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FUNNEL VISION: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS OF RECRUITMENT AND  
ADMISSION PRACTICES

BY

Adekunbi O. Ajiboye, Heather L. Anderson-James, Jennifer Fountain, and  
Jose Alejandro Vega-Gutiérrez

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

2020

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Alejandro Vega-Gutiérrez, 2020  
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**Dedications****Adekunbi O. Ajiboye**

*Ènìyàn ni asọ mi. Àjèjé ọwọ kan kò gbé ẹrù dọrí.*

*I dedicate this dissertation to my loving parents and greatest cheerleaders, Sayo and Moni Ajiboye, for their unwavering support, wisdom, and belief in my abilities. Thank you for instilling within me values of perseverance, resilience, fortitude, joy, kindness, and grace. To my beautiful, strong, and brilliant sisters, Kunmi and Feyi, thank you for your laughter and sunshine, you both inspire and challenge me to be a better version of myself. To my aunts and uncles that believed in my dream and started calling me Dr. Kunbi at age 3. Finally, to the myriad family members, friends, co-workers, students, classmates, teachers, and mentors that provided mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical support throughout this journey. No one achieves anything alone, and I thank you for helping me reach this amazing milestone. I love you all so much and hold you in my heart forever.*

**Heather L. Anderson-James**

*“Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.” (D&C 88:118).*

*I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my family: My husband, Dr. Farrell James, my dearest friend and partner who selflessly supports my love of learning and academic pursuits. Next, with love and gratitude are my beloved and precious children - Alexa & Brian Lunt, Mikaela & Grant Russell, Courtney, Kelsey, Caitlin, and Mark James. Their sacrifice and encouragement have meant everything; the greatest honor is being their mother! Included with great love are my parents Charlet and Kent Anderson, grandparents Anthon and Glenna Price, and great-grandparents Clyde and Vera Calaway, whose legacy of faith and hard work endure through the generations.*

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*It is my genuine gratefulness and warmest regard that I dedicate this work to current and future Student Affairs administrators and their courageous students. As a collective, we can change policies and practices that suppress accessibility of education for all people. We can ensure that each person who has a dream of education can burst through its heavy/barricaded doors to make a grand entrance into something spectacular. That's what it did for me. And that's how I'll pay it forward. In special recognition to my family, friends, mentors, colleagues, and students, thank you for your support throughout this journey. Your encouragement and love brought me to the finish line. Thank you for teaching me how to be a courageous leader who has agency to "challenge the system" and make education (at all levels) accessible to every member of society.*

*With love, admiration, and a celebratory soul.*

**Jose Alejandro Vega-Gutiérrez**

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## Abstract

This inquiry employed a convergent mixed-methods case study through a collaborative partnership with a College of Education at a private, West Coast Jesuit university. The study's purpose was to interrogate recruitment and admission policies and practices of a Student Affairs graduate program to determine the extent to which they did or did not align with equity- and justice-oriented principles. The Education Deans for Justice and Equity framework, Critical Race Theory, and Social Reproduction Theory served as the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for this study. Research participants were employees and students associated with the program and its recruitment and admissions processes. Data collection involved interviews, focus groups, artifacts, and electronic surveys. Data analyses revealed four overarching themes: (1) recognition of mission-driven philosophy, (2) integration of practices to values, (3) expansion of fiscal resources, and (4) development of human capital. *Recruitment* recommendations included: (a) implement a graduate enrollment management plan; (b) collaborating with key stakeholders to develop policies and clear role responsibilities; (c) expanding and diversifying recruitment and outreach strategies; (d) using CRM data to leverage a return on investment of recruitment activities; and, (e) updating recruitment imagery on printed and digital materials. *Admissions* recommendations included: (a) articulation of the true costs of college attendance before and after the application of financial assistance; (b) clarifying and strengthening graduate assistantship and internship structures; (c) conducting a regular program assessment to strengthen equity and justice-oriented goals; (d) developing intentional collaborative practices across university departments; and, (d) implementing a developmental process to support applicants through the graduate admission process.

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RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS PRACTICES

xii

*Keywords: university admissions, diversity, equity, justice, recruitment, persons of color, postsecondary/higher education, critical theory, EDJE, social reproduction theory*

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

In the 1900s, approximately one in eight people in the United States were of a race other than White. One hundred years later, the number had increased to nearly one in four people, and researchers expect the number of racially diverse individuals will continue to increase over the next decade (Colby & Ortman, 2015). As an example, from 2000 to 2016, the proportion of the population comprised of minority racial groups in the United States increased for individuals identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native (from 0.9% to 1.3%), Asian (from 3.6% to 5.7%), Black or African American (from 12.3% to 13.3%), Hispanic (from 12.5% to 17.8%), and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (from 0.1% to 0.2%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2001). While the report acknowledges that Non-Hispanic Whites are projected to remain the single largest race or ethnic group for the next 40 years, it also noted that if this trend continues, the racial composition of the United States will become more racially and ethnically pluralistic.

In alignment with the increasingly diverse and pluralistic nature of the U.S. population, higher education institutions have experienced increases in enrollment rates of minority groups. The National Education Statistics consider enrollment rates as the percentage of young adults (age 18 to 24) that enroll as undergraduate or graduate students in higher education institutions. Their 2019 report on the conditions of education highlights that the college enrollment rate increased for all race groups, compared to the enrollment rates from 2000. For example, American Indian/Alaska Native enrollment increased from 16% in 2000 to 20% in 2017, Asian from 56% to 65%, Black moved from 31% to 36%, Hispanic grew from 22% to 36%, and White enrollment went from 39% to 41% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). Yet, the increasing enrollment rates were not proportional to the overall or increased representation of these respective groups in the country's

overall population (NCES, 2019). Figure 1 illustrates the percentage increase in college enrollment versus population based on race from 2010 to 2017.

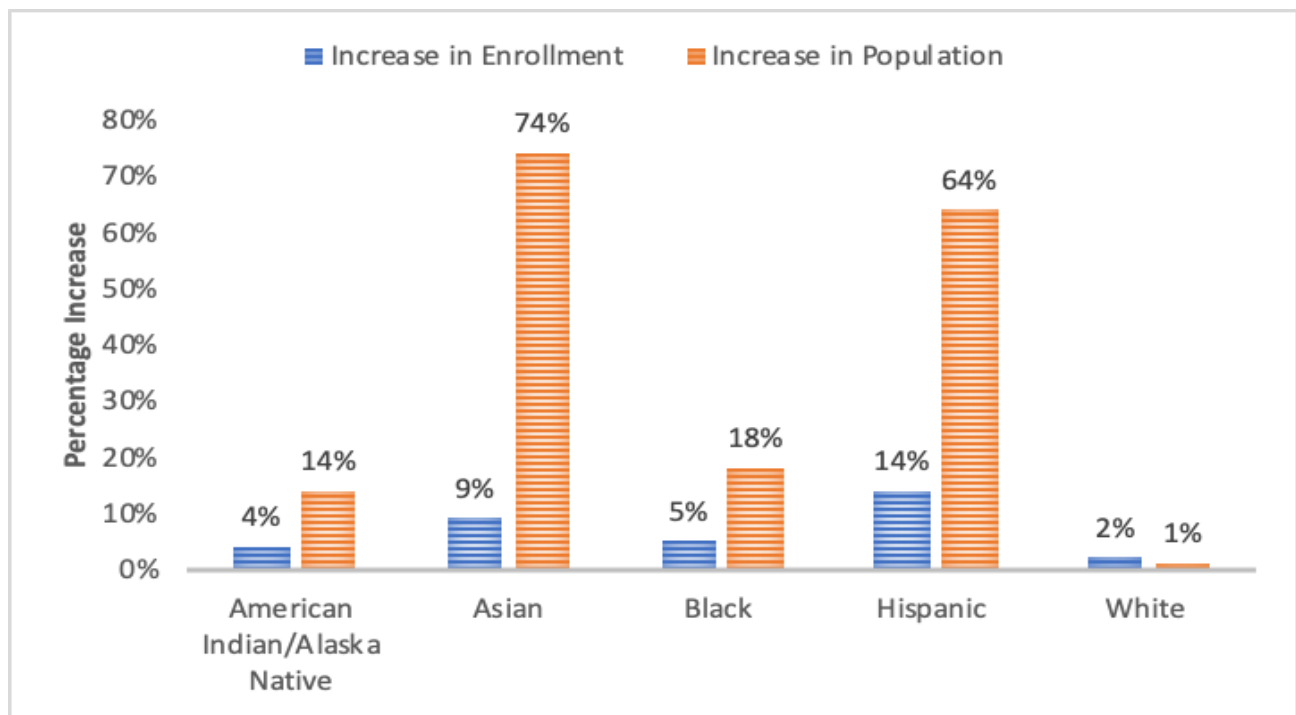


Figure 1. Percentage increase in college enrollment vs. population based on race from 2010 to 2017.

When comparing the increase in enrollment versus the representation and increases in the general population, data show that higher education institutions continue to struggle with proportional and equitable college access among historically marginalized populations (Dahill-Brown, Witte, & Wolfe, 2016; Hynes, 2006; Nguyen & Ward, 2017). The Condition of Education Report of 2019 also considered students' socioeconomic status in higher education institutions; it noted that enrollment in postsecondary education in 2016 was 50 percentage points higher for students with the highest socioeconomic status (78%) than for those with the lowest (28%). This may occur because students with lower socioeconomic status sometimes lack access to a reliable internet connection, computers at home, or fiscal resources to cover book expenses. One report suggested that 44% of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds never enrolled in postsecondary education, compared to only 7% of those with high socioeconomic status (NCES,



2019). For these reasons, historically marginalized populations continue to serve as the foundation of conversations regarding access to higher education and best practices for recruitment and admission in the United States (Hynes, 2006; Nguyen & Ward, 2017).

The foundational policies and practices of higher education inherently exclude and marginalize certain groups of people based on factors related to race and socioeconomic status (Dahill-Brown et al., 2016; Pitman, 2015). Historically, communities of color have been subjected to political disenfranchisement and institutionalized social oppression, creating a struggle for equal rights and equitable access to higher education (Evans, Taylor, Dunlap, & Miller, 2009). The struggle with equity and inclusion creates unintended consequences that limit opportunities for historically marginalized populations excluded from dominant social, cultural, and political advantages. These unintended consequences include an increased likelihood of admission officers and academic advisors counseling marginalized student populations out of lucrative college pathways and academic programs during the recruitment and admission process (Hynes, 2006; Nguyen & Ward, 2017).

Legal policies and supreme court cases adjudicating on racial issues have served as the bases of increasing equitable recruitment and admission efforts of historically marginalized populations in higher education (Rubin, 2011). We argue that these court decisions have positively impacted postsecondary institutions' equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment and admission efforts. However, despite various institutional efforts such as the elimination of standardized testing or increased funding opportunities for historically marginalized groups, the college access gap between people of color and their white counterparts continues to widen (Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Musu-Gillette et al., 2014; Zhao, 2018).

As the population of the United States shifts, higher education institutions must create justice-oriented systems in which people from all social identities can seek full and equitable

participation in physically and psychologically safe institutions (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007).

There is a correlation between an individual's successful pursuit of a graduate degree with increased lifetime earnings and increased quality of life which could result in a higher socioeconomic status (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). Closing gaps in educational access for historically marginalized populations requires an institutional focus on equity that involves the consideration of systemic oppression and a commitment to challenging that oppression in order to afford equitable access to resources, opportunities, representation, and inclusion (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003; Braveman, 2014; Garces, 2014). An institutional commitment to diversity based on the pursuit of justice is critical to creating a more equitable distribution of cultural, economic, and social capital (Hopson, 2014; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; Rubin, 2011).

### **Problem Statement**

Organizational efforts in higher education suggest a general interest in improving diversity through inclusionary practices focused on the intentional recruitment and retention of certain groups and fostering policies and practices that reflect a greater understanding of cultural differences (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). For many organizations, diversity is a catchphrase for surface-level efforts to provide access to historically marginalized populations (Adams et al., 2007; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Patton, 2010). Unfortunately, in such cases, diversifying practices do not translate to addressing systemically perpetuated inequities and injustices of access to resources and opportunities among marginalized populations. This failure suggests that diversity without a systemic understanding of equity and justice can lead to marginalization and tokenism of historically marginalized groups (Adams et al., 2007; Heifetz & Linsky, 2017).

Multiple layers in the higher education system contribute to educational access gaps among historically marginalized groups (León & Nevarez, 2007; Luedke, 2017; Nguyen & Ward, 2017). While there have been measurable advances in student access to higher education, there are still

structural forms of oppression embedded in societal systems—such as individual and collective bias, which may lead to experiences of racism, micro-aggression, micro-insults, and micro-attacks during the recruitment and admission process (Evans et al., 2009; Hernandez, Mobley, Coryell, Yu, & Martinez, 2013; Patton, 2007; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Therefore, educational leaders must critically interrogate the reproduction of inequities and injustices that provide advantages to dominant groups by challenging the traditional thinking of objectivity, meritocracy, equal opportunity, and color-blindness when considering student access to and participation in higher education (Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Villalpando, 2004; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016). To address this problem, we sought to examine the policies and practices of recruitment and admission at a private Jesuit university's Student Affairs (SA) program located on the West Coast.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this convergent mixed-methods case study was to interrogate recruitment and admission policies and practices of a private Jesuit university's College of Education (COE) Student Affairs (SA) graduate program and determine the extent to which they did or did not align with equity- and justice-oriented principles. Researchers explored potentially hidden forms of equitable or inequitable and just or unjust policies and practices embedded in educational institutions and the role this COE may play in perpetuating or transforming future educational leaders recruited and admitted into programs. This study acknowledges the historical legacies of inequities and injustice embedded in educational institutions and the hegemony that exerts significant influence in maintaining such systems (Education Deans for Justice and Equity [EDJE], 2019). We examined equity- and justice-oriented principles with a focus on the values of inclusion and diversity. Through this inquiry, we sought to better understand the different and overlapping levels of injustice and inequity embedded in the individual, institutional, and ideological levels of recruitment and admissions policies and practices. We engaged in this inquiry with the understanding that all COEs

hold a social responsibility to recruit, admit, and prepare diverse future educational leaders for justice- and equity-oriented practice (EDJE, 2019).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How and to what extent do the recruitment policies and practices of the Student Affairs graduate program align or misalign with equitable- and justice-oriented principles?
2. How and to what extent do the admission policies and practices of the Student Affairs graduate program afford prospective students with equitable and just access to its programs?

### **Significance of the Research**

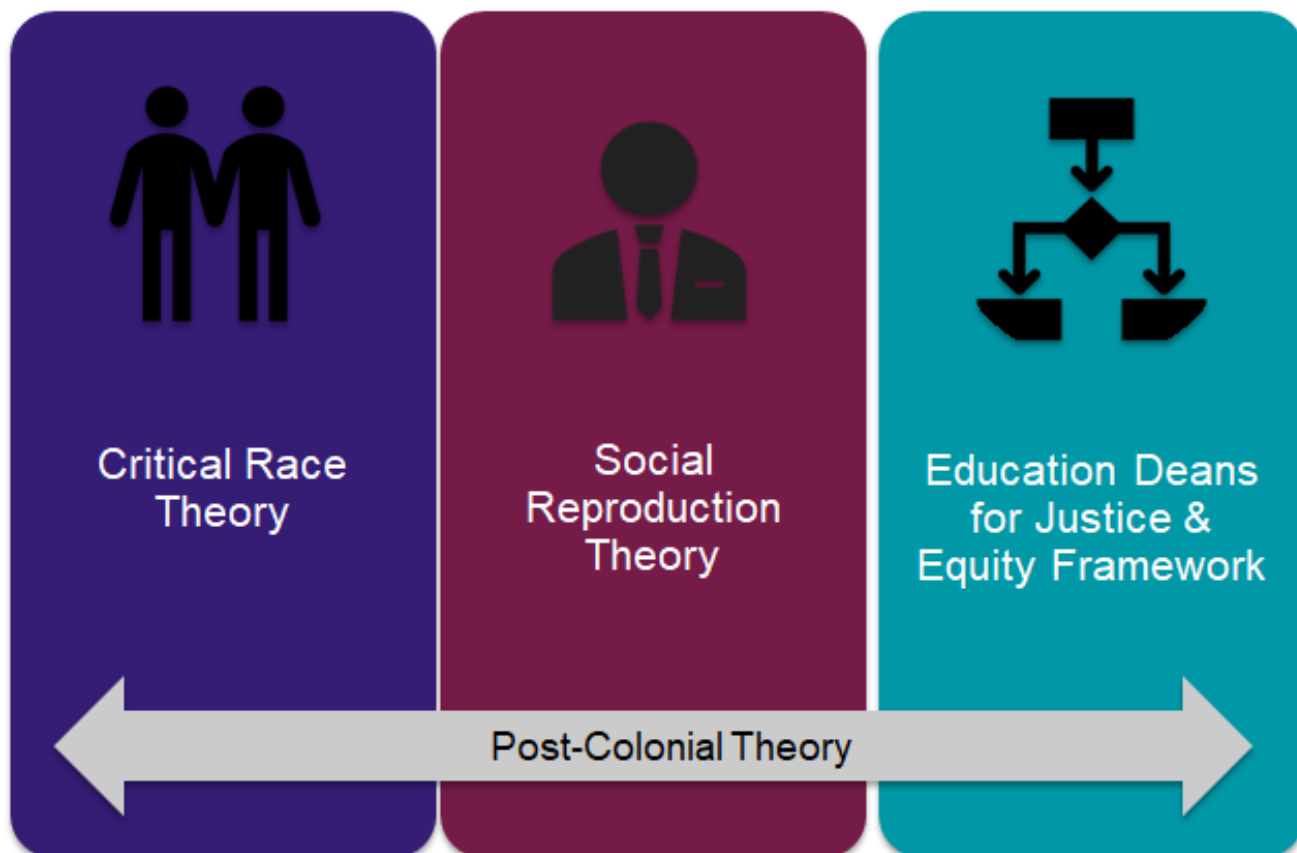
This inquiry explored the complexity of equity and justice in graduate-level higher education. The purposeful and explicit consideration of recruitment and admission policies and practices could inform critical analysis of educational approaches that advance just and equitable practice and serve as a guide for action planning and future transformation. Furthermore, this study deliberately addressed equity and justice in educational systems to highlight the role COEs play, through admission and recruitment, in building capacity and transforming the higher education system for future educators, counselors, and leaders.

The design provided a unique insight into the lived experiences of students, staff, leaders or administrators, and faculty. The SA program faculty supported this research opportunity through a community partnership with doctoral students performing a Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice (TDiLP). The TDiLP process required a small group of doctoral students to conduct an inquiry related to a specific problem of practice with a community-based organization/partner.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

Two theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), as well as one conceptual framework, the Education Deans for Justice and Equity (EDJE)

Framework, guided this study. However, it is important to note that a fourth framework, Post-Colonial Theory, or PCT is foundational to the other three. While not the focus of this study, PCT served as a critical starting point, as it gives deeper insights into historic and systemic inequities by exploring the context that creates educational systems. Figure 2 highlights the relationship between PCT as a grounding theory to the other conceptual and theoretical frameworks we employed.



*Figure 2.* Representation of the relationship between PCT as a grounding theory to the conceptual (EDJE) and theoretical frameworks (CRT and SRT) that guided this inquiry.

### **Post-Colonialism in Education**

PCT provided an understanding of historical contexts that created educational systems that marginalize and outrightly devalue communities of color in the United States (Asher 2010; Kohn, 2010; Morrison, 2017). The theory challenges Western civilizations' dominant privileged perspectives and seeks to reposition and empower marginalized groups. PCT acknowledges the challenges of changing centuries-old practices that influence current educational systems (Asher,

2010; Kohn, 2010; Morrison, 2017). PCT is an important starting point to gain deeper insights about historic and systemic inequities and injustices that impact college recruitment and admission policies and practices. For educational reform to become a practiced reality, organizational policies and practices in higher education must reflect values that accept, respect, and encourage differences. Post-Colonial theory takes many different shapes and interventions, but all share a fundamental claim: when we focus on Euro-centric and Western ways of knowing and doing, we marginalize and ignore the multiplicity of cultures of other racially and ethnically diverse communities. The task of considering PCT in higher education deserves a treatment of its own. Therefore, it is not our goal, nor is this study intended to elaborate in much detail on what such theory principles would entail. Instead, PCT served as the foundation for the theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed below.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that stems from multiple disciplines used to understand the experiences of students of color within educational systems. CRT stems from Crenshaw's (1988) work on intersectionality, the complex ways that overlapping social identities, such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status, systemically impact an individual's experience within institutions. CRT serves as a guide to educational researchers in understanding the impact of living in a racialized society—helping them recognize that class-, race-, and gender-based explanations do not sufficiently explain educational access gaps. CRT also serves as a lens that facilitates deeper exploration of systemic issues by critically interrogating hidden forms of oppression and the social reproduction and normalization of systemic racism in educational policies and practices (López, 2003; Villalpando, 2004).

The tenets of CRT are (a) that U.S. society remains significantly connected to race; (b) that cultural capital serves as the basis of societal advancement; (c) that race, gender, and class are

intersectional and impact societal hierarchies; and (d) that social identities predispose individuals to prescribed and unequal systems (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Harro, 2018; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Patton, 2010). CRT moves researchers toward discussions of systemic inequities and injustices, and it offers a coherent framework otherwise absent from current educational research. This framework guides and requires researchers to critically examine experiences and responses to racism, sexism, and classism within educational systems to validate and contextualize research data related to students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). For example, researchers have found that universities uphold systemic, structural, and cultural dimensions that often involve systems of covert racism throughout the recruitment and admission process (Banks et al., 2014; Patton, 2007). An example of racism prevalent in admission requirements is the mandatory submission of a candidate's GRE scores, despite recent studies showing little correlation between GRE scores and success in graduate school and the concern that the test puts underrepresented groups at a disadvantage (Langin, 2019).

### **Social Reproduction Theory**

Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) explores the relationship between education and social class and lends a critical review of the impact of cultural capital and social mobility in higher education (Bourdieu, 1977; Tzanakis, 2011). The tenets of SRT posit that generations inherit cultural capital through family connections, and the value of the inheritance determines a student's educational outcomes, reproduced and reinforced by educational systems (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016). The literature suggests that higher education rewards students who possess elite cultural capital and sets standards that privilege students with higher socioeconomic status while excluding others, thereby reinforcing social reproduction (Tzanakis, 2011; Luedke, 2017; Serna & Woulfe, 2017; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016).

Social reproduction occurs in myriad ways throughout recruitment and admission policies and practices in higher education. Methods of social reproduction related to cultural capital include

high stakes testing, student and family expectations, student “self-elimination” due to low test scores or GPA, and students advised out of college pathways towards vocational programs (Evans et al., 2009; De la Rosa & Tierney, 2006; Luedke, 2017; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Schwartz et al., 2015; Serna & Woulfe, 2017). These policies and practices, coupled with historical oppression, contribute to limited college access and choices for students with lower socioeconomic status and for those from historically marginalized populations. Therefore, higher education institutions remain a culprit of class stratification, power hierarchies, and social disparities, since cultural capital and traditional philosophies of merit serve as the basis of recruitment and admissions practices (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Serna, 2015; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016).

College access is one of the most influential and instrumental social mobility tools in society (Baum et al., 2010). However, the structure of higher education, through social reproduction, creates an inequitable distribution of capital that limits access to higher education by underrepresented and minority groups (Rubin, 2011). Therefore, educational leaders must shed long-held dominant beliefs and values, and they must revise structures and policies to open access to all groups (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Serna & Woulfe, 2017). We used SRT as a lens to interrogate the perpetuation of deeply held individual, institutional, and ideological values and beliefs responsible for upholding higher education exclusivity. SRT allowed us to examine socially constructed identities, reinforced through generational inheritance of cultural capital, and the value of this inheritance reproduced among racial and other marginalized identity groups in a higher education institution.

### **Education Deans for Justice and Equity Framework**

A nationwide coalition of deans, EDJE, acknowledged the role that COEs play in perpetuating and transforming inequities and injustices that disproportionately exist among marginalized groups (EDJE, 2019). The EDJE group produced a framework and an assessment tool



to be utilized by educational leaders who have the capacity and responsibility to advance equity and justice in COEs (EDJE, 2019). PCT served as a critical lens in the development of the EDJE Framework and provided a pathway to explore the complexities of higher education as well as the historical constructs that maintain systemic inequities and injustices.

The EDJE Framework begins with the recognition that educational institutions are not politically or ideologically neutral. It affirms that colonialism, imperialism, hetero-patriarchy, and/or neoliberal policies deny accessibility to certain students. Therefore, educational leaders are held responsible for addressing such gaps in educational access and success. This framework is grounded by the recognition and assessment of education at three levels: (1) the individual level, including interpersonal interactions and internalized oppression, (2) the institutional level, including systemic, structural, and cultural dimensions, and (3) the ideological level, including the meta-narratives that shape “common sense” (EDJE, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

For generations, higher education has served as the great equalizer in society and a pillar of the American dream. The college degree remains the primary catalyst into high-wage jobs that bring increased social and economic mobility. However, for the reasons described above, that dream continues to be out of reach for a significant portion of our nation’s college-seeking students who represent historically marginalized, first-generation, and low-income populations. Indeed, these systemic issues may even be worsening. According to Glynn (2017), too many institutions in the last two decades have been following an enrollment-management roadmap that discounts tuition to attract high-performing students—whether they needed the funding support or not. This has also meant that colleges and universities must add new amenities, buildings, and academic programs at lightning speed to stay ahead of their competition—all with the focus of boosting enrollment and revenue. Such a focus on the economic growth of institutions is at odds with equity- and justice-

oriented principles and further contributes to the leaving behind of historically marginalized populations. U.S. demographics call upon colleges and universities to react differently in how to recruit students and how to help these students afford a college degree.

### **Definitions of Terms**

**Admissions.** A structured process that determines entry into an educational institution, often based on the cumulative data of a student's transcripts, letters of recommendation, test scores, or interview results. Different institutions have varying determinants ("My College Options," n.d.).

**Diversity.** The presence of different perspectives, ways of making meaning, and lived experiences (as influenced by such things as ability, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, culture, and values). Diversity can appear in representation, climate and intergroup relations, curriculum and scholarship, or institutional values and structures (Phillips, 2019).

