid projecting Eurocentric view on Black and Hispanic/Latino male teacher candidates.
4. Know the cultures of teacher candidates and create a bridging or early support program that acknowledges issues of segregation and poverty that challenges the initial pipeline into teaching.
5. Create historical narratives for each culture group that will connect with their cultural pride.
6. Practice intrusive advising.
7. Foster teacher candidate success through focused mentoring throughout their programs.

# INITIAL OUTCOMES

## Barriers and Challenges to Systemic Change

The NIC member institutions realized early on that varied policies, definitions, and procedures in practices presented challenges in creating common goals for each driver that would be applicable across institutions. For example, candidates at NIC member institutions matriculate at varying points in their degree programs. There also were differences in strands of funding based on the size of the institution and whether the university was a public or private entity. Thus, throughout the four PDSA cycles, NIC member institutions grappled with identifying similarities and differences among EPPs, considering university-specific characteristics, and developing action plans that took into account their various contexts.

In regards to recruitment and retention strategies, NIC institution members reported how Black and Hispanic/Latino males encountered numerous entrance and program barriers to their respective EPPs. A few of the recurring themes included state testing requirements, a lack of Black and Hispanic/Latino faculty and staff, and a lack of CRP in educator preparation classrooms.

### ASSESSMENT MANDATES

The majority of NIC member institutions' EPPs require prospective teacher candidates to pass the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) PRAXIS Core Academic Skills for Educators test or a state equivalent. NIC member institutions referred to the "cut scores" of these tests as one of the major impediments for Black and Hispanic/Latino males entering EPPs. Bennett, McWhorter, and Kuykendall (2006) found that a disproportionately higher percentage of Black and Hispanic/Latino teachers who applied to educator preparation programs did not pass one or more of their Praxis exams in order to gain admission. This served as a barrier for interested candidates who wanted to pursue the teaching field.

To undertake the state-mandated testing, NIC member institutions emphasized the need for systematic test preparation support. How schools might offer this service/support to Black and Hispanic/Latino male teacher candidates varied across different EPPs. Finding the resources to provide and fund test preparation was a daunting task for all NIC member institutions. In addition to funding test preparation, NIC member institutions grappled with how to support and fund teacher candidates if they did not pass the mandated test. Identifying solutions to these challenges is crucial to teacher candidate retention.

NIC member institutions continuously reinforced how meeting other entrance requirements, e.g. GPA, written and oral proficiency tests, and even completing a dual major, demonstrated the strength of these applicants, and negated the importance of the state-mandated tests. Additionally, without evidence of a clear connection between these standardized test scores and future teacher effectiveness, obstructing these teacher candidates' admission into EPPs, and therefore the teacher workforce, was tantamount to failing to effectively and equitably address the shortages felt across all disciplines in the field of education. Such a compelling argument bolstered some of the members to request, or revisit previous requests, to their institutions for additional test supports (e.g., funding for test registration and test preparation workshops) and to argue for legislative reforms around state-mandated testing.

### FINANCIAL OBSTACLES

The NIC member institutions learned that many Black and Hispanic/Latino male teacher candidates face a lack of financial support while pursuing their academic degrees. Financial assistance allows teacher candidates to concentrate fully on their academic studies as opposed to working full- or part-time to supplement family income.



# INITIAL OUTCOMES

Scholarships, grants, and fellowships are excellent ways to assist teacher candidates who are otherwise struggling to maintain their level of focus on their academic success. Navigating the complex network of financial assistance offices at most colleges and universities often requires substantial teamwork across faculty, staff, and prospective or admitted teacher candidates.

## **DEARTH OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EPP FACULTY IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY**

At the onset of the NIC, it was assumed that Black and/or Hispanic/Latino faculty would be able to support and understand the experiences of Black and/or Hispanic/Latino teacher candidates. It became evident early in the NIC process that this assumption was misguided. Many faculty members at NIC member institutions have not

received professional development in the area of culturally responsive pedagogy. Thus, faculty are not grounding their teaching and assessments in culturally responsive practices. Teacher candidates who did not experience CRP during their programs described feeling “woefully unprepared” to enter the education profession. The lack of experience with CRP also impacts the climate within EPP classrooms. While some NIC institutions began providing workshops and training for faculty to implement CRP, members encountered resistance from other faculty. Since culturally responsive teaching practices were an outcome of the NIC work and not the primary focus, institutions found it difficult to receive financial support for these trainings.

# NEXT STEPS: DATA COLLECTION AND EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

NIC institutions continue to deploy the recommended strategies from this report and collect data on the impact and effectiveness of these strategies in recruiting and retaining male teachers of color into EPPs. In the next phase of this initiative, AACTE will collaborate with member institutions to measure the progress made toward the NIC’s overall aim of increasing the number of Black and Hispanic/Latino males admitted as teacher candidates into their EPPs by 25% per program. The recruitment and retention strategies identified above by the NIC take time to test, adapt, and implement. While the formative data collected by the NIC was helpful in determining the promising practices, examination of the data from a longer time frame is needed to deduce effectiveness and sustainability. Therefore, in addition to measuring progress toward the overall aim, AACTE and member institutions will also analyze which strategies have been the most impactful over time, based on the longitudinal data collected. The findings from this analysis will be shared more broadly with the field in a forthcoming report.

# NIC MEMBERS

This list comprises all of the individuals who diligently worked on the AACTE NIC project. AACTE is enormously grateful for the time, attention, and expertise of all of the NIC members.

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