**Equity.** The recognition of systemic oppression and a commitment to challenge such oppression in order to afford access to resources, opportunities, representation, and inclusion of historically marginalized populations. Equity is grounded in fairness and not sameness (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003; Braveman, 2014; Garces, 2014).

**Historically marginalized populations.** A group of individuals systematically excluded from educational, political, economic, and societal opportunities and benefits because of discriminatory policies and practices (Pang & Tanabe, 2012; Steel, 2010).

**Inclusion.** Intentional consideration of certain individuals or groups. Inclusion is diverse representation. Inclusion considers power, equality, and involvement (Nguyen & Ward, 2017).

**Justice.** To seek full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is equitable, and in which its members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007).

**Person of color.** An inclusive nomenclature for individuals belonging to different racial or ethnic groups considered non-White, where “White” (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau) refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tyson, 2012).

**Practices.** An operationalized and purposeful series of organizational action that supports policy (O’Neal, 2004; University of California, 2017).

**Policies.** Broad guiding principles designed by the organizational leadership to ensure alignment with institutional mission, vision, and goals and legal/regulatory compliance matters (O’Neal, 2004; University of California, 2017).

**Postsecondary/higher education institutions.** Institutions that grant an associate, bachelor, master, or doctoral degree, whose students are eligible to participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Postsecondary/higher education institutions include almost all 2- and 4-year colleges and universities (NCES, 2019).

**Recruitment.** Formal and informal effort to attract potential students who will successfully complete the program and promote the school’s brand through achievements; involves a mutual desire between institutions and students to find the right match (Posecznick & Bialostok, 2015; Tallerico, 2006).

**CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In the United States, students continually make critical decisions about their future centered on financial and economic mobility. While some students choose to enter the workforce, many decide to pursue a degree in higher education that would provide them with the opportunity for a desirable career and a higher socioeconomic status (Morelon-Quainoo et al., 2011). In 2017, approximately 1.9 million high school students enrolled in college and 3.0 million students enrolled in post-baccalaureate degree programs (National Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). However, studies show that access to college information varies depending on demographics and socioeconomic circumstances (De La Rosa & Tierney, 2006; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Vultaggio & Friedvel, 2013; Wiese, Jordaan, & Van Heerden, 2010). For instance, in 2017, the college enrollment rate for students with high socioeconomic status was 84% compared to a 67% enrollment rate for students from a low socioeconomic status (NCES, 2019). Given the intersections of social identities that impact college access, higher education institutions must understand barriers to accessing higher education (Escarcha, 2018; Lee, Almonte, & Youn, 2013; The Postsecondary National Policy Institute [PNPI], 2018). Research showed that understanding these barriers is especially critical for supporting historically marginalized students who face increased financial, academic, and social barriers during the recruitment and admission process (PNPI, 2018; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).

The shift in the U.S. population created a ripple effect in institutions of higher education, creating an increased social and economic obligation to provide equitable services for all students (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016; Garces, 2014; Phillips, 2019; Malone, 2013; Lee et al., 2013). The current recruitment and admission practices at many institutions involve variations in institutional support systems that directly impact marginalized student populations (i.e., diversity scholarships, and targeted recruitment). These variations include insufficient support by family and teachers

throughout the college application process, poor academic preparation, and limited financial resources (Niu & Tienda, 2013; Schwartz et al., 2018; Tzanakis, 2011). As the college-seeking population becomes increasingly diverse, educational leaders must examine current policies and practices that place historically marginalized students at the forefront of recruitment and admission practices to ensure equitable- and justice-oriented outcomes (Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Slay, Reyes, & Posselt, 2019). This section provides a review of the literature on recruitment and admission policies and practices in higher education and the need for educational leaders to address exclusionary practices that impact students' access to higher education.

### **Recruitment in Higher Education**

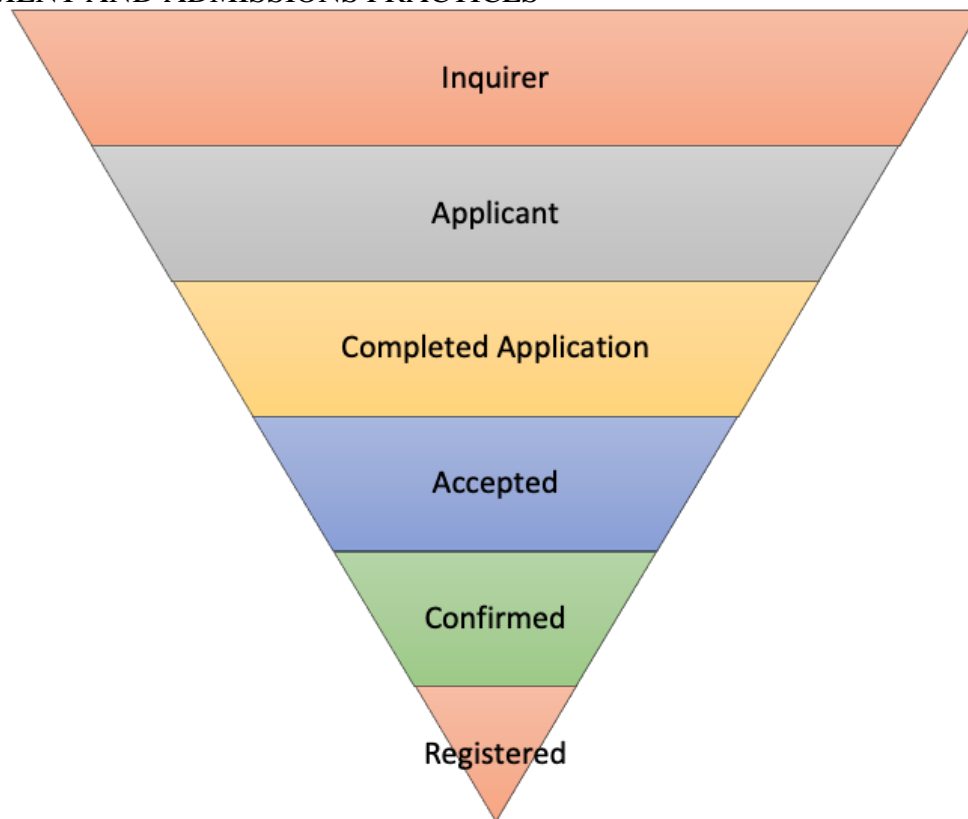
The origins of contemporary recruitment practices began with the surge in growth of higher education during World War II, emerging directly from the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 and the baby boom that followed (Johnson, 2000; Kerr, 1994). While the number of individuals applying to colleges in the 1960s-1970s rapidly increased, forcing an increase in enrollment capacity among colleges, the 1980s left colleges with a declining applicant pool (Coomes, 2000; Johnson, 2000). The prospects of declining enrollment prompted colleges and universities to adopt marketing practices that would specifically address the target population of prospective students (Commes, 2000; Johnson, 2000).

In recent years, declining enrollment rates due to challenges such as increased tuition rates or higher cost of living have created an increased need for recruitment as an enrollment management strategy of maintaining the vitality of an institution (Commes, 2000; Duniway, 2012; Han, Jaquette, & Salazar, 2019). However, many recruitment efforts exclude historically marginalized students (Jones, 2018; Luedke, 2017). Research on higher education indicates that institutions are better poised to leverage the benefits of diversity when recruitment efforts focus on providing equal opportunities to underrepresented groups (Garces, 2014; Nguyen & Ward, 2017).

Graduate enrollment management strategies take on a different approach compared to undergraduate enrollment management. According to Kalsbeek (2017), enrollment management teams, deans, and department chairs typically set the university's undergraduate enrollment and marketing strategies informed about enrollment projections so departments can make their plans accordingly. Conversely, bringing intentionality to goal-based enrollment planning to graduate programs is more inclusive of academic administrators and faculty (Hanover Research, 2017; Kalsbeek, 2017; Kent & McCarthy, 2016).

At many campuses, enrollment goals of graduate programs do not include the university's professional enrollment management team. According to Kalsbeek (2017), realities like trends in the economy, demands from applicants, and pricing, inform inadequate recruitment goals. This results in the inability to view goals through a strategic enrollment management perspective that considers a fuller scope of factors beyond the understanding of academic faculty (Council of Graduate Schools, 2012; Kalsbeek, 2017).

Enrollment management includes recruiting, admitting, and retaining students (Duniway, 2012; Grandillo, n.d.). Historically, educational leaders have shaped enrollment strategies around simple, straightforward, and consistent 'enrollment funnel'. The funnel is a metaphorical process of advancing students from prospective students from the categories of inquirers, applicants, admitted students, and enrollees (Duniway, 2012; Hossler, 1999; Noel-Levitz, 2009) illustrated in Figure 3. Recruiting activities allow enrollment managers to target prospective students at different stages and follow a funneling progression to identify the ideal student—the prospective student pool is often wider on top and narrower at the bottom (Perna, 2005).



*Figure 3.* Enrollment funnel illustration.

The literature offers a wide array of research on the enrollment funnel and the various stages of engagement of individuals who progress through the funnel (Dolence, 2015; Duniway, 2012; Hossler, 1999; Noel-Levitz, 2009; Noel-Levitz, 2010). The prospect stage begins the funnel, consisting of purchasing data sources and third-party data sources and leveraging networks to obtain a name and a channel for communication. The inquiry stage begins once a prospective student shows interest and then receives a series of target messaging and personal communications from the college. The university typically processes each inquiry through a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which allows for customized communications based on academic interest, source of inquiry, and other demographic data. During this stage, there are various calls to action--to apply for admission, to visit campus, to meet administrators or program faculty. The applicant stage represents individuals who initiate the admissions process, like completing an online application. The college reviews all applications received, the Offices of Admission, and the

graduate program faculty conduct the applicant evaluations. The admit stage represents individuals who demonstrate eligibility and who are subsequently offered a position in the cohort. This stage is composed of admitted student days, online engagement, and out-of-town receptions for place-bound students. The enrolled stage includes attendance at an orientation event, or completes registration required for minimum attendance.

The process of recruiting a diverse pool of college students is challenging for many educational leaders, and industry-wide conversations center on the need to change or update the way enrollment strategists regard the enrollment funnel; in other words, it is an outdated model that historically drove all decisions and practices around recruiting inquirers (Garces, 2014; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Woodhouse, 2006). According to Noel-Levitz (2010), the development of new metrics and learning to look outside the funnel connects to increased institutional success through alignments with prospective student behaviors.

As of writing this paper, current trends showed declining enrollment rates among first-year applicants at both public and private four-year institutions, suggesting a growing disconnect between traditional enrollment management approaches and the receptiveness of current students (Castleman & Page, 2013; Noel-Levitz, 2009; Soares, 2012). Early in the 21st century, outreach and recruitment practices sought to personalize the process through consumerism (Coomes, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Maringe, 2006). Federal and state policies designed to expand college enrollment created a competitive market of sophisticated consumers with the perceived ability to navigate college websites; peruse flashy catalogs, viewbooks, invitations, and postcards; and visit colleges (Coomes, 2000; Maringe, 2006; Noel-Levitz, 2009). These enrollment strategies created students who behaved more like ‘secret shoppers’ without making a single point of advance contact with an institution, which made the decision-making process confusing (Noel-Levitz, 2009; Rutter, Lettice, & Nadeau, 2017).



The traditional recruitment management approach has become increasingly outdated due to shifting demographics, the role of technology, and altered patterns of student behavior (Han, 2014; Noel-Levitz, 2009; Paterson, 2018). The current trends suggest a need to rethink recruitment strategies to reach prospective students, especially among historically marginalized groups. As a result, many institutions must critically examine factors that influence a student's decision to apply and enroll in a college program. Research showed that for many students, selecting an institution is a multistage decision process influenced by the student's individual preferences, information gathered, college actions, anticipated diversity climate, job and income expectations, economic resources, quality of the academic program, and other program characteristics (Ihme, Sonnenberg, Barbarino, Fisseler, & Sturmer, 2016; Kallio, 1995; Woodhouse, 2006).

### **Recruitment Strategies**

Recruiting activities allow institutions to identify a wide pool of prospective students interested in the institution. However, most colleges do not admit every prospective applicant. As the stages of recruitment move toward admission and enrollment, the number of prospective students decreases. A well-built enrollment funnel allows the institution to identify and build an emotional connection with the ideal prospective student (Perna, 2005).

Recruitment efforts in higher education often consist of identifying potential students through academic performance, partner institutions, market research, geodemographic databases or hiring enrollment management consulting firms that consider factors such as family income and home value (Bowman & Bastedo, 2017; Hossler, 1999; Jaquette & Salazar, 2018; Wang & Shulruf, 2012). However, these recruitment strategies often center on white students from higher socioeconomic statuses (Han et al., 2019; Jones, 2018; Paterson, 2018). For example, in a study of over 150 colleges and universities, researchers discovered that white students from affluent

communities were recruited more often than those in less affluent communities despite possessing similar academic scores (Han et al., 2019).

Underrepresented students face significant obstacles in educational settings that prevent entry into the postsecondary and post-baccalaureate pipeline (Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Takayama, Kaplan & Cook-Sather, 2017). These barriers include educational challenges, lack of support from counselors, increasing graduation requirements, difficulties garnering financial support, family expectations and needs, legacy access, and university-related institutional factors (Calvin & Pense, 2013; Goforth, Brown, Macheck, & Swaney, 2016; Ihme et al., 2016; Persico, 1990; Rubin, 2011). Marketing is a central aspect of recruitment initiatives in higher education. An institution's recruitment strategies can contribute to the colonial narrative of superiority directly related to whiteness (Osei-Kofi & Torres, 2015). Therefore, recruitment and admission officers need to understand the characteristics of prospective students using marketing outlets, modes, data analytics, and messages that influence the decision to apply to a specific institution (Perna, 2005).

### **Moving Towards Equitable Recruitment**

As colleges and universities develop more inclusive recruitment strategies, the research suggests a change in the traditional pedagogical approach to recruitment. As the population continues to shift, colleges and universities must develop more precise data-driven approaches to track potential students (Paterson, 2018; Kilburn, Hill, Porter, & Pell, 2019). Researchers also suggest an increased need for academic pre-admission support through the recruitment process that includes admission counseling during face-to-face and virtual meetings, open houses, and campus visits (Paterson, 2018; Kilburn et al., 2019). However, college employees must deliver this pre-admission support with cultural humility and the ability to understand and empathize with student and family concerns (Finkel, 2019; Jaquette & Salazar, 2018; Woodhouse, 2006). Institutions must spend time developing faculty and staff involved in the recruitment process (Kilburn et al., 2019;

Woodhouse, 2006). The development of faculty and staff to understand culturally responsive frameworks by which they can approach recruitment through best practices stands to better position them to serve all students better.

For many students, a sense of identification with the college is critical (Jaquette & Salazar, 2018; Rutter et al., 2017). Therefore, colleges and universities hoping to recruit students must develop brand awareness and identity that is meaningful to a diverse group of students. The institution's branding awareness includes consistent information and artifacts available to potential students on websites, in printed materials, in the university's mission statement, and at recruiting events (Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Scott, 2018). Furthermore, the branding information must accurately reflect the diversity of students and faculty within the program (Finkel, 2019; Kilburn et al., 2019; Slay et al., 2019). Academic deans, coordinators, faculty, and staff play a critical role for students in their development of identity during the recruitment stages and need to become more actively involved in efforts to attract marginalized students (Dumas-Hines, Cochran, & Williams, 2001; Patton, 2010; Quarterman, 2008). This collaboration of professionals is pivotal in providing resources to address both academic and non-academic barriers, and strategies that increase the likelihood of success for marginalized students include faculty and staff who facilitate personal contact through visits and recruitment fairs while providing financial resources during the recruitment process (Quarterman, 2008).

Finally, finances often play an essential role in recruitment. Research showed that lack of financial resources contributes to decreased access to higher education (Calvin & Pense, 2013; Goforth et al., 2016; Ihme et al., 2016; Persico, 1990; Rubin, 2011; Paterson, 2018). Therefore, equitable recruitment efforts must include the ability to address student financial needs (Paterson, 2018; Kilburn et al., 2019; Scott, 2018). Institutions of higher education must develop individualized pathways that break down financial barriers. Individualized pathways include finding

the most effective way to communicate potential scholarship and grant opportunities to alleviate the financial burden of higher education (Hossler, 1999; Paterson, 2018; Scott, 2018). Completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a requirement for additional financial aid assistance, including scholarships or loans.

However, research shows at the undergraduate level that the complexity of the form and process leads students not to complete the form (Kofoed, 2017). Students complete FAFSA at the graduate level have limited opportunities for financial aid allocation and often rely on alternative means of financial aid. However, the shift of federal and state financial aid policies from grants to loans has had an impact on student loan burden on both undergraduate and graduate. For example, students who recently graduated and are still paying for their loans, are less likely to enroll in graduate school and take additional loans. As a result, graduate education is not financially accessible to students with lower socioeconomic status. Access to financial aid “is one of the greatest challenges for students of color in higher education today. Because of the lack of policies in place to ensure financial access to those students deemed academically qualified, many of them are not able to afford to attend college, even at the undergraduate level” (Johnson, Kuykendall, & Winkle-Wagner, 2009, p. 48)

Learning how college and university attributes influence a student’s decision-making process can help admission personnel develop more effective recruitment strategies. Successful marketing strategies for higher education rely on the identification of tangible characteristics of an institution that promote a competitive advantage compared to other tangible characteristics of competitor institutions (Han, 2014; Rutter et al., 2017). Recruitment efforts that highlight diversity are successful when these efforts emphasize a college or university’s social environment. When a campus depicts its social environment as one where a student’s personal characteristics are not a threat to academic and career success, this message has a significant influence on college choice

(Goforth et al., 2016; Han, 2014; Ihme et al., 2016). Therefore, colleges and universities that emphasize diversity in marketing materials stand to gain a return on prospective students becoming enrollees (Ihme et al., 2016). Leaders must also find ways to connect with the varying social identities of students and remain privy to the evolving recruitment strategies needed to recruit and admit students.

### **Admission in Higher Education**

Research suggests that current higher education admission practices and policies do not reflect the changing national demographics trends (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Surna, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). The increase in diversity underscores a need for institutions of higher education to develop and implement equitable admission practices and strategies that are reflective of today's population (National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; McDonough & Robertson, 2012; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). More than ever, higher education institutions need to prioritize diversity to increase equity and social justice (Hynes, 2006; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Owen, 2009). Access to higher education, in the form of admissions, should consider equity as an enhancement to the optimization of student selection (Hynes, 2006; Wang & Shulruf, 2012). However, while most educational leaders acknowledge the need for equal opportunity to education, there is no consensus on how leaders can apply equity in policies and practices (Phillips, 2019).

In higher education, educational leaders often use diversity in conversations about equitable admission policies and practices in a globalized world (Garces, 2014; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Phillips, 2019). Researchers found that equity and diversity are foundational to educational quality, and governmental organizations such as the U.S. Department of Education calls for campuses to adopt comprehensive measures of achievement that attract, admit, and support students from various backgrounds (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016; Garces, 2014; Phillips, 2019). However, diversity

alone does not always account for equity and inclusion in admission practices since historical inequities continue to impact certain communities more than others, particularly in higher education (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; Nguyen & Ward, 2017). For example, students with higher social capital gain a positional advantage during the admission process due to increased opportunities to practice entrance exams, increased guidance and recommendations, and family investments (Dahill-Brown et al., 2016). Therefore, educational leaders must explore equitable access to higher education through an approach that focuses on the interactions of social identities such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, and oppressive systems that perpetuate social privilege to some individuals during the admission processes (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016; Garces, 2014; Phillips, 2019; Malone, 2013; Lee et al., 2013).

### **Historical Context of Admission in Higher Education**

Institutions of higher education in the United States have a history of upholding systemic inequities (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; Rubin, 2011; Scott, 2018). For example, in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court upheld constitutional segregation of racial groups under the doctrine of separate but equal educational institutions. Since then, the Supreme Court has attempted to address equitable admission practices in higher education focused on race and ethnic diversity (Cegler, 2012; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005). In *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Supreme Court declared that separate but equal schools were unconstitutional, and the nation moved towards integrating the school systems. However, research showed that marginalized student populations continue to face structural inequalities, and college admission policies and practices disproportionately impact students negatively (Caldwell, Shapiro, & Gross, 2007; Rubin, 2011; Van Overschelde & López, 2018).

In the 1960s, President Kennedy introduced affirmative action, a collection of policies that serves as a rationale for increasing admission and recruitment efforts, providing extra consideration

to race and gender in admission and selection process, academic support programs, and financial aid through an executive order (Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2017; Rubin, 2011; Oluo, 2018). President Johnson also signed the Executive order No. 11246 (1965), requiring all government contractors to take affirmative action to expand job opportunities for minorities. These executive orders served as a tool to reverse racial and equity gaps in higher education. A decade later, Congress enacted the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 that, under Title IX, prohibiting discrimination based on sex. During the development and implementation of affirmative action policies and practices, higher education institutions found themselves in the middle of a controversy over race-conscious admission policies that triggered multiple court cases against claims of reverse discrimination (Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2017; Rubin, 2011; Oluo, 2018; Phillips, 2019). Five seminal historical cases shaped the future of admission policies in higher education, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003), *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2016), and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Harvard* (2019).

The *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) case foundationally framed current admission practices by requiring institutions to move away from race-conscious policies that compensate for racial wrongs and discrimination towards diversity-based decisions. The *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) case built on the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) case by determining that institutions could not use predetermined point systems due to the unconstitutional nature of the process. As institutions continued to pursue equitable processes, the U.S Supreme Court decided in the landmark *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) case that colleges and universities could use affirmative action as a means of diversifying institutions to provide opportunities for marginalized populations. The court ruled that higher education institutions could consider race, as one of other factors that contribute to student diversity.

In addition to these cases, researchers consider *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013) as the most affirmative decision for race-based admission processes within the last decade (Garces, 2014; Nguyen & Ward, 2017). After suing the University of Texas for reverse discrimination based on affirmative action policy, the courts held that race is an essential factor for achieving educational benefits. The *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Harvard* (2019) case in which Asian American students argued that holistic admission decisions limited the number of Asian American students admitted to Harvard University each year, further upheld prior court decisions related to affirmative action. During the case, the court ruled that while the process had its flaws, Harvard's race-conscious admissions process is necessary to ensure a fair process for a diverse student body.

All these cases demonstrate that affirmative action rulings by the U.S courts have created a legally permissive framework for including race in admissions decisions for institutions of higher education to examine admission policies for historically underrepresented students (Caldwell et al., 2007; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005). Researchers argued that these case rulings highlight the critical role of race-conscious decision making in graduate admissions (Graces, 2014). There have been positive gains of access to higher education; however, research showed policies surrounding affirmative action have not been effective in creating positive changes in equity due to ambivalence, attacks, claims of reverse racism, and legacy policies, particularly at selective institutions (Caldwell et al., 2007; Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2017; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; Oluo, 2018; Rubin, 2011; *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 1978; Schmidt, 2018). Van Overschelde and López (2018) found that teacher preparation programs denied black and latinx male students' admission at a higher rate than white female students. Colleges denied admissions to male students of color due to lower GPA scores compared to females and white counterparts (Van Overschelde & López, 2018). Therefore, state, national, and federal policies and legislation should consider the positive



gains associated with these rulings while acknowledging gaps in providing equitable access to higher education.

The pipeline of admission to career placement is critical to understand because inequitable admission practices contribute to the homogeneity of the workforce (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; McDonough & Robertson, 2012). The intentional consideration of equity in college admission processes has a positive impact on the socioeconomic outlook of marginalized populations (Bowman & Bastedo, 2017; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; Oluo, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). However, research showed that institutions of higher education maintain admission policies that uphold social inequalities that benefit the dominant social groups (Caldwell et al., 2007; Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2017; Schmidt, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). Moreover, research showed there is a need to further the educational mission through a diverse student body (Hynes, 2006; Garces, 2014; Scott, 2018). There is an imperative for institutions to reframe the way they consider equitable- and justice-oriented admission policies and practices while acknowledging the role race plays in students' identities as recruiting and admitting future leaders influences all aspects of society (Scott, 2018; Phillips, 2019).

### **Admission Process in Higher Education**

The admission process in most institutions of higher education relies on a review of standardized test scores, personal essays, interviews, and engagement activities (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Evans, 2017; Nguyen & Ward, 2017). Multiple studies found that colleges and universities heavily rely on quantitative criteria such as grade point average (GPA) and standardized test scores like American College Test (ACT), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), and Graduate Record Exams (GRE) as admission criteria and predictor of future academic success (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Bowman & Bastedo, 2018; Evans, 2017; *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003; Hopson, 2014; Soares, 2012; Smaby et al., 2005; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Zhao,

2018). Additional studies show that colleges use qualitative criteria of academic performance as measures of institutional excellence and selectivity admission (Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Schmidt, 2018; Soares 2012).

Scholars found standardized testing like the GRE did not consistently predict successful performance in college programs (Andrew, Cobb, & Giampietro, 2005; Evans, 2017; Smaby et al., 2005). Some researchers argued that although standardized testing may predict cognitive ability, there is no correlation with career and professional success after completing the program (Evans, 2017; Smaby et al., 2005; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). Furthermore, scholars showed a lack of clarity and transparency in how institutions of higher education utilize standardized tests like the ACT, SAT, and GRE to make admission decisions (Evans, 2017; Schmidt, 2018). For example, Bowan and Bastedo (2017) found that admission officers provided different responses to questions about admission criteria. As a result of these arguments, a small number of liberal arts colleges have eliminated or minimized the importance of standardized testing scores for admission. Garces (2014) highlighted additional research that showed an increased enrollment of students of color, women, and international students when standardized tests were optional. More importantly, the average GPA and graduation rates remained relatively the same when compared to those who submitted test scores.

Colleges and universities often use quantitative measures of achievement as a method of exclusion and gatekeeping (Evans, 2017; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; Soares, 2012). Utilizing qualitative criteria for admission decisions limits the racial and socioeconomic diversity of college campuses due to selection bias (Caldwell et al., 2007; Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2017). Researchers found that admission policies that focus on quantitative measures of achievement fail to understand the nuanced and complex ways academic achievement impacts intersections of social identity such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Soares, 2012; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). For

example, students with marginalized or non-dominant social identities are less likely to perform positively on standardized tests and GPA achievements due to social, political, and historical factors that negatively impact marginalized students (Justiz & Kameen, 1988; Kilburn et al., 2019; Rubin, 2011; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Steele, 2010; Soares, 2012; Zhao, 2018).

Students from low-income and non-dominant racial communities are less likely to meet high expectations and more likely to experience negative preconceptions due to implicit bias and racism (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2018). Research showed that legislative and institutional policies regarding the shift from need-based to merit-based financial aid and shrinking financial aid pools negatively impacted student admission and access to higher education because it increases the qualification of student achievement (Caldwell et al. 2007).

### **Moving Towards an Equitable Admission Process**

Equitable admission processes and decision making exist under the assumption that there are policies and practices in place that consider the impact of systemic inequalities (Caldwell et al., 2007; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). However, institutions of higher education often struggle with providing equity and equality in institutional admission processes (Caldwell et al., 2007; Castleman & Page, 2012; Hopson, 2014; Kilburn et al., 2019; Rubin, 2011; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). Many studies and policies fail to address the way that equitable- and justice-oriented practices consider the complex and nuanced ways students' social location relates to academic achievement (Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Zhao, 2018).

According to researchers, navigating the admission process is often difficult for students with marginalized and non-dominant social identities due to the complexity of college-related information, including but not limited to multiple documents required, deadlines, interviews times and locations, program expectations (Castleman & Page, 2013; Kilburn et al., 2019, Soares, 2012). Studies show that possessing non-dominant social identities correlate with a lack of knowledge

about higher education processes, economic disadvantages, and deficits in educational structures of low performing schools (Castleman & Page, 2013; Kilburn et al., 2019). Castleman and Page (2013) noted first-generation students from low-income environments lack resources such as parental and professional guidance, financial support for testing preparation and college application, access to information to complete critical documents, and time. Similarly, Bowan and Bastedo (2017) found that students from low socioeconomic status and other marginalized identities are less likely to have access to college preparatory courses that improve academic achievement considerations.

Admission policies that explore the impact of decisions from multiple perspectives are more likely to create a more equitable admission process (Caldwell et al., 2007; Hospon, 2014; Kilburn et al., 2019; Oluo, 2018). Moreover, there is a need for consideration of admission practices and policies and the contextual differences and nuances applicable to each program of study or level of degree. For example, in graduate studies, equity and diversity play a fundamental role during the development of future community leaders. Researchers suggest moving from achievement-based criteria towards a more holistic review of the student application (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Bowman & Bastedo, 2018; National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Rubin, 2011). This holistic approach could be an alternative to graduate school admissions and rely on academic measures, including but not limited to essays, portfolios, letters of recommendation, and previous leadership and or professional experiences.

Another way to move towards a more equitable admission process is the consideration of family background characteristics. Researchers note that practices and measures to help identify talented students and maintain an equitable admission process include broadening the definition of academic merit to include student talent, competencies, individual experience, and interests (Garces, 2014; Rubin, 2011). Furthermore, utilizing holistic non-cognitive criteria and college pipeline programs creates a more equitable admission process. Some proven non-cognitive variables that are

valuable in assessing diverse populations are positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, long-term goals, strong support system, leadership experience, knowledge acquired, community involvement, and successfully negotiating the educational system (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Garces, 2014; Paterson, 2018; Rubin 2011; Scott, 2018). Additionally, institutions with diverse admission committees, representatives, and staff were more likely to make equitable decisions (McDonough & Robertson, 2012; Surna, 2018; Woodhouse, 2006). Thus, admission policies should reflect an understanding of systems of oppression that persist and shape access to higher education and the student experience.

Mastery of academic achievement should not be the sole determinant that considers whether a person has the capacity to engage in academia and professional practice after graduation. According to Ibrahim (2015), getting more knowledge and not doing anything with it is becoming a societal problem. Students must have an opportunity to apply knowledge through practical experiences such as internships or assistantships because it provides further growth and development for reflection. Often, institutional barriers deny historically marginalized students with these opportunities for development because these opportunities often rely on social reproduction and access to demonstrate such skills (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; EDJE, 2019). Marginalized students must have adequate access to opportunities available to demonstrate soft skills, beyond their capacity to earn a high grade on a multiple-choice exam, “otherwise the system tries to equal everyone irrespective of their potential and ability” (Ibrahim, 2015, p. 225).

In reviewing the historical facts, the need to adjust and move towards equitable admission practices and processes considers the assumption that race and its intersectionality is a social construct that infiltrates the system of higher education. Hence, the frame of policies through the lens of critical race theory could help promote transformation and social justice in ways that identify and address exclusionary admission practices (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). It is important to note

that the goal of ensuring, promoting, and improving equity in higher education is to improve student access. This study coincides with higher education equity and intends to further interrogate the hidden elements of equity issues and the reproduction of exclusionary practices.

### **Principles of Equitable- and Justice-Oriented Recruitment and Admissions Practice**

The exploration of oppressive systems that reinforce disadvantages over minority groups reveals the gaps that exist in the admission process. Equity and justice-oriented practices highlight the importance of awareness and understanding of inequalities and the need to create systemic change in recruitment and admission processes. Researchers have called for awareness of structural inequalities such as the reproduction of colonial structures and challenges produced by dominant systems, which exclude the full incorporation of racial minorities from systems that continue to marginalize underrepresented groups among educational leaders (Stein, 2019; López, 2003). Systemic and historically embedded discrimination and prejudice have been ignored due to the subtle, hidden, and often insidious forms in which they operate. Nonetheless, educational organizations must recognize their involvement in perpetuating these injustices against marginalized individuals within society and commit themselves to recognize, question, and challenge injustice and inequity deliberately. Though it would be fair to say that higher education institutions have confronted these systemic challenges, many institutions still struggle with implementing equitable and justice-oriented policies and practices (Garces, 2014; Nguyen & Ward, 2017).

The research team consulted the literature to develop a list of four principles to establish a baseline for measurement required to address the research questions of this study effectively. A synthesis of the literature drew topics of culturally responsive organizations establishing the following list of principles (Curry-Stevens, Reyes, & Coalition of Communities of Color 2014); as well as suggested strategies for intentional and explicit efforts required of higher education to fully

address the access and achievement gaps of students entering postsecondary education (Adams & Zuniga, 2018).

**Principle 1**

Equity and justice serve as the guiding paradigm to the institution's ideological philosophy, foundations, and structural operations (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; EDJE, 2019; López, 2003; Stein, 2019).

1. The mission and vision of the institution and its constituent organizational structures reflect deep commitments to values and principles of equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).
2. Leadership reflects diversity of the constituency served by the organization (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).
3. Equity permeates all areas of the institution core operations including budgeting, hiring, promotion policies, assessment, and internal accountability structures. For example, budgeting practices are performance-based and tied to equity investments. Job descriptions include responsibilities for progress towards equity (Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; EDJE, 2019).
4. Clear, compelling, and consistent messaging communicates the urgency of reducing disparities through equitable policies and practices. This includes acknowledgement of structural inequalities such as the reproduction of colonial structure and challenges produced by dominant systems, excluding the full incorporation of racial minorities from systems that continue to marginalize underrepresented groups (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; López, 2003; Stein, 2019).
5. Messages communicate publicly and in writing the importance of achieving equity at all levels of campus leadership (Center for Urban Education 2015).

6. Equity is an explicit dimension of the framing and communication of new goals; in other words, equity is not an “add on” goal buried in the messaging of new initiatives (Center for Urban Education 2015).
7. An internal body charged with routine review of policies and practices within the institutions and monitors progress on equity outcomes (Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).
8. The institution’s commitment to equity is visible in their physical plant through signage in multiple languages, media, art, and pictures, welcoming and representative of the communities being served (Center for Urban Education 2015).
9. Employees understand the communities they serve including their culture, values, norms, history, and customs, and particularly the types of discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion they face in the country; applying the knowledge in a responsive and non-stereotyping manner (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).
10. Faculty, staff, and leadership receive professional development opportunities and incentives to align professional practices, engaging in continuous learning about their own biases, assumptions and stereotypes that limit cultural responsiveness, and which affect their work (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al. of Communities of Col, 2014). Employees are evaluated on their ability to implement equitable and culturally responsive support and services (Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).

## **Principle 2**

Equity and justice are the guiding paradigms for clearly articulated language, goals, and evaluation of recruitment and admission policies (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; EDJE, 2019).



1. Program faculty, staff, and leadership express routine and ongoing commitment to equity and justice through policies and practices (Hoffman, Rodriguez, Yang & Ropers-Hullman, 2018).
2. Program faculty, staff, and leadership demonstrate a shared value and commitment to equitable student success through policies (Hoffman et al., 2018).
3. Program faculty, staff, and leadership operationalize equity and justice mission statements to day-to-day policies. This considers contextual differences and nuances applicable to graduate education and the need to develop future community leaders (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Surna, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; McDonough & Robertson, 2012).
4. Policies highlight the nuanced and complex ways academic achievement intersects with social identities such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Van Overschelde & López, 2018).
5. Policies consider the social, political, and historical factors that negatively impact historically marginalized individuals' performances on standard tests and GPA achievements and privilege dominant students (Justiz & Kameen, 1988; Kilburn et al., 2019; Rubin, 2011; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Steele, 2010; Soares, 2012; Zhao, 2018).
6. Language on recruitment and admission materials, such as website, course catalogues, and advising materials avoid assumptions and communicate consideration and respect for diverse student identities (Hoffman et al., 2018).

### **Principle 3**

Equitable and just recruitment and admissions practices are designed to acknowledge and accommodate differences in the contexts of individual student needs and approaches to learning (Castleman & Page, 2013; Kilburn et al., 2019; Slay et al., 2019; Wang & Shulruf, 2012).

1. Recruitment activities are situated within diverse communities and leverage and highlight diverse faculty throughout the cycle (Goforth et al., 2016; Han, 2014; Ihme et al., 2016).
2. Recruitment and admission efforts highlight and emphasize authentic institutional and organizational social environments (Jaquette & Salazar, 2018).
3. Recruitment activities reflect diverse modalities, are audio/visually recorded and posted presenting the content in multiple languages (Slay et al., 2019).
4. Admission processes are easy to navigate, consideration is given to the complexity of organization (college and program levels) related information including but not limited to multiple documents required, deadlines, interview times and locations, and program expectations (Castleman & Page, 2013; Kilburn et al., 2019, Soares, 2012; Nguyen & Ward, 2017).
5. Admissions reflects holistic criteria as opposed to primarily achievement criteria for the review of applications (Justiz & Kameen, 1988; Kilburn et al., 2019; Rubin, 2011; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Steele, 2010; Soares, 2012; Zhao, 2018).
6. Admission practices clearly articulate the use of standardized tests (Evans, 2017; Schmidt, 2018; Nguyen & Ward, 2017).

7. Non-cognitive variables are used to assess the potential of diverse applicants. These include positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, long-term goals, evidence of strong support systems, leadership experience, knowledge acquired, community involvement, and successful negotiation of the educational system (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Garces, 2014; Rubin 2011).
8. Materials are modified to reflect the best fit of diverse local contexts and populations organized around cohorts of students, including cohorts of residential, commuter, and transfer students. Representation of non-traditional gender roles and racial/ethnic identities are reflected in recruitment materials (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Bowman & Bastedo, 2018; National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Rubin, 2011).
9. Decision-making practices embed multiple perspectives and are poised to leverage the benefits of diversity among the number of students of color (Caldwell et al., 2007; Hospon, 2014; Kilburn et al., 2019; Oluo, 2018).
10. Admissions decisions reflect changing national demographics and trends (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Surna, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; McDonough & Robertson, 2012).

#### **Principle 4**

Enacting equity and justice principles requires a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning assumptions about relevance and effectiveness (Center for

Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; EDJE, 2019; Slay et al., 2019; Wang & Shulruf, 2012).

1. Institutions collect data disaggregated by race and ethnicity each quarter to determine if there are inequities in representation or outcomes (Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; Slay et al., 2019; Wang & Shulruf, 2012).
2. Institutions conduct self-assessment such as interviews with faculty/staff/students to understand how students experience the day-to-day practices (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; EDJE, 2019).
3. Formative and summative data are used to change practices to fit the unique needs of students (Center for Urban Education 2015; Wang & Shulruf, 2012).
4. Scheduled program reviews include evaluation of updates to practices for impact and effectiveness (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; EDJE, 2019).
5. Basic indicators of access, academic progress, retention, and completion are monitored for proportional representation of diverse student demographics (Center for Urban Education 2015; Slay et al., 2019).
6. Data is presented clearly, both visually and in writing, so that the goals are easily understandable (Center for Urban Education 2015).
7. Feedback loops exist to incorporate student voice to help shape their own experiences and confirm the relevance of programs and services (EDJE, 2019; Slay et al., 2019; Wang & Shulruf, 2012).

**Conclusion**

A student's decision to enroll in higher education and engage with the recruitment and admission process of an institution offers potential positive outcomes to both the student and the institution. Individuals and institutions benefit when more students choose to continue postsecondary and post-baccalaureate education. Economists have demonstrated that individuals who graduate from two-year and four-year colleges and universities typically have better jobs and incomes, and society benefits from civically engaged citizens (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; McDonough & Robertson, 2012). Phillips (2019) noted that "diverse conditions on campus can prepare students to succeed in a diverse world" (p. 9). The American workforce needs people of color to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse society (Oluo, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018). Colleges and universities also benefit from students who enroll and persist due to purposeful retention efforts (Burke, 2019; Rubin, 2011). Retaining students is the role of the enrollment manager, who is committed to the sustainability of the institution through managing the right "enrollment mix" of students, courses, programs, faculty, and the availability of financial aid. However, what happens if that "mix" socially reproduces colonial ideologies and the majority population, privileged graduates?

The college recruitment and admission processes require a large and diverse applicant pool, and educational leaders owe applicants an unbiased consideration for acceptance to respective schools with a robust understanding of the unique challenges' students bring to campus. There are patterns and systems of social reproduction that perpetuate inequities in higher education. For example, marginalized students disproportionately face barriers to higher education, often exacerbated by colleges' possessive investment on academic merit and achievement (Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Zhao, 2018).

The trends described influenced the title of this paper, *Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices*. This study looked at alignment and misalignment of recruitment and admission practices that begin at the opening of the funnel - the pipeline and pathway for all interested students who wish to access higher education. Through this study's findings the researchers anticipated a call to action, to look beyond the traditional funnel, and look up and outward to combat singularly focused efforts that cause us to cast a wide net, and then "wait for them to come to us." This study responded to the current literature on enrollment management wherein educational administrators are called upon to have wider perspectives on the systemic challenges that innately encourage and purposefully inhibit entry onto that very pipeline of higher education. Undergirded by Post-Colonial Theory, this study is framed through the lens of the EDJE framework and Social Reproduction Theory. The study intentionally and explicitly interrogated the structures, policies, and practices of higher education, and more specifically, inequitable recruitment and admissions practices that limit access and inclusion of historically marginalized groups. Additionally, the Critical Race Theory framework allowed for a more in-depth and systemic interrogation of potentially ignored forms of racism and the intersection that race has with identity and the influence of race in potential access to higher education.

**CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the research methods, study design, participants, data instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and strengths and limitations. The purpose of this convergent mixed-methods case study was to interrogate recruitment and admission policies and practices of a private Jesuit university's Student Affairs (SA) graduate program and the extent of alignment or misalignment with equity and justice-oriented principles (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova, 2015). This study highlighted the experience of various stakeholders and interrogates differing levels of administrative practices and policies through the analysis of multiple data sources.

The conceptual and theoretical frameworks guiding the inquiry included (a) Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), (b) Critical Race Theory (CRT), and the (c) Educational Deans for Justice and Equity (EDJE) framework. These frameworks acknowledge the need to consider systemic issues of power and oppression embedded in individual, institutional, and ideological levels of education (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; EDJE, 2019). Hence, the integration of theoretical perspectives, philosophical worldview, and assumptions of the researchers and the SA program generated a clearer picture of the study phenomenon (Ivankova, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The following two research questions guided this study:

1. How and to what extent do the Student Affairs graduate program recruitment policies and practices align or misalign with equitable- and justice-oriented principles?
2. How and to what extent do the Student Affairs graduate program admission policies and practices afford students with equitable and just access to its programs?

**Study Design**

We used a convergent mixed-methods intrinsic case study research design to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the two research questions (Ivankova, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

As a convergent mixed-methods case study, we simultaneously collected, analyzed, and interpreted two data strands, qualitative and quantitative (Ivankova, 2015; McMillan, 2016). As emphasized by Shorten and Smith (2017), “[m]ixed methods research draws on potential strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods, allowing researchers to explore diverse perspectives and uncover relationships that exist between the intricate layers of our multifaceted research questions” (p. 74). The convergent mixed-methods intrinsic case study approach allowed for the triangulation--using multiple data sources to corroborate findings, validity, and understanding--of data sources required to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the SA program’s recruitment and admission policies and practices. Moreover, triangulation ensured that data analysis and results were rich, robust, comprehensive and well-developed. The researchers prioritized, weighed, and equally distributed the qualitative and quantitative methods that incorporated an integrated interpretation of both strands in the overall results. Figure 4 illustrates the convergent mixed-methods case study design and approach to data collection and analysis.

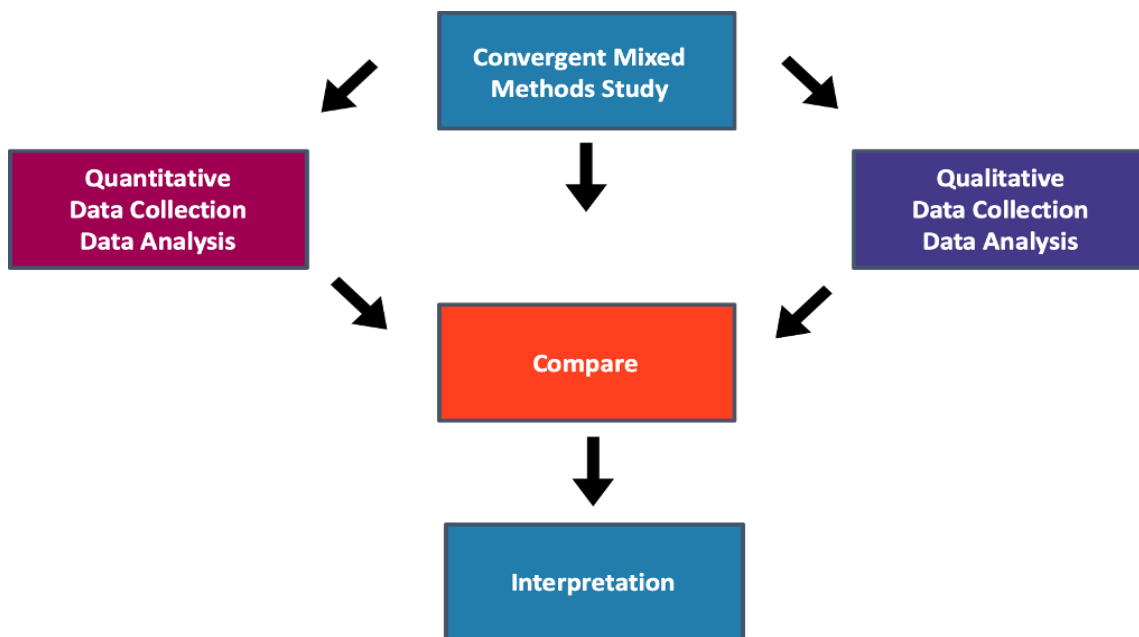


Figure 4. A convergent mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis.



An intrinsic case study approach is a form of single case study that allowed for an in-depth holistic analysis and insight into the SA program recruitment and admission policies and practices in its natural context and an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of a specific and unique problem of practice (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2010; Grandy, 2010; McMillan, 2016). This approach provided an exploratory opportunity to better understand the unique and specific research phenomena and particularities (Grandy, 2010; McMillan, 2016). The application of an intrinsic case study allowed for an in-depth understanding and exploration of the particularities and uniqueness of the SA program, rather than generalizing or extending across cases and building upon existing theories.

### **Setting**

This study took place at a private, Jesuit university located on the United States West Coast that prepares aspiring Student Affairs administrators from a framework of multicultural and social justice education. We applied the EDJE framework to the setting, and the university mission of “[e]ducating the whole person, to professional formation, and to empowering leaders for a just and humane world” represented the ideological level (Anonymous, n.d.a; EDJE, 2019). The university has various academic departments, one of which is the College of Education (COE), which houses the Student Affairs (SA) graduate program. The COE represented the institutional level, along with its mission (ideology) to “prepare ethical, reflective, transformative professionals to advance social, economic, and political justice in collaboration with local and global communities.” Lastly, we framed the SA program at the individual level (EDJE, 2019). The SA program seeks to recruit and admit prospective students who desire to become change agents, build multicultural competence, and become astute social justice educators (Anonymous, n.d.b). The missions across these three levels are consistent with the EDJE coalitions recommendations that higher education institutions and programs intentionally value developing future leaders who possess a level of social awareness

and the ability to deconstruct the interplay of inherent power and privilege that uphold the dominant cultural ideologies.

### **Participant Recruitment**

Recruitment started after obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (See Appendix A). The process of identifying participants for the study involved the collaboration with a community partner and consisted of a three-phase email recruitment process for all study participants and recruitment lasted five weeks.

Four recruitment emails were sent to potential participants during phase one: (a) a student focus group recruitment email; (b) a student survey recruitment email; (c) an employee interview recruitment email; and, (d) an employee survey recruitment email sent with study information. See Appendix B for all participant recruitment emails. Recruitment emails for the interviews and focus groups included the invitation to participate, a consent to participate in the research information sheet, and either a link to sign-up for one of three possible focus group sessions (students) or a two-week window for interviews (employees). Follow-up emails were sent to those participants who responded with interest in participating in the study and included the link to the video conference and the definition of specific terms used throughout the protocols (See Appendix C). These definitions of terms included diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion. A second email was sent to all SA students with an invitation to complete an electronic survey and included a consent to participate in the research information sheet and an opt-out statement (See Appendix D). Employees received an invitation to complete the electronic survey, only after they completed their individual interview.

The second recruitment phase consisted of a follow-up email sent to study participants one week after the initial recruitment email. All students received the follow-up email, regardless of previous response, and employees received a follow-up email only if they did not respond to the initial e-mail. The final recruitment phase consisted of a third follow-up email to all students, about

a week after the previous one. Employees did not receive a third follow-up. All participants received a thank you message and a reminder to complete the electronic survey.

### **Study Participants**

A purposive, non-random sampling was employed to consciously select participants based on specific attributes. Participants included employees with a formal role in the recruitment or admissions processes and currently enrolled students in the SA program (McMillan, 2016).

**Employees.** In collaboration with the community partner we identified employees in leadership, faculty, and staff positions with primary roles within the ideological (university), institutional (college), or individual (program) levels associated with SA program's recruitment and admission. We invited eight staff, leaders, and faculty with formal roles in the program's recruitment or admissions processes to participate in the study. Seven of those employees consented to participate in both the individual interviews and surveys. Only five of the seven subsequently completed the survey. Given the small sample size of this group and to maintain confidentiality, we did not disaggregate employee roles or titles, gender, or race, and renamed the aggregated group as "Employees".

**Students.** Invitations were sent to 54 currently enrolled students in their first or second year of the two-year program. Eight students consented and participated in focus groups. Completion of the survey demographics section represented 48% of the total targeted students in their first or second year in the SA program. Of 23 responses to the question on gender identity, 17 identified as female, 1 male, 3 non-binary, 1 genderqueer, and 1 as transgender. Of 25 responses to the item noting racial identity, 0 identified as African American, Black; 9 Asian-American, Asian; 5 White; 3 Hispanic, LatinX; 0 American Indian, Alaska Native; and 1 identified as Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander. While 26 students consented and participated in the survey, ten students only completed the demographics section and did not complete the full survey, rendering their results unusable. Data

from 16 students who completed at least 60% of the survey questions served as the basis of analysis.

Those 16 students represented the following gender identities; 12 females (-5 responses compared to the initial 23 students), 1 male (no change), 2 non-binary (-1), 1 genderqueer (no change), and 1 transgender (no change). The responses to the item noting racial identity were; 0 identified as African-American, Black; 5 Asian-American, Asian; 7 White; 2 Hispanic, LatinX; 0 American Indian, Alaska Native; and 1 identified as Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (who also identified as multiracial); and 1 multiracial. Though the loss of ten responses to the survey created an overall limitation to the study, students responding fully to the survey still represented diversity across race and gender.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researchers adopted and complied with ethical principles and guidelines of research, including respect for persons, justice, and beneficence through the provision of personal autonomy (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical Behavioral Research, 1979). Respect for persons allowed participants to make personal decisions concerning actions and well-being related to the study (Human Subjects Research, n.d.). The study ensured beneficence by enforcing a favorable risk-benefit ratio, and researchers actively worked to minimize risks to subjects by informing participants of the potential risks associated with participating in the study, such as privacy, confidentiality, and the strictly voluntary nature of the study. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or retaliation. Participants were encouraged to consider the equal distribution of potential benefits to subjects without undue influence or coercion to participate. We believe the study posed minimal risk and harm to participants' everyday activities but continually assessed the likelihood of harm and the situation, place, and time of the research.

Data collection occurred in April and May 2020. In alignment with a convergent mixed-methods approach, we simultaneously collected quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data collection occurred through individual interviews with employees, students' focus groups, and review of associated recruitment and admissions artifacts. Quantitative data collection consisted of two electronic surveys, one for employees and one for students. All data collection instruments were based on tenets of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and an extensive review of the literature. Figure 5 illustrates the overall approach to data collection for this mixed methods study.

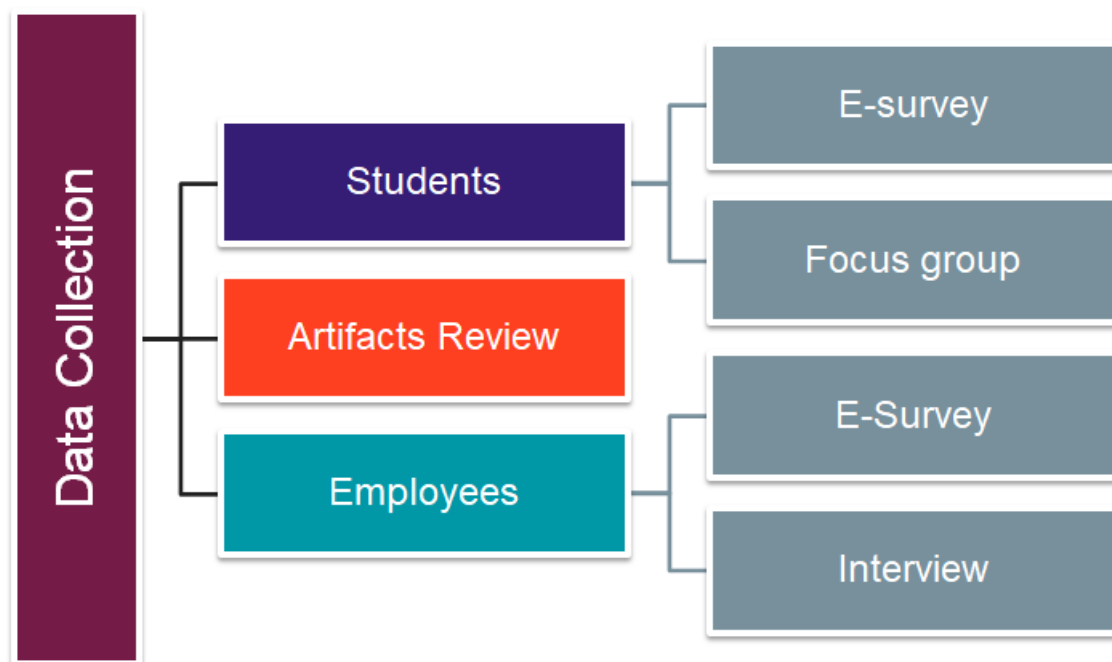


Figure 5. Overall data collection approach.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

Two research team members conducted video-based interviews with the seven employees, using a 26 question semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix E). The other two research team members conducted four video-based focus group sessions with students, using a 13-question semi-structured protocol (see Appendix F). We structured the interview and focus group questions

to encourage open dialogue, natural conversation, and reflection to elicit views, experiences, and opinions among study participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Prior, 2017). Each focus group consisted of no more than three students to allow for richer conversations.

Interview and focus group participants received a handout of definitions for our driving principles and values. The same pair of researchers conducted all interviews and focus groups, with one engaging the participant through questioning while the other observed and captured written notes and recorded participant responses, such as facial expression, tone of voice, and non-verbal cues. Employee interviews took between 60-90 minutes, and focus groups lasted between 50 - 120 minutes.

Program artifacts were collected relating to recruitment and admissions practices from our community partner, including the SA program Student Handbook, COE Administrative Policies and Procedure manual, COE Enrollment Scholarships data by academic year, COE Enrollment Handbook, Information sessions PowerPoint, and SA program flyers. We also explored the university, COE, and program websites.

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

We created two e-surveys on the Qualtrics ® platform, a 38-question student survey, and a 37-question employee survey (see Appendices G). Both surveys included definitions of our driving principles and values. The first two parts of the surveys included participant's consent and demographics, and the rest included multiple questions for recruitment and admission for the program, using a four-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Both surveys were open to participant completion for four weeks and took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

### **Data Coding**

We followed the recommendations and iterative guidelines provided in Saldaña's (2016) coding manual to ensure valid and reliable study results. The process enabled us to develop codes

and systematically code data to ensure reliable data analysis. The approach involved two phases: (1) development of a codebook and (2) coding the data.

### **Codebook Development**

The research team developed a codebook as a tool in coding the interview and focus group transcripts and artifacts. Formats described by Saldaña (2016) and Roberts, Dowell, and Nie (2019) guided the codebook creation. The coding process began with each researcher reading through an initial interview and focus group transcripts to identify the essence of participant statements, developing inter-coder agreements through an iterative process (Saldaña, 2016). Working in pairs, each team member presented their individual list of provisional codes to compare similarities and/or mitigate disagreements. These provisional codes captured the essence and meaning of passages through an analytical process of examining each line of the data for significant words, concepts, events, experiences, feelings, and phrases (Corbin, 2004).

All researchers then met via video conference to present and discuss results of pair conversations, presenting findings collectively to ascertain levels of agreement, and calibrate disagreement. The team entered the final codes into the codebook only after achieving a 95% intercoder agreement through interpretive convergence (Saldaña, 2016). Through this mutual process, the codebook included parent codes, respective sub-codes, magnitude codes or valence based on mutually exclusive variables, definitions, and connections to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The definitions served as a method of limiting ambiguity about the meaning of each code during the analysis data process. Magnitude codes or valence described subtle differences in codes and sub codes (Saldaña, 2016). These shorthand symbols helped researchers “compose a richer answer and corroborate” the nuances of coding (Saldaña, 2016, p. 118). As coding commenced, there was a designated process to add codes to the codebook. Appendix H highlights a sample of the codebook.

The research team separated parent codes and sub-codes into aggregated sections that aligned with the research questions. The primary coding sections included recruitment, admissions, values, and common codes across the two research question sections. The recruitment codes identified principles that served as driving levers about recruitment decision-making, strategies designed to build brand awareness, and expand the pool of student inquiries, targeted marketing strategies, and other touchpoints during each stage of the recruitment process. The admissions codes identified principles regarding the structured process that determines entry into the educational institution such as cumulative data of student's transcripts, letters of recommendation, test scores, and interview results. Finally, the common codes involved foundation principles of recruitment and admissions such as diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and communication.

### **Interview, Focus Group, and Artifact Coding**

In Vivo coding served as the primary approach to coding the interview and focus group transcripts and artifacts. In Vivo coding is a detailed method of coding used to create parent codes that summarize the transcript passage with a word or short phrase found in the data (Corbin, 2004; Saldaña, 2016). Two researchers completed the focus group and artifact coding process, while the other two completed the interview coding process. We coded the artifacts by notating pictures, diagrams, illustrations, or other visual cues.

Researchers employed sub-coding to assign a second-order code after a parent code to provide further detail and "enrich the entry" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 114). Depending on the phrase or series of phrases, we added a single parent code with multiple sub-codes to the transcript. At times, a single statement code required multiple parent codes. Simultaneous coding occurred when two or more codes applied to the same section of the transcript, highlighting the complexity of the participant's response (Saldaña, 2016). We applied evaluative codes to "assign judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy" (Rallis & Rossman, 2003, p. 492). Magnitude



coding allowed us to note whether the respondent made a positive or negative comment and facilitated categorizing topics. We noted these codes with a negative (-) or positive (+) symbols. Color coding and a variety of font styles were employed to differentiate transcript text relating to recruitment, admissions, and principles of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. We met as a group to review and mutually confirm all codes. We shared sample results along with the codebook with our community partner for review after coding all data. The request provided the community partner with an opportunity for feedback and input; we did not receive concerns or recommendations. Figure 6 illustrates a detailed representation of the codebook development and data coding.

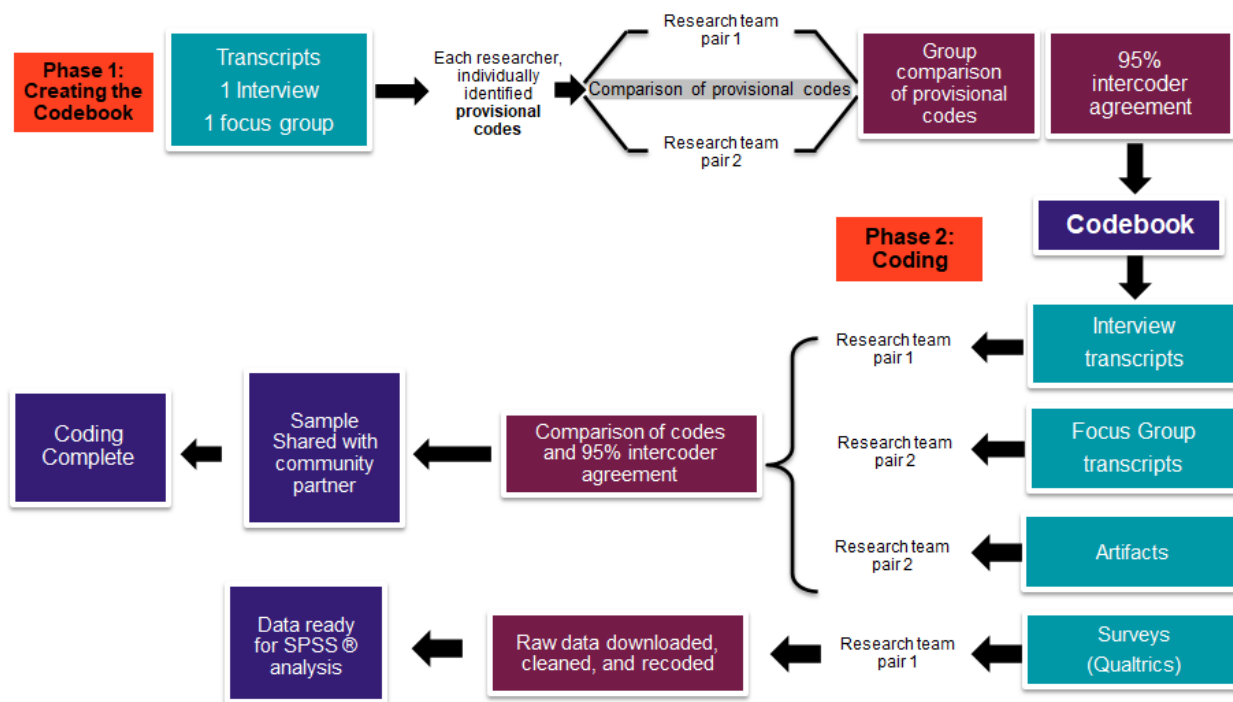


Figure 6. Codebook development and data coding process.

### Data Analysis

We simultaneously analyzed each set of qualitative and quantitative data and later integrated it to provide a more comprehensive interpretation for each of the two research questions and

implications. First, we transferred all interviews, focus groups, and artifact codes into an analysis matrix illustrated in Figure 7. The analysis matrix organization included different tabs for each data set, divided vertically with the individual interview and focus group questions and horizontally by columns, capturing by focus group and interview questions parent codes, sub-code, valence, themes/judgments, connection to the theoretical and conceptual framework, and potential recommendations or quotes. Finally, we analyzed the quantitative data using IBM® SPSS® descriptive and inferential statistics.

	Research Question	Code	Sub code	Valence, magnitude, or qualification	Framework Connection	Themes	Important Quotes
Data collection method							
Participants		ID	ID	ID	ID	ID	ID
Interviews	Research Question 1						
	Research Question 2						
Focus Groups	Research Question 1						
	Research Question 2						
Artifacts	Research Question 1						
	Research Question 2						

Figure 7. Representation of the analysis matrix.

**Interview and Focus Group Data Analysis**

A pair of researchers conducted the data analysis for focus groups and interviews. The analysis matrix allowed researchers to discern agreements, disagreements, patterns, themes, and connections to the frameworks and principles. As coding is more than labeling, we color-coded the codes to form links that led the researcher from data codes to analysis (Saldaña, 2016). Color coding aided in visual identification at-a-glance to identify links between codes and patterns by question

across all participants. We grouped interview and focus group questions into different categories based on topics related to the research questions to facilitate the interpretation and report of results.

The qualitative data analysis involved an iterative process of looking across the matrix for patterns, themes, and trends. This process allowed the researchers to have a better sense of the information gathered and an opportunity to reflect on its overall meanings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To further expand the data analysis for each group of questions, we returned to the transcripts and pulled participants quotes that supported the analysis.

### **Artifact Data Analysis**

We analyzed artifacts similarly to the interviews and focus groups. We reviewed the codes of each artifact looking for possible trends and notated observations in the analysis matrix. We considered the elements in artifacts such as graphics, quotes, images, and numbers and considered the interrelationship between each artifact and looked for ways the artifacts provided insight into program policies and practices (Silverman, 2001).

### **Survey Data Analysis**

Another pair of researchers analyzed data from employee and student surveys. We exported the data from Qualtrics ® to IBM ® SPSS ® to perform descriptive and inferential statistical analysis (McMillan, 2016). The first step quantitative of data analysis involved cleaning the data by removing information such as IP address, start and end date, duration in seconds, recorded date, respondent ID, location latitude and longitude, and user language. We then re-coded data on race, gender, and current affiliation into the same variable (Green & Salkind, 2014). Furthermore, researchers turned questions into unique variables by identifying the question's essence and grouping similar questions. For example, we grouped questions about equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity under principles.

We ensured the data variables included appropriately labeled nominal and interval/scaled variables. Nominal variables included codified categories such as gender, race, year in school, and university affiliation, while scale/interval variables include codified questions with responses on the 4-point Likert scale (McMillan, 2016; Urdan, 2017). Once the researchers cleaned, recoded variables, and identified appropriate variables, we conducted descriptive statistics extrapolating frequency and percentages for each variable.

We conducted descriptive statistics by extrapolating frequency and percentages for each respective variable and inferential statistical analysis of independent sample t-test to explore the difference between first and second-year student groups. We selected an independent sample t-test due to the small sample size and the ability to compare differences between two mutually exclusive groups, first and second-year students (McMillan, 2016; Urdan, 2017). The t-test results showed the Levene's Test for equality of variances (F) and the significance, the t-test, degrees of freedom, and 2-tailed significance (*p*-value). The Levene's test for equality of variance evaluated the assumption of equal variance between two groups when the F value significance is above or equal to .05 (McMillan, 2016; Urdan, 2017). The t-test allowed researchers to report unequal variances by using the F value to avoid homogeneity of variance assumptions at a 95% confidence interval (Green & Salkind, 2014). Therefore, the t-test highlighted difference between groups at a reported 2-tailed *p*-value below or equal to .05 (Green & Salkind, 2014). We did not conduct an inferential statistic test with the employee surveys due to the extremely small sample size and lack of groups. Figure 8 illustrates the approach to quantitative analysis.

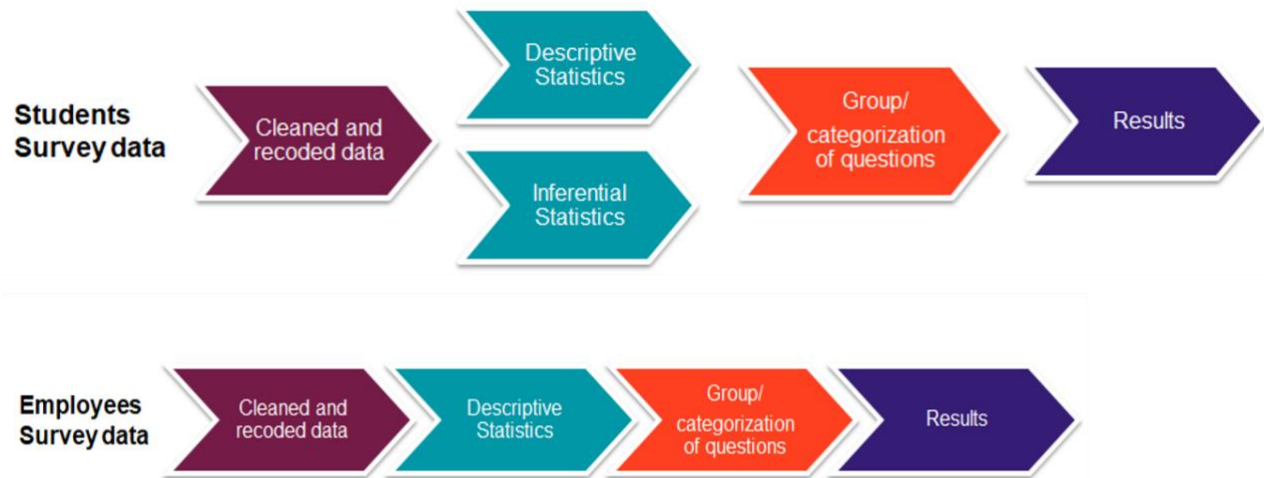


Figure 8. Quantitative data analysis by study group.

### Strengths and Limitations

As with most research studies, this inquiry project had strengths and limitations. Strengths included the mixed methods intrinsic case study design and team-based Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice, while limitations included outcomes associated with a global pandemic, sample size, and access to artifacts.

#### Study Strengths

This study addressed a real-life problem of practice situated in the context of higher education through an iterative, comprehensive, and holistic process that evolved as we learned and gained nuanced information. The convergent mixed methods intrinsic case study design provided great strength for triangulation of data, required for a comprehensive data analysis and report of implications and recommendations. The study provided the opportunity to apply the EDJE framework as a lens for identifying justice and equity-oriented policies and practices. Although the aim of this convergent mixed methods intrinsic case study does not involve generalizability across COEs, we believe expanding this work to other institutions of higher education may provide additional and possibly unique insight to the research questions and inform how institutions of

higher education address structures and systems that misalign to equity and justice-oriented principles and practices.

Additionally, this study allowed doctoral students to work in a team-based, Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice (TDiLP) research inquiry. The TDiLP inquiry process reflected working principles and design concepts for Doctor of Education (EdD) programs nationally established through the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (2019). This inquiry approach is a hallmark of the program and allowed doctoral students to collaborate with a community partner organization on an authentic problem of practice with stakeholder input. The team-based and community partnership approach to research enabled us to use our diverse strengths, experiences, and perspectives to inform the research process, increasing the applicability of the study to a SA graduate program's current practices and systems. This team-based approach reflects an authentic feature of the nature of work expected of individuals who hold leadership positions.

### **Study Limitations**

Study data collection occurred during the global health pandemic of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) believed to have originated in Wuhan, China. In February 2020, Governor Jay Inslee issued a state of emergency for all counties across Washington State due to the rapid spread of COVID-19, (Proclamation No. 20-05). The 'stay home' order triggered businesses and educational institutions across the state to shut down operations. In higher education, day-to-day operations, including classes transitions to virtual platforms, forced all students and non-essential faculty and staff to work and learn from home. The global pandemic required the researchers to conduct all data collection activities online. Furthermore, the global health crisis held several economic consequences, including business closures, loss of employment, changes in living arrangements, altered employment expectations and skill sets, and declining individual health. Responses and regulations at the national, state, and institutional levels impacted this study negatively. For

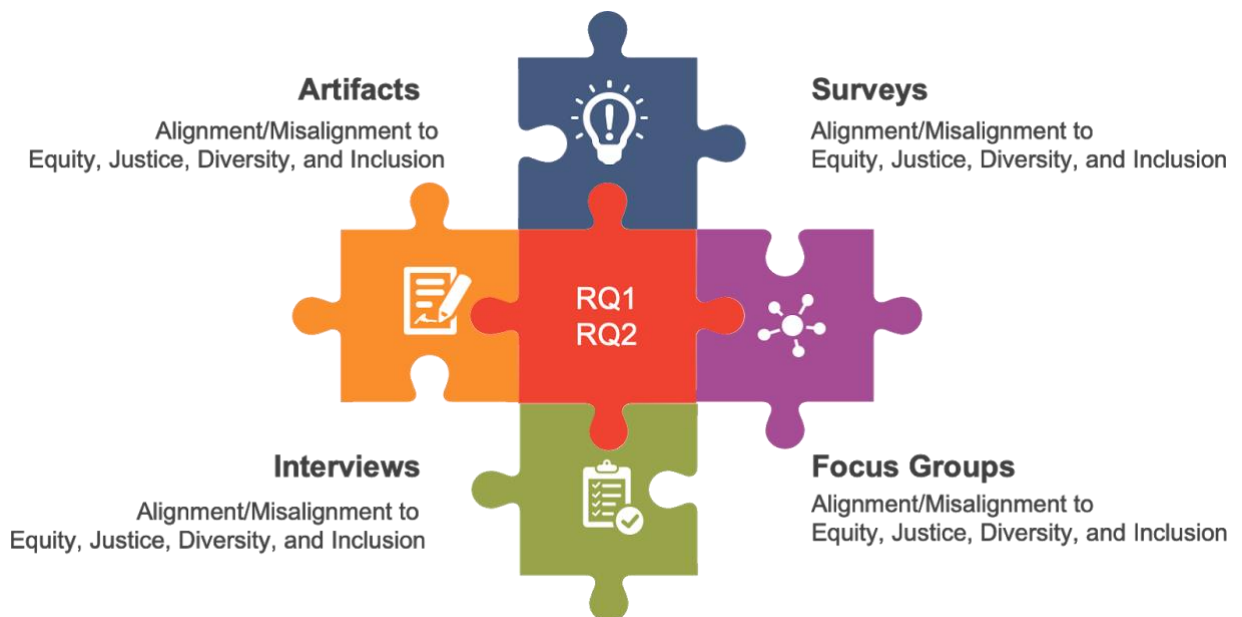
example, we revised and re-submitted approaches to data collection, changed, IRB materials, and all activities moved to virtual platforms. These changes not only affected study timelines but, we suspect, impacted recruitment and participants' engagement leading to the subsequent small samples of students participating in focus groups, and students and employees responding to and completing the surveys.

Finally, after multiple information requests for artifacts, we received critical documents about the program recruitment and admissions policies and practices after developing the data instruments, IRB approval, and data collection. The timing of receiving critical artifacts negatively impacted the line of questioning. For example, we generalized recruitment policies and practices suggested in the literature, such as information sessions resulting in multiple questions, a recruitment activity the program rarely practices.

### **Conclusion**

Researchers designed this convergent mixed methods, intrinsic case study to reveal meaningful, and explicit perspectives of varied stakeholders regarding the extent to which a Jesuit university's SA graduate program's policies and practices aligned or misaligned to equity and justice-oriented principles. We hoped analyzing data through the conceptual and theoretical frameworks would reveal a deeper understanding of the presence or absence of equitable and justice-oriented and inclusive and diverse recruitment and admissions practices. Finally, the research team intended to then recommend those discoveries to our partner organization and program to positively impact future policies and procedures.

The first three chapters of this dissertation offered (a) an introduction to the problem and purpose of the study, (b) a review of the literature, and (c) the methodological approach utilized for this study. We collected qualitative data from employee interviews, student focus groups, and artifacts and quantitative data from two surveys: a student survey and an employee survey. In this chapter, we have organized results by data source and by our two research questions—that is, alignment and misalignment to equity- and justice-oriented principles and to corresponding values of diversity and inclusion. Figure 9 illustrates our approach to organizing and presenting results.



*Figure 9.* Overall approach to organizing and presenting results.

### Recruitment Results

Here we address research question one by detailing ways in which the SA program’s recruitment practices aligned and misaligned with the principles and values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. Figures 10 and 11 illustrate summaries of this evidence by data source. We elaborated the results in the following sections, organized by data source, first with discussion of



## Recruitment Results Evidence of Alignment





 <b>Artifacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imagery on website, Information session materials, and flyers showcase diversity of individuals.</li> </ul>	Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Student Focus Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledgement of diverse representation of faculty and students.</li> <li>Preview Day Events emphasize faculty interaction, salient identity panel, meals/overnight costs provided.</li> <li>Availability of Graduate Assistantships &amp; practical experiences in Student Affairs' departments.</li> <li>Recruiting both recent undergraduate students as well as career changers.</li> <li>Creative marketing messages designed and delivered by students for students.</li> </ul>	Equity Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Employee Interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holistic cohort - Individual students build holistic cohort.</li> <li>Construction of recruitment materials showcase diversity of opinions, ideas, roles, and backgrounds required to attract a diverse cohort.</li> </ul>	Equity Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment strategies are consistently reviewed for equity and justice outcomes (Students, and employees).</li> </ul>	Equity Justice

Figure 10. Aspects of recruitment policies and practices aligned with values of equity, justice, and inclusion across data collection methods.

## Recruitment Results Evidence of Misalignment





 <b>Artifacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse representation appears tokenistic - unclear if it is authentic and illustrative of cohorts</li> <li>Objective of recruitment is to identify students who are the 'right fit' - appears to undermine lived experiences of students</li> <li>FAFSA requirement without alternative options</li> <li>Lack of CRM data on inquiries, leads, prospects, applicants, and admits</li> <li>Materials for Internships (paid/unpaid) is unclear</li> <li>Tuition cost is unclear</li> </ul>	Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Student Focus Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of access to faculty</li> <li>Recruitment at NASPA is exclusionary</li> <li>Preview Days - Alternative options for place bound and time constrained student</li> <li>Recruitment for Graduate Assistantships and the requirement for internships is misleading</li> </ul>	Equity Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Employee Interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary recruitment efforts focused at national association for student affairs</li> <li>No program-level information sessions with faculty</li> <li>Selectivity in ideal student - onus is on students vs. university to navigate the recruitment process</li> <li>Lack of Developmental support and scaffolding</li> <li>Roles and responsibilities for graduate program recruitment are unclear</li> <li>Lack written policies at the institutional, college, and program levels which leads to lack of transparency and varied actions</li> <li>Graduate marketing dollars are too limited to attract a diverse applicant pool and controlled by the Office of Graduate Admissions and Financial Services.</li> <li>Lack of coordination between faculty and marketing departments</li> <li>No tuition waivers</li> </ul>	Equity Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both students and employees disagree that recruitment materials are accessible</li> <li>Different languages, print style, and not represent diversity in gender, race, occupation, age, ability, or religion</li> </ul>	Equity Justice Diversity Inclusion

Figure 11. Aspects of recruitment policies and practices misaligned with values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion across data collection methods.

**Artifacts**

Artifact information and messaging included reviews of university, college, and program websites, PowerPoint slides from information sessions, and student and employee handbooks. We assessed artifacts and found two dimensions of alignment: recruitment imagery, and information regarding graduate costs and funding efforts. Although those aspects of the recruitment artifacts aligned with study values, other aspects did not. In particular, artifact images and text revealed evidence of (a) tokenistic representation, (b) lack of clarity on internships and cost of tuition, (c) ideal student as based upon 'right fit,' (d) restrictive federal financial aid requirements, and (e) insufficient CRM data. We further examined these areas in the following sections.

**Recruitment imagery alignment.** The institutional mission and vision reflected the values and principles for equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity, and aligned with the principles of equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment practices. Actions enacting these principles, we found evidence of clear, compelling, and consistent messaging; language on materials communicating consideration and respect for diverse student identities; and diverse modalities. A review of institutional and individual recruitment-based digital media highlighted institutional branding with similar colors, imagery, and language. Specifically, the university, college, and program websites illustrated consistent messaging focused on their respective and aligned missions. For example, the first text on the SA webpage stated, "more than ever, reflective and social-justice minded professionals are needed in post-secondary institutions and other educational environments throughout the United States and globally" (Anonymous, n.d.b). Overall, imagery and information from the recruitment materials showcased the program's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Four of five pictures featured on the program website highlighted people of color, with three of the five pictures highlighting females. Furthermore, all three pictures in the Information Session PowerPoint showcased individuals from diverse racial and religious backgrounds. These artifacts

aligned with our values of diversity and inclusion by purposefully showcasing diverse individuals, backgrounds, and perspectives beyond mere representation in all media. The purposeful representation of diversity also connected to our value of inclusion. Recruitment imagery revealed the intentionality of showcasing individuals and groups of diverse representation. These images demonstrated consideration of equality in participation and involvement in campus activities, classroom discussion, and diverse staff representation thus visually demonstrating the inclusive atmosphere the university sought to showcase in recruiting efforts.

**Graduate education costs and funding efforts alignment.** Funding efforts that aligned with equitable- and justice-oriented principles consider the contextual differences and nuances applicable to graduate education and the need to develop future community leaders. As a result, funding efforts should highlight the nuanced and complex ways academic achievement intersects with social identities, particularly socioeconomic status. Analysis of multiple artifacts revealed an emphasis on the costs of attending graduate school and the influence that graduate funding efforts had on prospective students. Artifacts addressed messaging and information about scholarships, internships, graduate assistantships, and tuition. Examples supporting alignment in this area included the college enrollment handbook, program website, and recruitment materials that listed the graduate assistantship as a method to partially meet the financial cost of graduate tuition, fees, and living expenses. These artifacts aligned with our principles of equity by considering and acknowledging the hindrance of graduate education costs and noting an ongoing commitment to offsetting these costs through various funding efforts.

**Tokenistic representation misalignment.** While most forms of media included diverse representation of racial identities, the placement, and frequency of the same student(s) in these images suggested tokenism. Tokenism represented a misalignment with the value of diversity and the principles of equity and justice because it feigned representation of different abilities, ages,

genders, races, and religions. In this context, primary use of an image of the same student repeatedly failed to avoid assumptions about social identities and did not communicate consideration and respect for diverse student identities. Additionally, this tokenistic representation misaligned with the value of inclusion because recruitment artifacts did not consider the representation of other underrepresented groups who did not see themselves identified in multiple recruitment materials. Lastly, the artifacts suggested a misalignment with the principles of equity and justice because the recruitment materials did not highlight an authentic institutional and organizational social environment.

**Lack of clarity misalignment.** Principles of equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment emphasize the need for materials to avoid assumptions that prospective students understand the complexities of graduate education. Moreover, the program should clearly present financial expectations of students, both visually and in writing. Artifact analysis revealed a misalignment with our principles due to lack of clarity regarding the cost of attendance. The tuition costs listed on the college and program websites, and those included on the Information Session PowerPoint were different. For example, two artifacts listed the cost of attendance as \$619 per credit or \$31,569 for full-time students, while the another stated that the cost of attendance was \$625 per credit. A deeper analysis of artifacts revealed that while the program student handbook highlighted that “some courses have different fee structures and may have additional costs” (Anonymous, 2019), artifacts failed to account for a myriad of additional fees (i.e., program, COE assessment, quarterly recreation fees, and quarterly technology), all of which ultimately impacted the total cost of attendance.

Messaging and information available for graduate assistantships and internships provided two additional examples of misalignment related to finances. While artifacts clearly listed graduate assistantships and payment figures, the degree to which the graduate assistantship defrayed the full costs associated with tuition, graduate school materials, and living expenses was not explained fully.

For internships, artifacts revealed lack of information about requirements and expectations for paid versus unpaid internships. Information was unclear also on students' ability to retain a Graduate Assistantship and a paid internship concurrently. These examples misaligned with our value of inclusion because practices were not designed to acknowledge and accommodate differences in the contexts of individual student needs and approaches to learning (Castleman & Page, 2013; Kilburn et al., 2019; Slay et al., 2019; Wang & Shulruf, 2012). Moreover, information available misaligned with our principle of equity because it did not consider the social, political, and historical factors that negatively impact and thus limit the access to resources, opportunities and representation of historically marginalized groups (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003; Justiz & Kameen, 1988; Kilburn et al., 2019; Rubin, 2011; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Steele, 2010; Soares, 2012; Zhao, 2018).

**Ideal student and right fit misalignment.** Multiple artifacts from the university, college, and program, as well as recruitment materials highlighted the goal of recruiting the 'ideal student'. For example, according to the COE Enrollment Handbook, the objective of Information Sessions is to "engage potential students and help find the right fit" (Anonymous, 2020a, p. 33). Multiple artifacts alluded to the idea that the 'ideal student' would have attended a regional or national student affairs professional conference. Indeed, the primary recruitment strategies were aimed at and conducted at these types of conferences. According to the COE Enrollment Handbook, national and regional conferences served as a strategic enrollment effort where prospective students could be identified and targeted for recruitment and admission. The COE Enrollment Handbook further explained, "In order to successfully identify and enroll prospective students who are the best fit for the College of Education's programs, faculty and staff can utilize historical data and current trends to analyze past efforts..." (Anonymous, 2020, p. 14). Consequently, artifacts showed that outside of digital advertising, conferences served as the second most expensive recruitment practice cost for the program to produce a list of inquirers.

Recruitment practices and strategies that mainly focus on potential ideal students' attendance to national professional conferences misaligned with the value of inclusion because these negated or erased the unique lived experiences and individuality of other students who may be interested in or a good fit for Student Affairs but who did not have access to current professional networks or knowledge of the field. Furthermore, artifact messaging misaligned with the principles of equity because the information assumed the “ideal student” was one who attended these conferences and was already familiar with the field of student affairs. Further, this recruitment practice did not consider the contextual differences and nuances applicable to the costs of graduate education and represented a barrier to potential students who lacked the social or financial capital to attend and navigate a professional conference (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Surna, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; McDonough & Robertson, 2012).

**Federal financial aid misalignment.** Equitable- and justice-oriented principles of recruitment should acknowledge differences in the context of student needs. Nonetheless, artifact messaging demonstrated a misalignment with this principle because the descriptions of resource structures in place for financial aid did not acknowledge structural inequalities such as the reproduction of dominant systems that exclude the full incorporation of racial minorities from systems that continue to marginalize underrepresented groups (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; López, 2003; Stein, 2019). We found a contradiction in the artifacts as some provided detailed information about the structures of scholarship awards and financial considerations, outlining the necessity for setting and promoting scholarship applications/award deadlines. At the same time, though those messages appeared to apply to all prospective students, other messaging indicated that international students and undocumented students were not eligible for federal funding or institutional scholarships (Anonymous, n.d.b). These artifacts misaligned with the principles of equity and justice

because the financial aid structure did not consider that graduate students were required to complete a Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) ® to be eligible for scholarships and aid but international and undocumented students were ineligible to complete such requirement, adding to the barriers that limited their access to graduate education. Furthermore, multiple artifacts fell short of providing detailed information on additional forms of financial aid for those students who did not qualify under FAFSA. The requirement of FAFSA completion for financial aid and the limited information on additional resources for those that did not qualify assumed that prospective students knew how to navigate the complexity of graduate education financial aid. Lastly, all the artifacts demonstrated a misalignment with the values of diversity and inclusion because they lacked clarity on the number of scholarships and financial aid available and who made those decisions/how those decisions were made, particularly for students with limited fiscal resources.

**Insufficient CRM data misalignment.** Analysis of artifacts for the recruitment process showed the use of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system as the university's primary database for managing communications and tracking prospective students from inquiry through admission. The CRM allowed for program customization of communications based on academic interest, source of inquiry, and other demographic data, and relied on the coordinated efforts of faculty, staff, and leadership at the different levels to facilitate student inquiry, outreach, engagement, and communication through the recruitment process. However, the program informed us that the historical data regarding the number of students funneled through this process into the program was not available. This result suggested a misalignment with our principles of equity and justice and the values of diversity and inclusion because the program did not use historical and disaggregated data by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographical location to determine if there were inequities in particular students' representation or outcomes (Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; Slay et al., 2019; Wang & Shulruf, 2012). Misalignment with the values of diversity and

inclusion included the limited or lack of availability about student access indicators monitored for proportional representation of diverse student demographics (Center for Urban Education 2015; Slay et al., 2019).

### **Student Focus Groups**

Information from the student focus groups revealed areas of alignment and misalignment to the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Students responded to a series of questions probing them to reflect on their level of engagement throughout the recruitment process, factors that influenced their decision to apply to the SA program, their involvement in the various recruitment avenues, and the explicit and implicit messages received throughout the early stages of the application decision. Analysis of this data revealed four areas that aligned to values of equity, diversity, and inclusion including (a) diversity at preview days, (b) financial assistance through the Graduate Assistant (GA) positions, (c) a diverse student cohort, and (d) creative marketing messages. Other results from the student focus groups evidenced aspects of recruitment practices misaligned with study principles and values. Evidence of misalignment included (a) lack of access to faculty, (b) exclusionary recruitment strategies, (c) exclusionary nature of preview days, and (d) lack of clarity for GA and internship requirements. We discuss each of these areas further in this section.

**Diversity at preview days alignment.** Results highlighted students' broad acknowledgments of diverse representation of faculty and students associated with the Preview Day program. They overwhelmingly emphasized their positive experiences with diverse faculty based on a supportive and genuine interest in each student's journey. This evidence of faculty interaction and representation of marginalized identities aligned with values and principles of diversity. Faculty leaders and other professionals critical to the day's activities represented marginalized identities



reflective of a diverse population of students (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014). Participant L explained diverse representation of students and faculty,

When I came to visit... I saw three South Asian students and I had never seen that before. And I hadn't really seen a lot of South Asian students in my peer groups in my field of higher education. And so, for me, it was really nice to have that kind of representation and have that connection that we didn't have to explain...[and] then I saw there was more diversity for me personally, in terms of race, but also gender identity and sexual orientation identity. [This] influenced me wanting to come to the SA program and being able to have those identity conversations with everybody. I thought that was really nice to have.

Participants also reported the connection to current students who also represented diverse identities. Specifically, students reflected on a program session entitled, 'Salient Identity Panel' that highlighted unique experiences of underrepresented students in the SA program. One participant explained that during the panel, faculty left the session so that prospective and current students could authentically engage with one another. This aligned with our principles of inclusion since learning experiences and orientation activities included diverse modalities designed to reach a large audience (Slay et al., 2019). Furthermore, the session suggested freedom from assumptions about prospective students, communicating consideration and respect for diverse student identities (Hoffman et al., 2018). The data suggested the intentional inclusion of under-represented identities empowered to share their unique lived experiences with an audience of prospective students in a peer-to-peer format generated authentic learning and living experiences while in the SA program.

Lastly, participants felt that the program displayed a commitment to equity by providing free overnight accommodations and meals to Preview Day attendees. Participants consistently reported Preview Day motivated their desire to apply to the SA program once they were able to learn of the diverse representation of faculty and students. These examples aligned with our value of inclusion

because Preview Days acknowledged and accommodated differences in the contexts of individual student needs and approaches to learning (Castleman & Page, 2013; Kilburn et al., 2019; Slay et al., 2019; Wang & Shulruf, 2012). This was evident through the pro-active planning and accommodations provided to students living outside the Seattle area.

**Financial assistance through graduate assistantship alignment.** Students named the number of open Graduate Assistantship (GA) positions as another appealing aspect of recruitment activities. Graduate Assistantships provided students with degree-related work experience and financial support. Students acknowledged the feeling of increased security and confidence due to this financial aid. One participant recalled applying to four other institutions and found this SA program held a significant level of priority due to the graduate assistantship opportunity. Participant N explained,

when I entered my first year...I did secure one of those graduate assistantships, so at least financially this felt really appropriate for the finances that I had and I knew that I'd be taking out loans, but it still felt really manageable at the time.

This participant acknowledged the financial burden beyond what an assistantship could fund. The opportunity to gain practical experience in Student Affairs included a specific department with unique opportunities unavailable at other campuses with assistantship; this aligned with our value of equity because program administrators demonstrated their value of equitable student success of marginalized students (Hoffman et al., 2018). Data suggested evidence in the acknowledgment that graduate students unqualified for need-based or subsidized federal financial aid when pursuing graduate studies.

**Diverse student cohort alignment.** Participants recognized the diversity of cohort members admitted into the program, diverse identities, and life experiences present when asked to reflect on messages received about the ideal student during the recruitment process. Participant H shared,

I definitely got the sense that the [SA] program was looking for a really diverse group of students in terms of identities and backgrounds and life experiences...which was really exciting to me...I saw that they were sort of recruiting some students who were straight out of undergrad and then other students who had or were making more of a career transition or who have been out in the world for a little longer, which, like I fell into that category... I felt like there'd be space for me in the program as somebody who was sort of transitioning in from a different field.

Additionally, two participants commented on the make-up of individuals within the holistic cohort who shared common and diverse identities, backgrounds, and perspectives. These results reflected our inclusion values because messaging about recruitment and admission policies, and practices was designed to build a representation of diverse student identities (Hoffman et al., 2018). This further represented our value of diversity by emphasizing an engaging social environment supportive of marginalized students and intention to build a diverse cohort of students, creating a more robust learning community where an individuals' lived experiences served as a powerful platform for exploring barriers to inclusion (Jaquette & Salazar, 2018).

The SA program's goal to attract and admit a diverse cohort served as an example of inclusion because achieving equitable student success meant something different for each person. In accounting for equitable student success, the program avoided assumptions and generalizations based on the majority, dominant groups. To achieve equity, it must be inclusive of all individuals, their beliefs, and values and not as an "add on" goal that gets buried in new initiatives (Center for Urban Education 2015).

**Creative marketing messages alignment.** Students highlighted successful marketing strategies designed to attract students who represented marginalized identities. Participants reported that current marketing strategies improved since their entrance into the SA program. The program

used new social media platforms (Instagram) to peak students' interests because this new media highlighted "a day in the life of a current student in the SA program." Participant L explained,

I do think one of the strengths in recruiting individuals from historically marginalized populations [more diverse representation] is the recruitment strategies [that come] from the student-driven social media that is public facing and I'm specifically referring to [SA program student organization] Instagram page. So, I think like that student-centered, student-run recruitment strategy is really important to have a platform for underrepresented students to showcase their day to day [experiences].

This participant explained the significant advances in utilizing social media as an expanded platform to reach out to students in the recruitment phases. The student suggested collaborations with student organizations and graduate assistants who could offer information on authentic student experiences and perspectives of marginalized students. This was an example of inclusion because messages communicated publicly, and in writing, the importance of including multiple voices for the purposes of achieving equity at all levels of campus involvement and messages designed to include different culture, values, norms, history, and customs, that was applied in a responsive and non-stereotyping manner (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).

**Lack of access to faculty misalignment.** Four students expressed concern about the inaccessibility of faculty during the application materials submission process. The lack of access to faculty negatively impacted these prospective graduate students, as they desired to connect with faculty as mentors and guides throughout the application process, especially since the faculty evaluated and selected students for admission. This is an example of misalignment with our values of equity and inclusion in that program faculty did not demonstrate shared values or routine and ongoing commitment to equity and justice throughout recruitment phases (Hoffman et al., 2018).

**Exclusionary recruitment strategies misalignment.** Most students reported concerns about the SA program's reliance on identifying leads from attendees at regional and national conferences for Student Affairs professionals such as the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). Recruitment from national conferences misaligned with our values of equity, diversity, and inclusion in part due to the high cost associated with attending a regional or national NASPA conference. Further, we found this recruitment strategy attracted leads already knowledgeable about the field of Student Affairs. This excluded attracting a wider range of leads who may have wanted to pursue graduate studies in Student Affairs but who did not attend a prestigious professional conference. We found this practice misaligned with our value of equity because the practice prohibited students who were place-bound, without needed financial resources, did not have access to flexible work schedules, or lacked social capital required to navigate such professional development experiences. Reliance on this recruitment strategy also limited the ability to meet and attract a diverse pool of graduate applicants (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Surna, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; McDonough & Robertson, 2012).

**Lack of clarity of graduate assistantships and internship requirements misalignment.**

While students commented on the financial and experiential appeal of graduate assistantships, four participants reported concerns that recruitment materials for Graduate Assistantships did not show the mechanics required to hold a graduate assistantship along with accompanying limitations. For example, since the assistantship did not come in the form of a waiver, the practice did not cover the full cost of tuition. Instead, payment came in the form of a stipend with a cap placed on hours worked. One student explained that the wages earned per hour, under the stipend mechanics, provided an hourly wage well below the standard of living.

For students to apply for a GA position, applicants must have attended Preview Days on campus, to participate in three to five different interviews with various Student Affairs offices. This misaligned with our values of equity and inclusion since the program expected students to meet 'professional expectations' and possess an appropriate level of experience and confidence to navigate the interview process in addition to addressing the anxiety produced from simply attending Preview Days and learning how to prepare for graduate-level studies. This practice served as an example of misalignment with our values of equity, diversity, and inclusion due to the absence of clear, compelling, and consistent messaging needed to reduce disparities and barriers. These results revealed a failure by the program to acknowledge possible structural inequalities embedded in Preview Days that may have excluded the full incorporation of marginalized, underrepresented groups (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; López, 2003; Stein, 2019).

When we asked students to reflect further on programmatic information received during the recruitment phase, most participants reported a lack of clarity regarding policies on paid versus non-paid internships and the impact of a paid internship on a GA assistantship position. Two participants went into detail about the inability to concurrently perform both requirements due to financial and employment requirements that imposed a ceiling of a maximum number of hours worked for pay. We found these policies and practices did not consider the social, political, and historical factors that negatively impact marginalized students' full access to education. Further, recruitment materials and messaging reflected assumptions that all students could afford the cost of graduate education beyond a stipend or the requirement to pay for internship credits, while completing a minimum number of work hours. If an internship was unpaid, some students had no choice but to also maintain outside paid employment. Participant N explained the frustration with not earning credit for prior experience and the realities of an unpaid internship:

I did have [student affairs] professional experience [coming into the program] I thought that I would have been able to petition some of those experiences so that I didn't have to pursue the full 200 hour requirement for this internship, but then also have to pay for those credits to take this internship. Financially, that was a really big barrier for me to have to afford.

In addition to not understanding the complexity of the paid or unpaid internship positions, two students reported learning about a graduate assistantship offered or denied too late. The timing of those late notifications induced a significant amount of stress as those students prepared to begin their graduate program. Participant M added,

the fact that graduate assistants are paid stipends, and if you add that all up, it does not really fully even cover tuition, much less like all of the other living costs or like relocating [redacted]. I think that's a [sic] really big factor. I think that that has always felt like a disconnect to me and like the way the program talks about equity, access, inclusion, and social justice and then if you are relying on a graduate assistantship to attend this program, you're going to need to find some other way to make it work, too.

Participants reported a misalignment with values of equity and inclusion due to the conflicting messages in how the graduate assistantship and the internship requirements were communicated. One participant reflected on the burden of paying for a required number of internship hours with little to no guarantee the internship would lead to professional employment.

**Exclusionary nature of preview days misalignment.** Participants described limitations of Preview Days as not all eligible students had full access to or the ability to participate in the function. For example, while room and board costs were covered for Preview Days, these events also included areas of exclusion and barriers. One student who lived in another country without remote, technology access, was unable to attend Preview Days in-person or virtually. The student

expressed the desire for an option of having a Skype call to support attendance at Preview Days.

Participant M added,

I knew I wasn't going to fly to campus, I don't have the funds, and technically I'm on a travel ban...what's the point of filling out the form? ...and asking about Skype? ...as if it's assuming that most people will be able to make it [to campus] and I didn't really know how to advocate for my needs and for myself. And so, yes, [the SA program] did send an email out, but I never received a response back. I felt like I was short-changed, especially with all the challenges that I personally was experiencing in terms of location, time difference, and funding definitely prevented me from reaching out even further and getting a Skype interview for [graduate assistantships].

Further evidence of inaccessibility and exclusionary practices related to Preview Days related to its *timing* and the season during which it was offered. This was a two-day event hosted on a Tuesday and Wednesday in February. Students indicated that due to their work schedules and the weather in February, it was difficult to attend during workdays and debatable as to whether conditions would support easy transport to campus. These examples misaligned with our values of equity, inclusion and diversity because these practices did not acknowledge the inherent barriers that continue to disadvantage specific groups of admitted students. Not all students invited to participate in Preview Days could take work off, and not all students were able to cover the true costs of the SA program thus forced to seek additional employment outside of the GA position or unpaid internship positions.

### **Employee Interviews**

Results from one-on-one employee interviews included responses to questions about recruitment policies, practices, identified goals that regulated recruitment strategies, and alignment or misalignment of the SA program recruitment policies and practices with equitable- and justice-oriented principles. Analysis of these responses revealed two overall areas aligned to the principles



of equity and justice and to values of diversity and inclusion. These included (a) holistic cohort goals, and (b) accessibility of recruitment policies and practices. Other results from employee interviews analysis highlighted recruitment policies and practices that did not align with study principles and values. In particular (a) recruitment activities, (b) resources allocation, and (c) roles and responsibilities. Each of these areas is discussed further in this section.

**Holistic cohort goals alignment.** All employees described the ‘ideal student’, who is the focus of recruitment into the SA program, as one that aligned with the equity and justice lens of the program. When further prompted to describe an ideal student for this program, four of seven employees emphasized the recruitment goal to identify students who could shape a holistic cohort that, as a collective, would contribute to a deep learning of and from each other. This represented an alignment with principles of equity and justice because student recruitment and the concept of an ideal student was connected to the program and institutional missions and vision of equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity. Moreover, the goal of a holistic cohort leveraged the benefits of students’ diversity, lived experiences, and identities. Employees also recognized how the goal of forming a holistic cohort was illustrated and modeled through the construction of recruitment materials, which showcased diversity of opinions, ideas, roles, and backgrounds required to attract a diverse cohort focused on advancing social justice in higher education. These results aligned with values of inclusion because messaging about recruitment and admission policies and practices were designed to build representation of diverse student identities (Hoffman et al., 2018).

**Accessibility alignment.** While all employees noted the program’s commitment to equity and justice, the majority, five of seven, noted access as the main consideration for equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment policies and practices. Employees emphasized recruitment that facilitated students' access through financial support, disability support services, and technology services. One employee stated,

.... it's an access piece as much as it is anything else. Understanding that not everyone is going to have the [financial] ability to attend conferences or have the money to go be at a conference. Not everyone has access at all time to the internet.... Understanding that not every student looks, talks, and walks the same or has the same opportunities. (Participant A)

These results suggested alignment with our principles and values of inclusion and diversity because employees demonstrated an acknowledgement and understanding of individual students' needs and approaches to learning as well as the accommodation of students' differences.

Additionally, most employees responded positively on the relationship between accessibility and graduate assistantships and scholarships. Respondents communicated a high level of awareness of the costs of graduate education, possible financial burden on lower socioeconomic status students, and the financial resources available to support graduate education access. This aligned with our principle of equity because recruitment practices highlighted the nuanced and complex ways academic achievement intersects with social identities such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Van Overschelde & López, 2018). Alignment with our value of diversity and inclusion was reflected in the employees' awareness of the need for fiscal resources that provide access opportunity to prospective students and the consideration of contextual differences and nuances applicable to graduate education.

**Recruitment activities misalignment.** The majority of respondents identified student affairs national professional conferences as the main recruitment practice for the SA program. Five of seven employees expressed concerns with this recruitment practice because the SA program relied on national professional conferences as their main recruitment practice. This result misaligned with our principles and values because the practice of recruiting at these conferences may have served as a factor limiting access to graduate education for many prospective students who could not afford to attend such events. Moreover, results suggested that this recruitment activity misaligned with our

principles and values of inclusion because it reinforced structural inequalities such as the reproduction of colonial structures by dominant systems (i.e., high socioeconomic status students who can afford attendance to national conferences), excluding the full incorporation of racial minorities from systems that continue to marginalize underrepresented groups.

Two additional recruitment activities identified by employees suggested a misalignment with principles and values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. These were information sessions and student-led recruitment. Information Sessions were identified as a university-wide recruitment practice where prospective students had the opportunity to interact with program faculty and learn details regarding program curriculum, expectations, etc. However, analysis of employee responses highlighted that faculty in this program did not participate in information sessions. This misaligned with our principles of equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment because the activities were not being situated within diverse communities or leveraging and highlighting the diversity of the faculty. Additionally, it limited the access and resources that underrepresented students could have from faculty and the program.

While employee responses suggested that formal and informal student-led recruitment activities could be a positive approach to recruitment, as prospective students could see themselves identified in others' roles, employees also highlighted this recruitment practice as a limiting factor preventing access to faculty. Students perceived that limited access to faculty also deprived them of access to important program information and potentially that could undermine their ability to navigate the complexities of graduate education. Limited access to faculty and assumptions that students can seamlessly navigate the recruitment process without faculty support and scaffolding misaligned with equitable recruitment principles.

**Resources allocation misalignment.** All employees expressed that there were insufficient resources, either fiscal or human capital, to support equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment

practices. Moreover, the majority (five out of seven employees) shared their belief that access to faculty as a recruitment practice was negatively impacted due to the limitations of human capital. For example, Participant G provided a succinct response that captured the results for resources allocation:

I don't necessarily think that [the program has] sufficient resources. That's money, but it's also people, you know. There's few faculty in the program. And then a number of part time faculty. And so those two faculty members who remain are really left to do curriculum development, student advising, recruitment, admissions, and teaching course load and grading. So they have a lot on their plate.

Limited resource allocation of fiscal and human capital misaligned with our principles of equity and justice, and values of diversity and inclusion, because it limited the opportunities to operationalize equity and justice from the lens of the mission statement to implementation in day-to-day practices. Moreover, limited graduate marketing and recruitment dollars impacted the ways in which the program could attract a diverse applicant pool—like targeting historically black institutions or hosting program fairs.

**Roles and responsibilities misalignment.** Five of seven employees responded that program faculty drove recruitment despite the number of people with roles and responsibilities to support program recruitment. For example, employees indicated there were no policies that outlined roles and responsibilities for those various individuals who could contribute to and support a seamless and collaborative process of equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment into the program. The lack of clarity or awareness of recruitment policies misaligned with our principles and values because it prevented a concerted effort from the institution, college, and program to maximize fiscal and human capital while also creating confusion and a sense of role confinement.

Both students and employees responded to a series of questions with ratings on a 4-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. We presented their responses as overall beliefs about recruitment alignment and misalignment with equitable- and justice-oriented principles in connection to our values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion.

**Recruitment areas of alignment.** We asked both employee and student groups about the SA program faculty, staff, and leadership preparedness to support and address disparities facing individuals from historically marginalized communities to further evaluate alignment with the principles and values. An overall majority of students (88%) and employees (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that the SA program's recruitment policies and practices aligned with its values of diversity and inclusion by showcasing intentional consideration for different backgrounds, perspectives, and representation.

We asked both groups about information session recruitment practices within the SA program. Most students and all employees agreed or strongly agreed that information sessions provided necessary steps to apply to the SA program and meet application deadlines. The information sessions suggested an alignment with the value of inclusion and the principle of equity as the sessions provided an opportunity to communicate with prospective students, possibly providing them with access to resources to complete the application process successfully. Furthermore, 88% of students and all employees surveyed agreed the information sessions considered cultural norms including personal values and cultural, racial, and religious traditions. The results provided opportunities for intentional representation and consideration of the communities being served.

A clear majority of students and employees indicated evident values for diversity in recruitment marketing materials. Seventy-five percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that

materials represented a diverse group of students and faculty based on gender, race, occupation, age, ability, and religion. These results suggested a strong alignment with our principles and values of diversity and inclusion because they reflected, leveraged, and highlighted diverse students and faculty. Additionally, all employees surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the SA program included current and active students in recruitment planning, decision-making, and activities, which are particularly critical to intentionally seeking full and equitable participation of diverse individuals from all social identity groups and promoting equity in relation to the recruitment process and structure.

**Recruitment areas of misalignment.** Results from employees and students revealed areas of financial resources planning, accommodations, and admissions evaluations that were misaligned with values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. When asked about the SA program's leadership preparation to support and address disparities facing marginalized communities, 31% of students disagreed that the program provided additional resources and accommodations needed to support historically marginalized communities through the recruitment process. Additionally, approximately 25% of employees and students disagreed or strongly disagreed that information sessions covered financial planning resources. We linked both responses to misalignment of equity values based on a perceived failure to challenge systemic oppression by affording prospective students' access to resources, opportunities, representation, and inclusion specifically among historically marginalized populations.

Over half of students (63%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that information sessions provided information regarding the evaluation of prospective applicants during admissions decisions while 20% of employees strongly disagreed. Finally, 51% of students surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that the program's marketing practices and materials included equitable representation of communities through signage, art, and pictures. Posting materials representative

and welcoming of communities served aligned with our value of equity. These areas of disagreement suggested misalignment between program practice and values of diversity, justice, and inclusion by avoiding intentional representation and consideration of diverse groups, which may have prevented prospective students from seeking full and equitable participation in the recruitment process.

### Admission Results

Admission results addressed research question two by outlining evidence of SA program alignment and misalignment with our principles and values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. Figure 12 and 13 illustrate summaries by data source of evidence from results that aligned and misaligned with our principles of equity and justice-oriented admissions practices and values for inclusion and diversity. Next, we elaborated on these results by discussing areas of alignment and misalignment by data source.

## Admissions Results Evidence of Alignment





 <b>Artifacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a structure of roles and Admission responsibilities and opportunities for collaboration.</li> <li>• Admission requirements communicate value of equity and justice-oriented values.</li> </ul>	Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Student Focus Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application process is clear</li> <li>• Personal essay demonstrate career goals and prepare for graduate level coursework</li> <li>• No GRE requirement</li> <li>• Preview Day (faculty involvement, room and board, student involvement)</li> </ul>	Equity Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Employee Interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admission process operates from “How to get to yes”</li> <li>• GRE requirement is waived</li> <li>• Applicant materials are reviewed by a committee</li> <li>• Personal essay is prioritized as one of the most important means of evaluation of the applicant</li> <li>• Holistic review including non-cognitive factors as opposed to quantitative variables</li> </ul>	Equity Justice Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty and students also evaluated the personal essay as the top priority when evaluating admits, and standardized test results as least important.</li> </ul>	Equity Inclusion

Figure 12. Aspects of admission policies and practices aligned with values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion across data collection methods.

## Admissions Results Evidence of Misalignment





 <b>Artifacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of clarity and inconsistent messaging about who has primary authority in the admission process</li> <li>• Lack of clarity for Internships and Graduate Assistantships process and remuneration</li> </ul>	Equity Justice Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Student Focus Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial burden with unpaid internships &amp; Graduate Assistantships remuneration- inability to combine funding sources</li> <li>• Tuition and fee waivers for fees are not clear</li> <li>• Graduate coursework is not subsidized by federal financial aid</li> <li>• Scholarships for marginalized students do not go far enough</li> <li>• Barrier for applying for graduate assistantship due to the hidden curriculum</li> <li>• Expectations for <i>Student fit</i> meet competencies of privileged White, dominant, students</li> <li>• Prior work experience does not count towards internship hours</li> </ul>	Equity Justice Diversity Inclusion
 <b>Employee Interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No resources to admit students to promote yield</li> <li>• Over-reliance on faculty as the primary decisions</li> <li>• Not inclusive of age, veterans, lack of experience with leadership</li> <li>• Personal essay privileges students who able to complete the essay in the way it is asked for</li> <li>• Believe that rolling admissions philosophy dilutes the prestige of the program</li> </ul>	Equity Justice Inclusion
 <b>Surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students and employees disagree that admission policies and practices eliminate advantages to certain groups</li> <li>• Students do not know how their applications are evaluated to mitigate bias</li> </ul>	Equity Inclusion

Figure 13. Aspects of admission policies and practices misaligned with values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion across data collection methods.

### Artifacts

We analyzed the SA program student handbook, university landing webpage, the program website, COE Administrative Policies and Procedure Manual, COE enrollment scholarships by academic year, Information Session PowerPoint, COE enrollment handbook, SA program admissions application website and materials, and SA program flyers to understand the SA program’s admission policies and practices. Overall, our analysis suggested that artifact messaging was aligned with values of diversity, inclusion, and access in the areas of mission-driven admissions and a holistic application process for students. However, other results from the artifact analyses evidenced aspects of admission processes that did not align with equity- and justice-oriented principles in the areas of (a) admission policy transparency, (b) internship processes, and (c) graduate assistantship processes.



**Mission-driven admission alignment.** Artifacts revealed both institution-wide and program-level commitment to SU’s mission and Jesuit ethos as guiding admission philosophies. Diversity, access, and inclusion were highlighted elements of admission materials, as illustrated through pictures of students and faculty, which represented both males and females from multiple racial backgrounds. The number of images depicting different types of people was well balanced, suggesting that various types of people were valued equally. Students were shown in a variety of settings on campus that appeared welcoming. Values of diversity, access, and inclusion were also illustrated in the verbiage employed in the text, where admissions artifacts consistently referred to educating the “whole person” and “empowering leaders for a just and humane world.” The university’s values of “fostering a concern for justice and the competence to promote it” and “putting students first” created an inclusive message for applicants as well (Seattle University, n.d.).

**Required admission materials alignment.** The program admissions website built on this mission-driven focus and contained a detailed list of admission requirements and clear writing prompts for applicants. The quantitative materials, such as a transcript or GPA, in combination with the qualitative materials of letter of intent, résumé, and recommendations, allowed for a holistic review of applicants. It was in these spaces that the artifacts demonstrated equitable access and inclusion when admitting students were evaluated by the same initial quantitative expectations, but individual contextualizing circumstances were considered in the qualitative components. For instance, the personal statement prompted applicants to explain their previous involvement in social justice and how they planned to use their master’s degree to further advance the work of social justice.

**Admission policy transparency misalignment.** Artifacts showed that program faculty developed the admission requirements and held the ultimate authority for making decisions about the admission of individual students (although this contradicts participant responses, below). This

practice appeared misaligned with values of access and inclusion because it failed to include the diverse perspectives of multiple external reviewers (such as other staff and administrators) who could have potentially participated in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the rubric used to judge applicants in the admission process was confidential. This exclusionary practice may impact diversity and inclusion as a lack of process transparency served as a barrier to students' ability to understand evaluated methods and hampered the ability of staff to support applicants in preparing their application materials.

Additionally, the COE Enrollment Handbook stated that the SA program faculty served as lead contacts for (a) developing admissions requirements, (b) developing application review timelines and processes and communicating this information to the enrollment team, (c) facilitating the application review process, (d) communicating admissions decisions to Graduate Admissions, and (e) contacting unconfirmed and unregistered applicants. However, the COE Enrollment Handbook stated that SA program faculty do not have the authority to close the application cycle without approval from the Dean or Associate Dean. These artifact examples clearly articulated roles and expectations; the apparent contradictions were addressed during the employee interviews.

**Internship processes misalignment.** Artifact analysis indicated the internship process lacked clarity and consistent information about requirements and procedures. While the artifacts laid out a framework of expectations of the student's role as an intern, they did not clearly describe the level of daily work an intern would be expected to complete. Artifacts also did not clearly state information about compensation. We found this lack of transparency misaligned with the values of access as it created confusion surrounding financial obligations.

**Graduate assistantship processes misalignment.** Artifacts about graduate assistantship processes lacked clarity in explaining the employee's time commitment and compensation. Artifact language was unclear regarding fiscal relief for graduate assistantships (such as tuition waivers).

Artifacts lacked information about the hours an individual could work and why there was a cap on hours and wages. The lack of transparent information related to the financial side of graduate assistantships was poorly aligned with the values of access and inclusion since it created a barrier for students that may have limited their ability to access resources and fully participate in the graduate assistantship program.

### **Student Focus Groups**

We asked participants to reflect on admission requirements and any experiences throughout the process that felt inviting or challenging. The following areas indicated an alignment with our values of diversity, equity and inclusion: (a) the clear application process with GRE submission requirements, and (b) positive messages received from staff and current students throughout application of Graduate Assistantships during Preview Days. Analysis of these results revealed alignment with our values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. Focus groups provided evidence about admission practices that did not align with study principles or values. Results revealed evidence of the (c) financial burden of affording graduate education, (b) barriers in accessing assistantships with paid internships, and (d) obligation to represent the ideal student attributes.

**Application process and absence of GRE scores alignment.** Every student noted that the SA program did not require submission of GRE scores during the application process. Participant K added, “Yeah, it adds to the point of the GRE, [which is a] standardized test and is not equivalent to your strengths as a person and as a professional... so not having that as a requirement felt more inviting.”

Participants agreed that the absence of the GRE requirement, the prompt and topic of the personal statement, and the SA program’s explicit commitment to justice aligned with their personal values of diversity and equity. These examples aligned with values of justice and equity as there

were intentional efforts designed to address achievement gaps for students who were entering post-secondary education (Adams & Zuniga, 2018). Three students cited the inherently racist and oppressive history and legacy of standardized scores and expressed a connection between avoiding the requirement and justice-oriented practice. We found participants recognized standardized testing as a product of structural racism and educational discrimination due to the unvarying measures of knowledge, learning, intellect, and skills acquired through formal education (AAPF, n.d.; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995).

Most participants described the admission process as a reflective process informed by the ideological principles imbued in the missions of the institution (university and college) and individual levels. Students provided evidence that the personal essay requirement was a fulfilling experience because it asked them to reflect on their values of equity, justice, and inclusion as well as to describe what their plans were for incorporating these values beyond graduate studies. Participant J responded:

I remember we had to submit a personal statement and talk about our commitment to diversity and social justice and how we feel that the program would improve or like would help us grow in that aspect. But also, like what we've done to demonstrate dedication to Jesuit values already.

In other words, the program applied emphasis on equity at multiple levels of the admission process from the non-requirement of GRE scores to the prompt provided for the personal essay. This alignment between the ideological, institutional, and individual philosophies was exemplified across the missions of the institution and its organizational structures as the missions reflected deep commitments to values and principles of equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).

Participant O compared applying for this SA program with other SA programs and added:

Ours is more reflective and pretty inviting... maybe you don't necessarily have the skillset to be a master student... they want to kind of bring you up to that level and will coach you on writing... even with essays, like they probably weren't a stickler for APA style.

This participant highlighted the practice and value of inclusion; the recognition that not every applicant began at the same level. This example of inclusion included an act of specific consideration for marginalized individuals and the application of accommodations to afford access grounded in fairness and not sameness (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003; Braveman, 2014; Garces, 2014).

**Positive messages and practices at preview days alignment.** Most students remembered faculty members approaching them on Preview Days and sharing encouraging and supportive messages. For example, students remembered messages they heard about being inspired to pursue their highest aspirations in the SA program and a variety of opportunities that would be made available from any functional area in student affairs they wanted to pursue. Those messages left students with a sense of support and reassurance from the program faculty during the preview day events. Participant J explained:

Once I got to preview days, I distinctly remember faculty coming up and asking me very specific like questions about like oh like how's your last year going [with finishing specified bachelor's degree] and that was really inviting because it showed to me like how much they actually put intention into knowing who we are.

In addition to a personable environment, students reported staff and faculty were available to applicants for follow-up questions that would assist them in completing the application process such as clarifying the application timeline or scholarship and financial aid deadlines. This was an example of alignment with our values of diversity and inclusion due to the specific recognition of diverse and unique lived experiences of applicants. Additionally, this was evidence of staff and

faculty who understood the communities they served and the types of marginalization and exclusion they faced in normative environments (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).

**Financial burden of graduate education misalignment.** All participants shared that the availability and impact of receiving tuition waivers and fee waivers was unclear and that the true cost associated with tuition and living expenses was not explicitly stated during the application process. Students reported they did understand that no federal need-based assistance was available to fund graduate studies. One participant noted the availability of scholarships but explained that scholarships specifically targeted for marginalized students did not go far enough. This was an example of misalignment with our values of equity and inclusion because certain groups that lack the financial capital are prevented access to full participation in the SA program's promise of a two-year program. Instead, students who lacked adequate financial resources were put in the position of having to work multiple jobs to afford their living and school expenses. Three participants explained their need to extend the SA program into a third year so they could meet the financial and educational requirements of the program. This was evidenced by a participant O, who added:

We do have a pretty good amount of students who work full-time while completing the program, so they do it on a 3-year track...and it was interesting I noticed at this year's Preview Days...there were a lot more students who would fit that description than there have been in the past.

We found the burdens of juggling family responsibilities and academic expectations compounded with a lack of financial resources to adequately fund a student's full and efficient participation in a graduate program. Participants further expounded on the misleading requirements for the graduate assistantship application process and the ability to secure a paid internship. All participants

identified both graduate assistantships and securing a desirable internship as financial burdens that accompany the pursuit of graduate studies.

**Barriers in accessing assistantships and paid internships misalignment.** All participants reflected on insufficient communication and messaging of requirements for applying and interviewing for a graduate assistantship. Most participants were concerned about the lack of transparent information on how to secure a paid internship when the university failed to provide the information. Two participants explained how this poor messaging had a negative impact on their student status since they assumed that they could simultaneously perform an assistantship and internship. When asked about the application process for graduate assistantships, two students reported the process was unclear and not easily explicable on the university's website, and it reflected a process that catered to the skills of White, dominant, privileged students—especially when confronted with communicating 'fit' with individuals from the office or unit interviewing them. This misaligned with the values of diversity and inclusion because the process did not allow space for recognition of a student's unique background and lived experience. Moreover, this process misaligned with the program and institutional commitment of admitting more underrepresented students, who were often first-generation students. The process to access assistantships and paid internships was perceived as grounded in sameness and an assumption that all prospective students understood and could successfully navigate the graduate studies application process and all of its intricate requirements. One student explained how the interview process was inequitable, saying:

Just kind of knowing how to navigate interviews and like professional settings can be something that is a hidden curriculum, like something your parents tell you how to do....so it might not be something that all students have the navigational capital for. (Participant J)

Overall, students felt that the process of applying and interviewing for assistantships diminished diverse perspectives and lived experiences of diverse applicants. This was evidenced by

the lack of consideration for marginalized students' various levels of familiarity that either allowed or prevented them the privilege of navigating the application process. The process contributed to an overall perspective that the graduate assistantship process was not equitable and perpetuated systemic oppression of students from accessing resources and opportunities.

Students felt a sense of belonging and that they were equipped with the skills required to meet their academic goals. Student affairs administrators provided services and experiences to students outside a traditional "academic classroom." In other words, the demands of the profession created a "duty to care" for students 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We found assistantships in student affairs made it difficult to avoid exceeding the maximum threshold of 20 hours per week. Even when graduate students performed the baseline requirement of 20 hours a week, they found the job still demanded attention. This misaligned with our values of equity as students lacked similar capacity to manage academic, employment, and social expectations. While the program offered a variety of assistantships, we found discrepancies in the demands associated with each assistantship and inequitable requirements among graduate assistantship positions.

The form of payment students received was another challenge associated with graduate assistantships—students were paid in the form of a stipend rather than a wage per hour worked. Participants reported working well beyond their required hours per week and earned the same wage as if they worked the minimum hours required. The nature of the work in Student Affairs created the inability to predict the demands associated with doing this work—regardless of the number of hours to accomplish assigned tasks. This influenced participants who may have worked into the late evening or early morning to assist a resident while able to meet their academic goals. Participant O explained:

The thinking behind this change is that people were working over hours...and they wanted to prevent that, so they switched to a new model where you had to report your hours more



often...however, now we get paid more infrequently and it doesn't line up with the tuition schedule...and I think, inherently for a lot of us, our essential job functions are a lot more than I can do within 20 to 25 hours a week.

One participant explained that the stipend model reduced the hourly wage to pennies. Two other students felt exploited and undervalued during their experiences of serving as a GA due to the low remuneration. Students also shared feelings of exploitation when reflecting on the internship requirement. This misaligned with our values of equity and inclusion because the process and policies erased students' unique backgrounds and experiences while actively inhibiting their self-agency to plan for courses and experiential learning required to adequately prepare them for a competitive field. Participant H explained:

I would say if I was going to put in a lot of work in an internship for free to one of the offices, but then have to pay for three credits, I feel like it's free work that I'm giving them, but it's giving me experience as well, but I feel like there's other ways to get experience at that point, too.

Another student who reflected on the unpaid internship requirement explained that students who were doing an internship could either be paid or not be paid and accumulate the internship hours to meet the required credits for degree completion. Participant I explained:

It's either they count as internship hours and they don't get paid, or they get paid, and it doesn't count for hours [toward credits required for the internship]...the university has very specific requirements for students, and if you're a full-time student, you can only work up to 20 hours on campus.

This policy significantly limited the amount of work hours and subsequent earnings to offset the high cost of living expenses these students expected to meet. This is in misalignment to the principle

of equity because admissions practices are not designed to accommodate differences of individual student needs.

**Obligation to represent an ideal student attributed to misalignment.** Students identified characteristics of an ideal student as one who was self-reflective, had a desire to serve others, and could apply the complexity of social, critical, and racial identity theory toward the work of advancing social justice in higher education. We asked participants to describe the key factors that influenced their decision to apply to the SA program. Seven out of eight participants identified the geographic location of the institution and the desire to be in an urban setting. Not all participants were originally from the city of the university, but all participants revealed their positive response to the messaging on the desirability of the geographic location of the university and the desire to be in an urban setting.

Participants reported that the messages received throughout the application process reflected a series of assumptions about prospective students. These included assumptions that all prospective students had a baseline knowledge of the field of student affairs, that most applicants would be located within the immediate region of the university, and that all applicants possessed the ability to pay all admission fees. Additionally, these included assumptions that all applicants would have access to mentors who could render two letters of reference and that all applicants knew how to demonstrate graduate-level course work by means of a personal essay. These examples misaligned with our values of equity, justice, and inclusion as not all students possessed the financial and social capital required for acceptance. This evidence also supported a reproduction of colonial, normative, dominant ideologies and practices that exclude marginalized groups from full access to the application process. Finally, this indicated a misalignment with equity and inclusion because the program based the policies on sameness and applied them with an assumption that all prospective

students must fit the institution's ideals. This limited the opportunities an applicant had for demonstrating their intention in applying to graduate studies.

### **Employee Interviews**

Researchers interviewed program employees to understand their perceptions of the SA program's admission policies and practices. With interview questions relating to all aspects of the admission process, participants described everything from admission requirements and selection criteria to which positions had ultimate influence and authority over who gets admitted into the program and who does not. From employee comments shared, we identified several aspects of the admission process that aligned with our values of diversity, access, and equity. These included (a) employee values, (b) admission materials, and (c) a focus on the creation of a diverse cohort. However, other comments evidenced aspects of admission processes that did not align with study principles or values including (a) admission decisions, (b) human capital, and (c) fiscal capital.

**Employee values alignment.** Employees' comments demonstrated a shared commitment to equitable- and justice-oriented admission policies and practices. Five employees emphasized practices in which they engaged to facilitate student access, including how they connected with or reached out to historically marginalized populations. For example, one employee described equitable access as "creating processes that help support students who don't have traditional access to information and to support them in engaging in those admissions processes" (Participant D). Another employee stated the importance of being "sure that we're not discriminating unintentionally against a certain group while being so focused on our mission that we are kind of missing something obvious" (Participant F). A third remarked they wanted to admit students who are academically ready "but then really consider the person's story, their interests, their values, and what they're looking for. It is not looking at applications blindly and only for the quantitative pieces but really

looking at who the person is and what they bring” (Participant G). The intentional effort of all employees to be inclusive, provide access, and honor diversity suggested alignment with all study values and principles.

**Cohort creation alignment.** When asked about goals that informed decisions to admit students into the SA program, six of seven participants responded an important aspect of admissions was the goal to create a holistic cohort. Employees also mentioned the program considered admitting enough students to meet the organization’s fiscal needs as well. However, responses indicated meeting admission goals involved a dual reality of having enough students to meet the fiscal responsibility of the university and having students who make up a diverse cohort that support the program goals. For example, one employee responded, “You want to have that sufficient applicant pool that lets you shape the cohort in ways that you think are going to be reflective of the population they’re going to serve and be able to be effective practitioners” (Participant B). All employees commented on the program’s efforts to create a diverse cohort that brought together individuals of varying identities, orientations, and cultures. Multiple employees commented that, in a cohort model, a focus on diversity required admitted students from varying perspectives, backgrounds, opinions, and social identities, thus creating more robust questions and conversations in the classroom. Most employees described the creation of the cohort as program- and mission-driven, “admitting an incoming class that’s composed of students who are academically prepared and show potential for academic success” (Participant G). Employees noted that the SA program’s inclusive efforts to find diverse students academically prepared for the rigors of a graduate program served not only to expand the value of the profession but to increase the reputation of the program, as well.

**Admission materials alignment.** Every employee noted the program avoided ranking the importance of specific required application materials to allow for a holistic and equitable

consideration of an applicant's personal story, and not only quantitative measures. Multiple employees shared how the letter of intent allowed students to tell their story, to explain gaps in their experience or blemishes on their transcripts, to speak to who they are, their values, and goals. This equitable consideration aligned with study principles and values of access and inclusion because non-cognitive factors such as attitudes, behaviors, and skills that are crucial to students' academic performance were being considered in the admission decision. Additionally, employees commented that the requirement imposed by other institutions of having to submit GRE scores hindered historically marginalized populations and concluded avoiding the requirement increased access to the program.

**Admission decisions misalignment.** Employees reported ambiguity regarding how the SA program assessed and evaluated admission criteria. Seven employees noted that the program faculty exercised admission decisions. When asked for clarification, four employees explained that faculty have the ultimate decision. The other three acknowledged that the ultimate decision of admission was not at the program level, but at the institutional level (i.e., the graduate admissions office), but rarely, if ever, was there disagreement in that office with the faculty's decisions. Additionally, employee participants mentioned rubric that helped inform the admission process, but most employees had not seen it, and the researchers did not receive the rubric upon request. Multiple employees reported that this lack of transparency in the admission decision process prevented them from fully supporting students during the admission process, since it was unclear exactly how students would be evaluated. This lack of transparency misaligned with our value of access and with the second and fourth principles of higher education admissions that were detailed in Chapter 2. This is because employees did not have the ability to give equitable and culturally responsive support and services. Multiple employees shared how this policy created confusion surrounding how

they might answer potential students' questions about how they would be judged, or what specific aspects of admissions were critical to the application.

**Human capital misalignment.** Employees reported an over-reliance by the university on faculty for too many diverse functions. Employees reported that the demands on faculty to balance teaching, curriculum development, student support, and enrollment management of the SA program created strains in communication for both employees and students. Employees reported that the program could alleviate the burden by providing additional faculty members or support staff. This imbalance in human capital created a misalignment with the value of access and with our fourth principle, because assessment of current practices and development of future projects were hindered by a lack of faculty availability.

**Fiscal capital misalignment.** Participants shared that access to higher education requires institutions to help students strategize ways to afford enrollment. In a misalignment with our value of justice and access, lack of available financial supports decreased equitable participation. In working to admit a diverse cohort of individuals, employees reported that students sometimes struggled with affording graduate education. One employee stated that part of being effective and successful in creating a diverse cohort meant “providing some kind of financial assistance that will provide access; not everybody can afford to be here” (Participant G). All employees reported a lack of extant fiscal capital in various forms (including scholarships, paid internships, and more graduate assistantships) as creating access barriers for students. Additionally, employees reported that limited financial capital hampered the ability to not only admit students but also to fulfill the promise of ongoing financial support.

Students' and employees' admission results explored the level alignment and misalignment in the SA program's admission policies and practices with equitable- and justice-oriented principles in connection to our values of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion.

**Admissions areas of alignment.** Overall response showed that many respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the SA program admission policies and practices aligned with diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity. Most students (80%) and employees (60%) surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the program's admission process targeted and accounted for the unique lived experiences of diverse students. The SA program's commitment to admitting a holistic cohort balanced with lived experiences and identities of individuals who contribute to a diverse learning community highlighted the values of equity, justice, and inclusion, allowing for full and equitable participation into the program. Similarly, survey responses showed that 69% of students agreed admission policies and practices mitigated barriers and provided easily accessible admission requirements impacting a student's ability to navigate the admission process. According to the literature, barriers included test scores, financial barriers, and professional experience, the omission of such requirements aligned with the value of equity, diversity, and inclusion. When asked about bias, most students surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed (82%) individual bias influenced the decisions about students admitted or rejected into the SA program. This aligned with our values and suggested that faculty, staff, and leadership engaged learning about biases, assumptions and stereotypes that limit cultural responsiveness that negatively impact marginalized students (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).

**Admissions areas of misalignment.** Most students (63%) and employees (60%) surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that the program's admission policies and practices eliminated advantages to certain groups of students, which is a principle of equity, justice, and inclusion. For

example, some students lacked awareness of the application materials evaluation process for

acceptance. This lack of transparency in the admission evaluation process contradicted our values by

preventing access to critical information needed for success. Similarly, 40% of employees agreed

individual biases influenced admission decisions and evaluation of applications, which contradicted

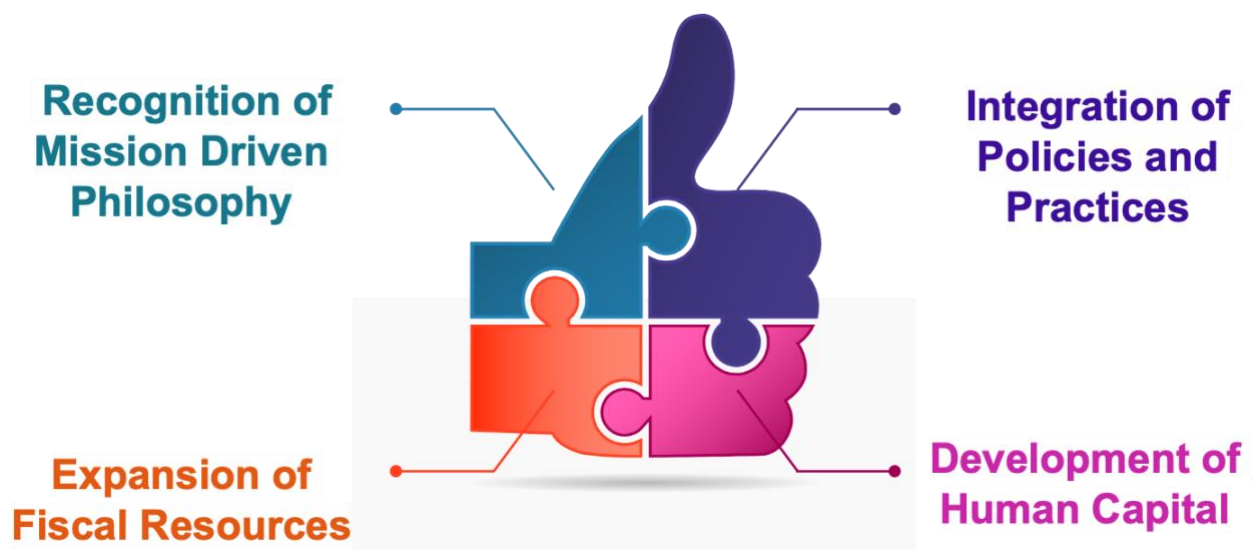
values of equity and justice, which demand professional practice with continuous learning

individual biases, assumptions, and stereotypes that limit cultural responsiveness.



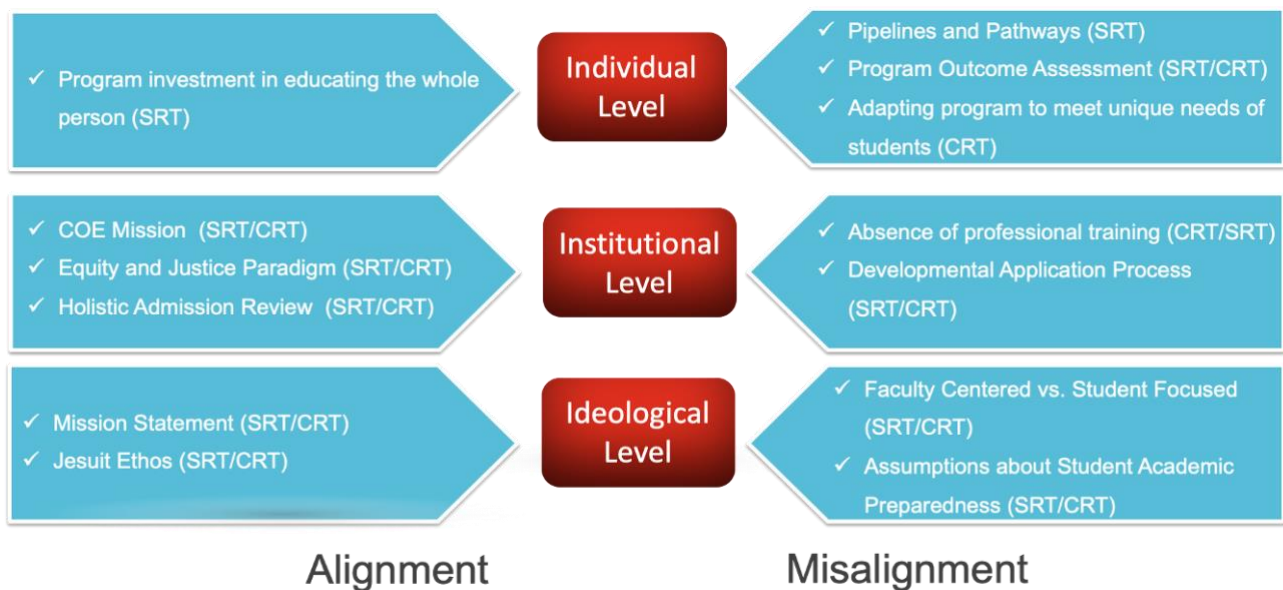
**CHAPTER 5 – IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this chapter, we explore the implications of the study based on results across all data sources for research questions one and two, with highlighted areas of data convergence and divergence. The implications connected results to the literature review, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and principles for equity and justice-oriented policies and practices. We organized the discussion of implications by four themes identified from all findings explored at the individual (SA program), institutional (COE/University), and ideological level outlined by the EDJE Framework. For this analysis, the individual level represented program interactions and internalized oppression of individuals, the institutional level represented the organizational and cultural dimensions, and the ideological level identified values that held and exemplified interpretation of what shapes ‘common sense’ (EDJE, 2019). Figure 14 illustrates the themes, which included (a) recognition of mission-driven philosophy, (b) integration of practices and value, (c) expansion of fiscal resources, and (d) development of human capital.



*Figure 14.* Evidence of recognition of mission-driven philosophy alignment and misalignment at the ideological, institutional, and ideological level in connection with Social Reproduction Theory and Critical Race Theory.

Data provided an abundance of evidence in areas of alignment and misalignment to the mission-driven philosophy at the individual, institutional, and ideological levels of the EDJE framework. Figure 15 illustrates the various levels of alignment and misalignment in connection with Social Reproduction Theory and Critical Race Theory. The program’s investment in the Jesuit value of educating the whole person served as an area of alignment at the individual (SA program) and the institutional (University and College) levels. This value of development of the whole person was realized through intentional development of the physical, spiritual, social, psychological, and professional development (Anonymous. (n.d.c). We found that the SA program and institution used the Jesuit values as the main guide for how leaders were developed as future educators poised to serve as change agents through an increased focus on self-awareness and self-reflection.



*Figure 15.* Evidence of recognition of mission-driven philosophy alignment and misalignment at the ideological, institutional, and ideological level in connection with Social Reproduction Theory and Critical Race Theory.

The institution's mission, vision, and organizational structures reflected deep commitments to values and principles of equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity. At the ideological level, we

found evidence of alignment based on the Jesuit ethos interwoven throughout all levels of the organization. Across all data points, we found evidence of the Jesuit ethos widely evident in the values of the institution, college, and SA program. This aligned with our values of equity and inclusion because the institution's mission and driving principles illustrated the institution's ideological values and served as levers for decision-making about approaches and strategies required to meet the standards of equitable and accessible recruitment and admission policies and practices (EDJE, 2019). Data suggested that recruitment and admission practices represented an ideological belief and incorporation of a set of Jesuit ethos that challenged students to think for themselves and test commonly accepted knowledge within their fields of study.

Furthermore, printed language about the institution described degrees and certificates, curriculum, and program outcomes as culturally responsive and provided a positive call to action for aspiring students who wished to make equity the focus of their life's work. For example, various program recruitment artifacts, and interview and focus group results highlighted the diversity of students, faculty, and staff associated with the SA program. The use of diverse pictures and videos promoted an ideology that fostered a point of connection between faculty and historically marginalized students who saw themselves reflected in the program through social identities. For prospective students from historically marginalized backgrounds, seeing diverse roles and representation may have legitimized their personal lived experiences and narratives, increasing a sense of belonging and identification with the program (Capper, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

A holistic review of applicants' materials provided evidence of the framing of values for equity and inclusion, not as an add-on goal or a short-term initiative, —but as a systemically woven principle into the day-to-day practices (Adams & Zuniga, 2018). Philosophically, we found a holistic admission review process at the institutional level where the program provided applicants with opportunities to produce qualitative measures for review beyond the typical quantitative

measures of GPA and standardized test scores. This was an example of a practice that supported equity and justice-oriented principles. The college mission espoused a philosophy that prepared graduates to lead change that promoted a systemic change in the future of education with an emphasis on social justice, equity, and the advancement of non-dominant groups as program outcomes. Additionally, evidence suggested the college deliberately structured a 'whole person' approach into their curricula and practice reflected deep commitments to values and principles of equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity.

Despite the exceptional equity efforts within the institution, we found the program struggled with systematically enacting and executing inclusive, equitable, and diverse learning environments, resulting in a difference between an attitudinal commitment and an institution-wide behavioral commitment to equity (Tierney, 1999). This difference highlighted evidence of misalignment at the individual, institutional, and ideological levels. Examples included the exclusionary pipeline and pathway to acceptance of the SA program, the absence of current program assessment data, and the limited accommodations offered to students beyond their ability to meet the minimum application requirements. We found not all students had the social capital or privilege that provided them with access to deliver a comprehensive application for graduate school. Institutions and programs that do not provide multiple avenues by which students can demonstrate competence in meeting the minimum requirements contradict stated values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

At the individual level, areas of misalignment included the absence of program assessment data to determine whether program admission and recruitment strategies attracted nor met the unique needs of marginalized students. Additionally, the absence of professional training for faculty and staff misaligned with our principles of equity- and justice-oriented practices at the institutional level. The literature suggests that faculty and staff professional development training highlights the nuanced and complex ways achievement intersects with social identities among historically

marginalized, low-income, and first-generation students (Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014).

Ideologically, the data highlighted widespread program philosophy for faculty to admit a diverse applicant pool. However, faculty assumptions about student academic preparedness and the selective nature of recruitment and admission misaligned with our values of equity and inclusion at the ideological level. Decision-makers held an ideological belief that all admitted students should be prepared for the academic rigor of graduate level studies, especially in the ability to demonstrate graduate-level writing and critical thinking skills. Students who represent marginalized, first-generation, or low-income communities unlikely possess the skills, social capital, or confidence to assemble a portfolio of materials that demonstrates preparedness for graduate studies. This was an example of a decision-making practice that avoided leveraging multiple perspectives that promote the composition of student diversity (Caldwell et al., 2007; Hospon, 2014; Kilburn et al., 2019; Oluo, 2018). According to the Council of Graduate Schools (2002), faculty need reminders that generalizing a few negative experiences contribute to unfair policies and practices. For example, there is a risk for bias when previous experiences with students from a racial or ethnic group, social class, or undergraduate experience color future decisions to admit students with similar characteristics or backgrounds. This was an area of misalignment since the admissions process did not provide evidence of an objective review of applicants' qualifications and interests without judgment.

Additionally, we found evidence of misalignment at the ideological level based on faculty capacity and their desire to recruit and admit a diverse cohort. The data showed that while some faculty members actively engaged in student recruitment and admissions, evidence indicated they lacked specific knowledge nor were they particularly interested in technical aspects of the recruiting process. Faculty felt that their primary role at the university was to serve as subject-matter experts in

their disciplines. Yet, the literature suggested faculty can be the most effective recruiters of graduate students, and when provided the skills and resources to recruit and admit, they are often quite willing and highly successful (Council of Graduate Schools, 2020; Kalsbeek, 2017). Bringing intentionality to the recruitment of a diverse pool of applicants cannot be done without the faculty's active involvement. Our findings suggested that faculty feel over-burdened and pressured to meet the university's enrollment goals in order maintain the vitality of the institution. Overwhelming, faculty wanted to retain admission decision-making authority while the work of recruitment would rest in the hands of the institution with staff who are better poised and trained to recruit prospective students.

### **Theme 2: Integration of Practices and Values**

The second theme evolved from evidence of successful integration of practice and values that upheld institutional policies and a clear connection to the institutional mission and vision (EDJE, 2019; O'Neal, 2004; Schein, 2010). The SA program displayed some areas of alignment at the individual and institutional levels; however, overwhelming evidence highlighted in Figure 16 showed misalignment across the individual, institutional, and ideological levels. Practices and values that provided evidence of alignment included diverse representation of students, faculty in recruitment materials, and intentional student support during Preview Days. These examples reflected our values of diversity and inclusion. Unfortunately, we also found examples of misalignment with values and practices. At the individual level, this surfaced through the primary avenue for student recruitment to be performed at national conferences. Additionally, role ambiguity of faculty and staff, and a lack of diversity in currently enrolled students also showed evidence of misalignment at the individual level. We found misalignment at the institutional level due to lack of clarity about graduate assistantship and internship structure, exclusionary FAFSA ® and scholarship policies, hidden admission practices, and lack of data-informed recruitment practices using CRM.

At the ideological level, evidence of misalignment included exclusion of certain populations during Preview Days, reliance on alumni recruitment efforts, and funding resources that were provided for retention efforts in place of recruitment efforts. These examples suggested misalignment to equity and justice-oriented principles at the ideological level.

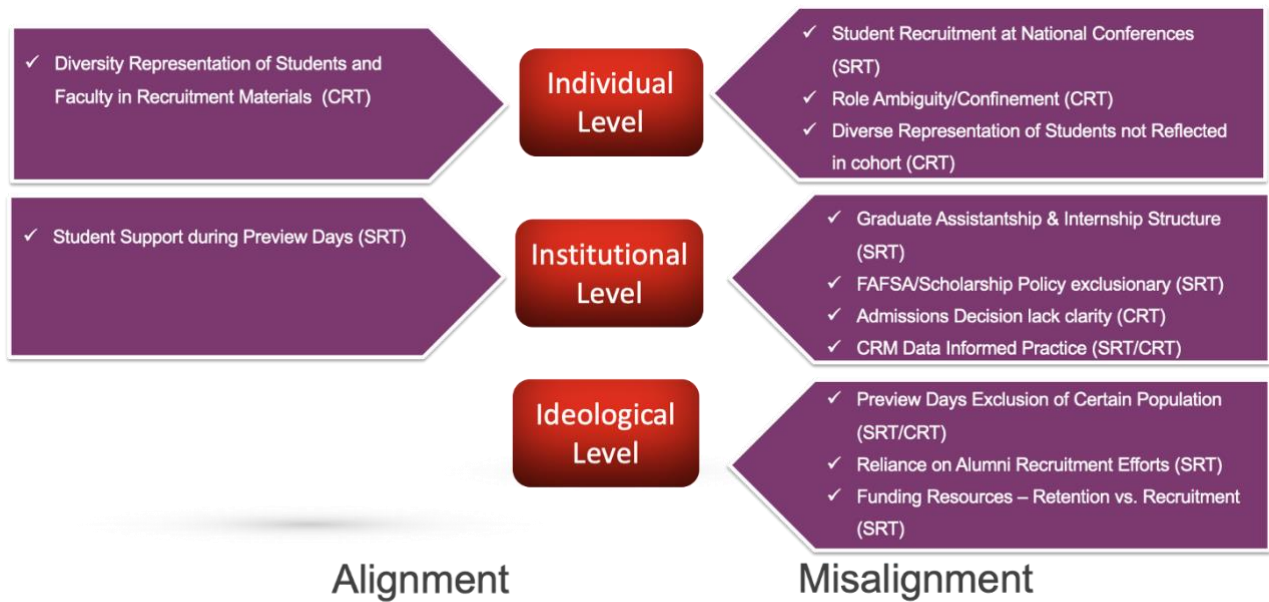


Figure 16. Evidence of integrated policies and values alignment and misalignment at the ideological, institutional, and ideological level in connection with Social Reproduction Theory and Critical Race Theory.

Diverse representation of students and faculty in recruitment materials served as a major area of alignment to diversity and inclusion values. Artifacts, surveys, interviews, and focus groups showed the recruitment messages demonstrated a commitment to diversity of social identities, backgrounds, roles, and opinions through recruitment images, videos, statements, and course offerings. Participants across data collection methods also expressed the application process focused on capturing students’ unique experiences through holistic reviews of personal statements, self-evaluation, and prior experiences. The admission policies demonstrated consideration of political, social, and historical factors that negatively impact historically marginalized individuals’ performances on standardized tests and GPA achievements and privilege dominant students (Justiz

& Kameen, 1988; Kilburn et al., 2019; Rubin, 2011; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Steele, 2010; Soares, 2012; Zhao, 2018). Each of these messages clearly articulated principles of equity and justice and provided an explicit form of social validation that reinforced the university and program mission (Center for Urban Education 2015; Hoffman et al., 2018; Schein, 2010). Some participants mentioned previous educational experiences that did not include intentional demonstration and articulation of the program's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Therefore, the visible alignment of program practices to values of diversity and inclusion led to positive outcomes among prospective students, including increases in program attraction and subsequent decision to apply to the program.

Preview Days recruitment practices served as the second area of alignment that highlighted a commitment to equity, diversity, justice, and inclusion values. Most students surveyed expressed the positive impact of the identity panels and diverse representation of faculty and students. Data suggested the ability to connect with faculty and current students provided a sense of belonging and connection with the campus (Hopson, 2014; Surna, 2018). Furthermore, the 'Salient Identity Panel' emphasized authentic social environments where current students shared their individual experiences and program expectations with prospective students. This was reinforced by the literature where prospective students are drawn to educational programs where faculty and students represent similar social and racial identities (Jaquette & Salazar, 2018; Castleman & Page, 2013; Kilburn et al., 2019, Soares, 2012). Recruitment and admission practices that depict a learning environment focused on the student's academic and career aspirations and is responsive to a student's unique background and experiences demonstrates a commitment to equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion (Goforth et al., 2016; Han, 2014; Ihme et al., 2016). The program also provided Preview Day participants with housing and meal accommodations that allowed for better access for participants as they did not bear the burden of those expenses. Overall, the SA program



designed the event to accommodate unique individual needs and approaches to learning, a foundational principle of equity and justice-oriented practice (Castleman & Page, 2013; Kilburn et al., 2019; Slay et al., 2019; Wang & Shulruf, 2012).

Conversely, evidence also illustrated inequitable and exclusionary practices associated with Preview Days. This evidence misaligned with our values of equity and inclusion. Data indicated Preview Days catered to a group of students who had the ability to travel to the event and had a weekday schedule that would allow for attendance. Place-bound students had to manage work or family commitments or had the perception the event was “not for them” did not attend. Artifacts and student focus groups revealed the SA program only offered two sessions during weekdays, thereby excluding students in technologically remote areas, out-of-state students, international students, and students who were unable to take time off work experience. For example, a student serving in the Peace Corps mentioned feeling like an afterthought since the program failed to communicate alternative plans for students unable to attend explicitly. Equity and justice-oriented principles suggested that programs must provide recruitment activities using multiple audio, visual, and language modalities that reflect changing demographics, trends, and social context (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Surna, 2018; National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005; McDonough & Robertson, 2012; Slay et al., 2019).

We found the sole source of information about Preview Days for prospective students buried in the program website, along with a tremendous amount of information about the program and application process. This suggested that the SA program held assumptions about prospective students’ access and ability to navigate technology. Given the complexity of organization (college and program levels) and information from required documents, deadlines, interview times and locations, and program expectations, we believed this practice misaligned with values of equity, justice, and inclusion (Castleman & Page, 2013; Kilburn et al., 2019, Soares, 2012; Nguyen &

Ward, 2017). Our principles suggested the SA program was too limited with the provision of modified recruitment and admission materials that reflected diverse needs, identities, and unique context of prospective students (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Bowman & Bastedo, 2018; National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Rubin, 2011).

We found evidence of misalignment to our values and principles through exclusionary policies and practices related to recruitment pipelines and pathways that prevented a diverse pool of prospective students. Results highlighted the lack of program-specific recruitment activities designed to address the unique needs of prospective students but instead relied on the institution's Office of Graduate Studies to facilitate recruitment activities. A lack of program- focused recruitment efforts created missed opportunities to understand the evolving needs of prospective students and the development of meaningful relationships between students, faculty, and staff (Finkel, 2019; Kilburn et al., 2019; Slay et al., 2019). Though most student survey responses indicated agreement that the program recruited diverse students, participants believed the recruitment practices were not accessible. This evidence showcased a disconnection between the seamless integration of practices and values. Although this data perplexed the research team—the focus groups, interviews, and artifacts clarified the conundrum by highlighting the program's emphasis on the recruitment practices of targeting prospective students at national and regional professional conferences such NASPA.

The prioritization of recruiting prospective students from a national/regional professional conference excluded low-income, first-generation, marginalized students lacking financial access or the social capital to attend conferences. For many current and prospective students, the high cost of national professional conferences rendered attendance inaccessible, making the recruitment practice a limiting factor and barrier to admissions. In 2020, the NASPA charged members \$515 to register for the conference (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 2020). The

registration cost did not include meals, hotel, plane tickets, or other associated fees (NASPA, 2020).

Although NASPA provided discounted rates to full-time students (\$205), students employed full-time and taking classes could not receive the discount (NASPA, 2020). These conferences appeared to target individuals currently connected to or knowledgeable about the field of student affairs; therefore, prospective students who identified as career changers or those unexposed to the field of Student Affairs were absent the recruitment avenue. This is an example of CRT where the recruitment practice served as a hidden form of systemic and structural oppression and covert racism that rewarded prospective students who possessed elite cultural and social capital and set standards that privilege students with higher socioeconomic status (Tzanakis, 2011; Luedke, 2017; Serna & Woulfe, 2017; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016).

Additionally, data showed the SA program heavily relied on alumni efforts to recruit prospective students during all recruitment practices. For example, both students and employees expressed that recruitment involved informal interactions through alumni word of mouth regarding past experiences, program requirements, and expectations to prospective students. Although alumni connections during the recruitment process showcased the program's influence, reputation, and the continued investment in the success of SA students, we believed this practice misaligned with the values of equity, justice, and inclusion. Reliance on alumni connections during the recruitment process reinforced social reproduction in which generations of SA students inherit cultural capital through personal connections, and the value of the inheritance determined student educational outcomes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016). Furthermore, interview results suggested that prior references, particularly from alumni, were critical considerations for admissions. Although our principles suggested that using non-cognitive variables through leadership experience, community involvement, and references could help programs access potentially diverse applicants, an over-reliance on such efforts could exclude prospective students without connections

(Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Garces, 2014; Rubin, 2011). Since college access is one of the most influential upwards social mobility tools, the program's reliance on alumni recruitment efforts held class stratification, power hierarchies, and social disparities by allowing cultural capital to serve as the basis of merit during recruitment and admissions misalignment to our values (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990; Harvey & Andrewartha, 2013; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Serna, 2015; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016).

Aspects of internships and graduate assistantships also misaligned to equity and justice-oriented principles. Overall, we found information on the availability of graduate assistantships, paid internships, and the credit requirements remained ambiguous to prospective and admitted students. For example, the program did not specify the need to pay tuition for the 300-hour internship requirement and lacked petition options for students with professional experience in the field to reduce the required hours. Students expressed the challenges of misleading information about paid versus unpaid internships and the disconnect to values of equity, inclusion, and justice, particularly among historically marginalized, first-generation graduate students inherently disadvantaged and overburdened in managing life demands outside of their studies.

The SA program provided internship sites and reportedly made accommodations for students who identified and requested an internship experience. However, we found existing policies that prohibited a simultaneous academic plan where students could complete their paid internship credits while earning stipend remuneration for a graduate assistantship. The data showed students were unable to simultaneously enroll and engage in both paid graduate assistantship and internship opportunities due to the limitations on maximum work hours required. For marginalized students, securing a paid internship that would provide a better income to balance outside employment demands, friends, family, and course assignments is a predictor of academic persistence (Akutagawa, 2018).

Furthermore, students expressed those interested in finding paid internships needed to seek out their own opportunities. Students highlighted the significant effort needed to find internship opportunities without institutional support. A review of the literature suggested it takes a significant amount of cultural and social capital to find these opportunities; and for students without connections, self-agency, or understanding of the field, advocating for alternative paid internship sites and successfully completing interviews may serve as a barrier academic achievement (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990; Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Serna, 2015; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016). In order to be a competitive candidate for a career, students must document relevant internship experience on their resume (CareerUp, n.d.). Although employers understand that graduates without practical experience may lack the skills required to excel in a position, social reproduction theory suggests that members who represent the normative, dominant culture are successful in seeking out opportunities for advancement and engaging in networking skill required to advance their social capital in graduate studies and beyond (Bersola et al., 2014; Dumas-Hines et al., 2001). The internship process highlighted examples of institutional practices that privilege and advantage specific groups of students. Our values of equity and inclusion advocated for institutions to provide an intentional pipeline of co-curricular opportunities aimed at advancing the success of non-dominant groups who are not a product of 'the system'. Policies and practices must highlight the nuanced and complex ways academic achievement intersects with social identities such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status (López, 2018; Slay et al., 2019). When employers must choose between two candidates, one with extensive internship experience and the other without, employers almost always chose the candidate with the internship experience because it shows a level of dedication and the candidate possession of 'soft skills' including teamwork and time management (CareerUp, n.d.). This is essential for non-dominant, marginalized groups struggling to get higher

status in society and have the inherent advantage of having a better life and living fully in society (EDJE, 2019).

Scholarship policies misaligned without values of equity and inclusion, whereby there was no seamless integration of policies and practices. Artifacts highlighted program scholarship policies required students to complete the FAFSA ®. The policy benefits eligible students applying for Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program, Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program, and William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). However, artifacts showed FAFSA ® requirements were tied to student financial need, and scholarships excluded undocumented students, international students, and other non-resident aliens. The data suggested national and federal policies heavily regulated governmental funds. However, artifacts suggested COE and SA program scholarship funds are general privately endowed, rendering the FAFSA ® requirement an unnecessary barrier for students with financial need (Harvey & Andrewartha, 2013; Kofoed, 2017). The rising cost of graduate education served as a barrier to educational access among students from historically marginalized and lower socio-economic backgrounds (Harvey & Andrewartha, 2013). The principles of equity and justice-oriented practices suggested that program policies must explore the nuanced and complex intersections of identity, such as race, gender, and socio-economic status, and modify policies to reflect all students' needs (Bial & Rodriguez, 2007; Bowman & Bastedo, 2018; National Association of College Admission Counseling, 2018; Van Overschelde & López, 2018; Rubin, 2011).

The admission data also highlighted a lack of transparency about the program's admissions strategies and goals, and this misaligned with values of equity, justice, and inclusion. Data from artifacts, interviews, and surveys suggested a lack of clearly articulated policies and practices related to recruitment and admission processes, decision-making, and expectations. Although we found

evidence of collaborative efforts during admission decision-making, overwhelming role ambiguity existed among decision-makers, including the Office of Graduate Admissions, the Student Affairs program faculty, staff, and executive leadership at the college level. This ambiguity resulted in the practice of one faculty member holding the ultimate responsibility and authority to admit or deny students into the program. Student participant survey responses suggested prospective students experienced bias where approximately half of the participants agreed that individual biases influenced admission decisions into the program. The lack of inclusion of diverse folks who render an admission decision, as well as the faculty-centered decision authority, introduced bias to the admission process, and created scenarios that may have led to inequitable outcomes, while practices and decision making that included multiple perspectives increased the likelihood of equitable admission process (Caldwell et al., 2007; Hospon, 2014; Kilburn et al., 2019; Oluo, 2018). Principled recruitment policies and practices must include the intentional consideration of diverse populations, thereby providing decision-making opportunities that advance all learners' educational futures (Nguyen & Ward, 2017; Waitoller & Thorius, 2019).

Finally, we found evidence that the program failed to use reliable, data-informed evaluation and tracking demographic information on inquiries, leads, prospects, applicants, and admits through CRM despite clearly articulated responsibilities and roles related to the task within written job duties and responsibilities. The literature suggested the use of formative and summative data to change practices to fit students' unique needs and impact effectiveness served as a critical principle of equity and justice-oriented practice (Center for Urban Education 2015; Wang & Shulruf, 2012).

### **Theme 3: Expansion of Fiscal Resources**

Expansion of fiscal resources was a salient theme that emerged through student, employee, and artifact results. While all participants recognized the multiple means of financial resources, such as scholarships, graduate assistantships, and on-campus employment positions, the majority

believed that fiscal resources were too limited. This included small budget allocations for student financial support; consequently, this hindered prospective student recruitment and admissions. Like with the previous themes, the data suggested alignments and misalignments of policies and practices associated with expansion of fiscal resources, highlighted in Figure 17. The theme of fiscal resources focused on the cost of graduate education, the availability of student financial support, and allocation of fiscal capital.

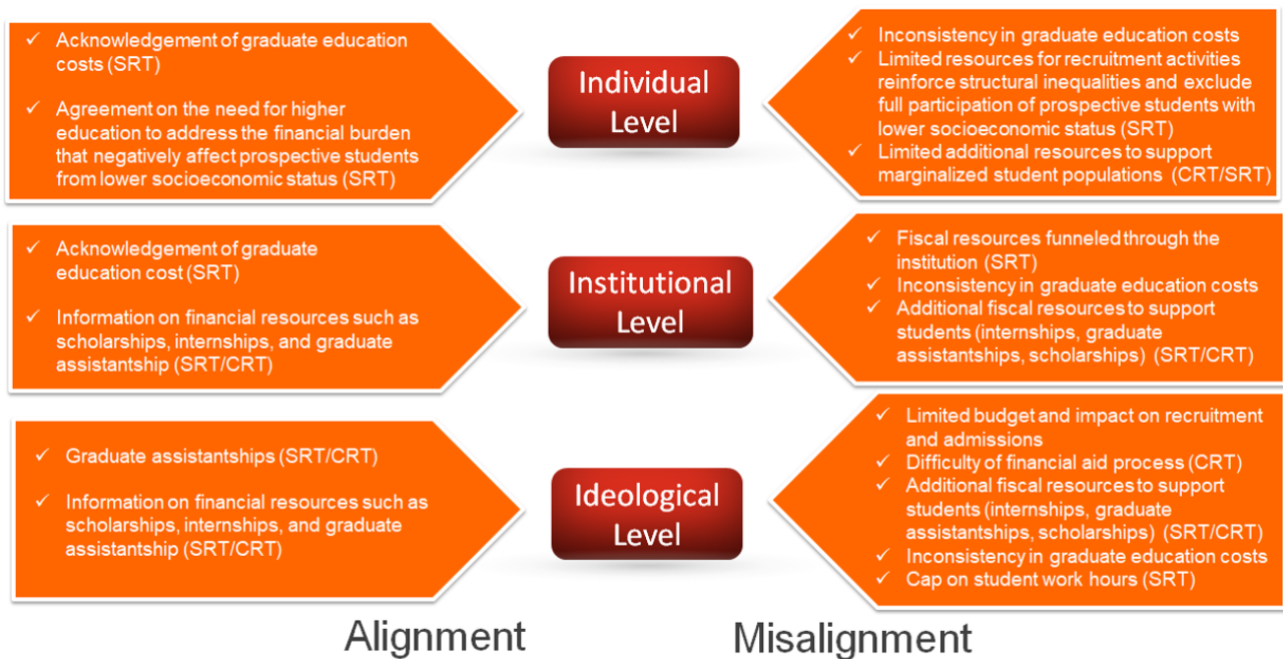


Figure 17. Evidence of expansion of fiscal resources alignment and misalignment at the ideological, institutional, and ideological level in connection with Social Reproduction Theory and Critical Race Theory.

All participants acknowledged the high costs of graduate education and agreed there was a need for higher education institutions to address the financial burdens that negatively affect access to post-secondary education, especially for prospective students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Artifacts (e.g., Enrollment Handbook, program website) explicitly stated the financial challenges of attending graduate school and provided information on financial resources such as scholarships, internships, and graduate assistantship. Similarly, most employees specifically recognized the high costs of attending a graduate program at a private institution. Consensus on this



topic and alignment with our principles suggested that at the individual and institutional level, equity and justice were guiding paradigms for clearly articulated language, and compelling and consistent messaging communicating the urgency of reducing disparities through equitable policies and practices.

Contrastingly, a closer look at the artifacts showed a lack of clarity regarding the costs of attendance (like recreation fees, college assessment fees, and technology fees). A comparison across the program, college, or university websites and recruitment presentation slides showed different costs of attendance for the SA program. While there was alignment through the acknowledgment of graduate education costs and the need to address students' financial burdens, the information available did not clearly unpack and communicate the financial costs connected to this program. Assumptions about students' understanding of higher education extra fees and confusing language on the recruitment material suggested a misalignment with our principles at all levels, individual, institutional, and ideological.

Results about resources connected to students' financial supports, including scholarships, tuition affordability, graduate assistantships, and internships also reflected this theme. Results from all data sources supported a call for the expansion of student financial support and highlighted the connection of financial challenges of attending graduate school and students' enrollment and persistence toward degree completion. An overall look at the data suggested a misalignment with equity- and justice-oriented principles. For example, when asked about practices that were supportive of meeting the needs of marginalized students, students explained that financial aid information, at Preview Days, was not explicit enough in outlining the availability of scholarships. Most students also supported this finding during the surveys by disagreeing with the availability of the program's additional financial resources and accommodations to support marginalized communities through the recruitment process.

Students and employees acknowledged increased financial supports would offset hardships as many graduate students had full-time jobs, graduate assistantships, participated in internships, and attended classes. Many factors contributed to the sense that increased financial resources were needed to successfully complete the program. Many students believed that required internships would provide an additional financial resource but later learned that most internships were unpaid. Additionally, unexpected federal requirements governed the maximum number of hours a student could work, also limiting their chances of extra income. Employees and students identified graduate assistantships as another example of limited financial resources. During the focus groups, a student explained that the program lacked recognition of the hardship they faced, exemplified by the fact that graduate assistantship payment did not cover the full price of tuition. Most respondents reported the appeal for graduate assistantships to provide a monetary stipend accompanied with a meaningful work experience. However, they later found the stipend insufficient to cover the costs associated with tuition and fees, thereby leaving the student with the burden to cover the remaining educational expenses. Students expressed a sense of working “for free” while paying for the credit hours of the internship, lack of transparency of students’ financial obligations, and expectations of the program, suggesting misalignments with justice-oriented principles. Current financial resources combined with program policies that affect access to financial supports misaligned with justice-oriented principles and did not account for the nuanced and complex ways academic achievement intersected with social identities such as socio-economic status.

#### **Theme 4: Development of Human Capital**

The economic value of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals within an organization are foundational to the notion of human capital (Coff, 2002; Ketchen et al., 2011). Included in the human capital skill set are the understood or implied knowledge and abilities that are not factually based (Polanyi, 1966). The EDJE framework suggests the need for joint commitments

between COE deans, faculty, and staff to build “the capacity of COEs to advance justice and education in education” (EDJE, 2019). We found the capacity to advance justice and education in human capital recruitment and admissions practices that aligned and misaligned to equity and justice-oriented principles. In this study, human capital emerged as a significant theme in both the areas of recruitment and admissions, with four distinct challenges: (a) the need for policy, (b) role confinement, (c) understaffing, and (d) communication. Figure 18 highlights the areas where policies and practices aligned and misaligned at the different levels as associated with development of human capital.

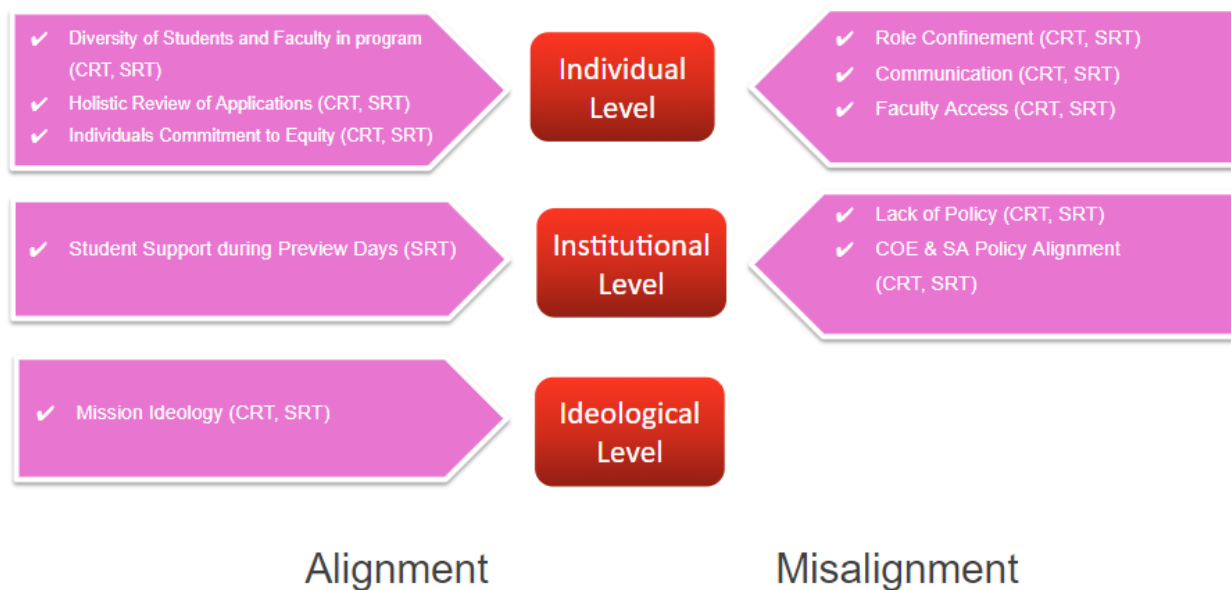


Figure 18. Evidence of development of human capital alignment and misalignment at the ideological, institutional, and ideological level in connection with Social Reproduction Theory and Critical Race Theory.

The SA program had many strengths under the theme of human capital; notably, the program accomplished a great deal in recruitment and admissions despite the size of staff and the number of faculty currently employed. Additionally, the SA program employed a group of professionals who worked hard to maintain the historical legacy of the program and to support continuous high standards. Another strength was the diversity of the staff both in culture, identity, and background

experiences. This diverse group of professionals placed a high value on diversity and supporting equitable access for all. Participants spoke passionately of diversity when answering questions, often sharing their own experience and the impact it had on their current practice of engaging with future and current students. Lastly, staff and faculty held high regard for each other as well.

The EDJE framework highlighted the importance of developing a shared understanding and raising collective awareness in educational efforts. This notion applied to supporting the knowledge, skills, and abilities of SA program employees in more robust ways. At the individual level, the program focused efforts on the holistic review of recruitment and admissions of prospective students. While promising, many participants felt the program lacked clearly established policies for designating how staff should support recruitment efforts or policies designating clearly individuals' responsibilities for various aspects of decision making or planning in both recruitment and admissions activities. At the individual and institutional level, participants also shared their sense of disconnects between program practices and university policy.

The lack of clear, written policies contributed to a sense of role confinement among participants. They were unclear as to their own and co-worker responsibilities – often posing the question - “Who does what?” As such, participants felt disconnected from budgetary initiatives and expenditures, insecurity about conveying proper messaging about the program to recruit viable potential candidates, and they indicated lacking clarity on program and university level graduate admissions policies. There was a general feeling that employees could take on more responsibilities if clear policies were in place to create a more collaborative and seamless approach to achieve mission-driven recruitment and admissions.

Most participants commented on the effect fiscal capital had on human capital and how decreased funds impacted individuals and the program in multiple ways. For example, limited fiscal capital restrained staffing which limited participation in school sponsored information sessions and

thus hindered recruitment. Participants felt most responsibility and decision making landed on the faculty's shoulders to the exclusion of other employees who had experience and knowledge that could have enhanced decision making. Employees reported the strain lack of human capital put on employee workload, staying connected with current practices, and limiting the employee's ability to take on new projects or update current work as there was not enough time. Another respondent explained that there were not enough resources such as time and the availability of funding to adequately integrate faculty in the recruitment and admission process. This trickled down to students who felt pressure and lack of choice in helping with recruitment, an effort some felt belonged to the program employees and not them. Other students reported limited access to faculty as they held too many responsibilities.

The data suggested that role confinement and understaffing exacerbated employee communication, with many individuals feeling unclear in employee roles and expectations and the weight of being understaffed. As a result, communication suffered. Individuals reported the workload of some employees at the individual level inhibited their ability to connect with staff properly. Struggling communication inhibited the ability to communicate a vision or big picture ideas at the program and institutional level. Additionally, students reported that communication impacted the timeliness of responses and that they did not always know with whom to communicate on various issues.

### **Recommendations**

In this section, we highlighted recommendations for future practice. We drew connections that emerged from research data and through the lenses of our guiding conceptual and theoretical frameworks, principles of equity and justice-oriented recruitment and admissions practices, and values for equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. We provided four recommendations for recruitment and six recommendations for admissions. With each recommendation, we suggested a

respective series of steps or options that the organization can implement to strengthen the SA program's recruitment and admissions policies and practices.

### **Recruitment Recommendations**

We recommended the university, college, and SA program adopt the following strategies to strengthen the recruitment policies and practices and their alignment with our principles and values for equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. A series of recommendations follow that provide a clear roadmap for the SA program's goals of engaging in equity-and-justice oriented recruitment and admission policies and practices. These include (a) implementing a graduate enrollment management plan, (b) establishing clear enrollment goals, (c) varying recruitment/outreach strategies and expanding recruitment activities, (d) employing data-informed recruitment efforts, and (e) updating recruitment imagery on printed and digital materials.

**Recruitment recommendation one.** Create and implement a graduate enrollment management (GEM) plan. Colleges and universities who must emphasize the value of graduate education amidst the reality of rising tuition costs and scarcity of financial resources available to attract prospective graduate students require a GEM (Connor, LaFave, & Balayan, n.d.). A GEM differentiates a graduate program among its competitors and maintains programmatic and institutional viability. A GEM is for enrollment managers who leverage their small staff teams with multiple role responsibilities. Therefore, we recommend staff and program faculty cross-train in areas of career counseling, academic advising, financial aid, and degree audits maintain and execute the GEM while responding to data on current, prospective, and developing markets (Connor, LaFave, & Balayan, n.d., Hanover, 2017; Kalsbeek, 2017).

A GEM looks at the larger ideological framework of an institution (vision, mission, values), and is an extension of the university's investment in graduate studies. A GEM plan relies on CRM data from inquiries, leads, and prospective students and analyzes data that flows through the

enrollment funnel. The intent is to identify the 'right size' of admitted students determined by the ratio of students to faculty, the number of assistantships available, desired class size, and average time to degree completion (Cason & Artiles, 2017). This approach to rightsizing must incorporate a comprehensive plan to promote the recruitment of culturally diverse faculty and students responsive to a university-wide commitment to promote equity for each student from entry/admissions to graduation (Dumas-Hines et al., 2001). We believe this will help the program achieve outcomes of equity and justice that serve as the guiding paradigm that drives the institution's ideological philosophy and structural operations and permeate all areas of the institution's core operations (Adams & Zúñiga, 2018; Center for Urban Education 2015; Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; EDJE, 2019; López, 2003; Stein, 2019).

A GEM must respond to the economic and market trends driving the skills and needs of students and incorporate those considerations into student recruitment, marketing, tuition and financial aid, graduate program offerings, and student support services (Council of Graduate Schools (2020).; EDJE, 2019; Hanover, 2017; Kalsbeek, 2017; Smith, 2001). Response to consumer behaviors with web-based searches, website navigation, and recruiting events (conferences, information sessions, graduation fairs) strengthens marketing collateral. Assessment of consumer satisfaction exemplifies the various strategies that move prospective students to applicants.

A GEM must be inclusive of centralized data systems (CRM), and advance targeted marketing efforts such as search engine optimization, web development, print production, and brand development of the SA program that differentiates from the competition (Hanover, 2017; Kalsbeek (2017). A GEM is responsive to market research that drives projections and budget forecasts for enrollment and assists faculty in creating and beginning new programs (Council of Graduate Schools, 2020; Kalsbeek, 2017).

A cadre of units should be involved to contribute to the GEM plan to implement a graduate enrollment management plan that achieves outcomes in diversity and inclusion. This includes staff who represent marketing, recruitment, admissions, financial aid, student affairs, academic affairs, and retention specialists (Hanover, 2017). A comprehensive GEM plan requires planning that sets clear enrollment goals, identifies optimal academic offerings, and provides wrap-around student support services, such as tutoring, accommodations for disabilities, and non-academic support required to attract and retain a diverse student cohort (Hanover, 2017; Kalsbeek, 2017).

Enrollment managers who prioritize diversity and inclusion for graduate student recruitment often overlook high-achieving, low-income students from less-resourced schools despite their ability to perform well in graduate studies (Giancola, & Kahlenber, 2016). The theory of social reproduction in education suggests institutions are catalysts for perpetuating social inequity (Bourdieu, & Passeron, 1990). Enrollment managers must analyze indiscrete preferences for wealthy applicants to expand recruitment methods of high-achieving or prepared graduate-level students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds and increase the availability of scholarships and financial aid (The Association for Graduate Enrollment Management [AGEM], 2009; Giancola, & Kahlenber, 2016).

According to Hanover Research (2017), graduate deans and enrollment managers should prioritize the admission of a diverse graduate student body as part of their GEM plan. An examination of the economic, social, and cultural conditions that inhibit marginalized students from applying to graduate studies suggest low-income students are less likely to apply to selective schools that produce high achieving graduates sought by employers; and those who do apply, receive inadequate consideration in the admissions and financial aid process (Dumas-Hines et al., 2001; Giancola, & Kahlenber, 2016). Execution of this plan is incumbent on the delivery of in-demand graduate programs, faculty and staff who provide quality student-focused services, the generation of



tuition revenue, and the collection of key data to track progress. The generation of tuition is critical to the sustainability of the plan, as well as the institution. An effective enrollment management plan “attempts to satisfy both the institution’s needs for stable tuition and fee revenues and the student’s desire to obtain a quality education” (Smith, 2001, p. 368).

Finally, implementing a GEM strategy for the SA program must plan and evaluate multi-departmental collaboration and communication by identifying staff capacity and looking for opportunities to improve organizational efficiency and assessing student and program satisfaction (Hanover, 2017). The organizational alignments and arrangements of various departments matter when bringing together otherwise siloed functions into a single organizational framework. This is more than just moving duties and positions within an organizational chart. It involves an intentional strategy to ensure alignment between organizational activities and critical functions (Kalsbeek, 2017).

**Recruitment recommendation two.** Increase collaboration between the institutional (university and college) and program levels to develop clear policies for program-level support and an opportunity for better understanding across all levels with regards to roles, responsibilities, decision-making expectations, jurisdiction, and data management. Policy development is essential to define and codify the structures, systems, decision-making, roles and relationships, and accountability metrics necessary to meet recruitment goals. We found decentralized, unclear, and codified policies and practices at the graduate level. Creating graduate recruitment policies that enhance collaboration across the institutional and individual levels serves as a means for addressing a variety of complex issues facing this program. Policy creation de-politicizes practices by enhancing transparency, which can be significant in advancing institutional and program-level goals as the EDJE framework suggests, and it connects education levels across the academy. This

increased connectivity aids in trust, clarification of processes, and provides consistent accountability to each education level (university, college, or program).

**Recruitment recommendation three.** The SA program should expand their recruitment strategies and activities while considering how varying types of recruitment impact different groups of students. Convergent data highlighted the commitment of faculty, leaders, and staff to equity and justice for the advancement of student access into graduate education. However, limited resources, such as fiscal and human capital, negatively impacted the program's ability to recruit from a broader base. We recommend the program situate equity- and justice-oriented recruitment practices within different communities, leverage the diversity of faculty, and highlight the authentic institutional and organizational social environments. Through the lens of CRT, we interrogated the use of one main recruitment activity, attendance to national professional conferences, and concluded that it greatly limited opportunities of underrepresented groups or lower socioeconomic students to access the program. Therefore, the program needs to critically examine the experiences and responses that promote oppressive systems (i.e., classism) within the program and how social identities predispose individuals to prescribed and unequal systems (Harro, 2018; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).

Alternative recruitment activities that align with the program's commitment to equity and justice could include participation in local fair or recruitment events, targeting of historically black institutions or Hispanic serving institutions, participation in university-wide recruitment activities (i.e., Information sessions), or hosting recruitment activities like Preview Days for prospective, instead of admitted students. The latter could benefit technologically remote students interested in the program and lack the capital to attend conferences or access online activities. Incorporating an accessible recruitment activity plan beyond the National Association(s) of Student Affairs conferences would increase access for those unable to attend for various reasons.

Another recommendation for considering recruitment activities is the strategic incorporation of faculty. The results showed limited access to faculty as a result of their myriad roles within the college and the program while also expected to actively participate in recruitment activities. However, the program must continue to incorporate program-level in-person and virtual events recruitment strategy as an attempt to highlight the unique characteristics of the program and the connection between faculty and graduate students. Moreover, the increased interactions with faculty will provide potential students additional access and opportunity to ask questions and enhance future faculty/student relationships. These interactions will also expedite familiarity with the program's academic environment and build a sense of community. Other forms of recruitment that could provide additional access to a wider range of students include increasing options and alternatives for out of state, international, and full-time working students. Technology oriented recruitment could serve this population better through video conferencing, live chat, or question-and-answer sessions.

**Recruitment recommendation four.** Increase and maximize the use of CRM options and data to leverage the return on investment for recruitment activities. Data-informed recruitment efforts must include the integration of accurate, secure, and available data through a customer relationships management (CRM) system used to manage the university's interaction with leads, prospective, admitted, applied, and eventually enrolled students (Smith, 2001). Maximum utilization of a CRM software is essential to maintain and take advantage of opportunities of as many touchpoints as possible and track prospects throughout their recruitment and admission pipeline. In its purest form, it provides demographic data in response to an institution's goals to recruit and admit a diverse student cohort. The program can use the CRM to provide students' profile, including the number of graduate students broken out by gender, ethnicity, and country of origin. Used fully, the CRM provides multiple opportunities to individually communicate with and connect with

prospective students, personalizing their experiences with the institution and program, enhancing their experiences and hopefully increasing the likelihood of application and admission.

Additionally, CRM software offers a centralized data system for documenting imaging, records and registration, admission status, and financial aid processing. Tracking data related to these processes provides a story of the starts and stops prospective students experience throughout their enrollment cycle. An electronic prospective student request form that feeds into CRM can assist the program in streamlining electronic communication messages and ensure prospective students can connect with faculty mentors and current graduate students to speak about research and the graduate student experience (Cason & Artiles, 2017; Kalsbeek, 2017).

Most institutions collect more data on undergraduate students than graduate students during the application and enrollment process, the survey undergraduates more often creating increased knowledge about what works best in achieving undergraduate enrollment goals through marketing, recruitment, admission, and financial aid strategies (Kalsbeek, 2017). Full utilization of CRM software provides a series of benefits that allow graduate student prospects tracking throughout the marketing cycle. According to Hilts (2018), the benefits of a CRM allow staff and faculty to send tailored communications as opposed to general “email blasts” that do not reach students during their decision-making process. The software performs an analysis to identify which marketing strategies work and which ones do not, and some software can provide information on the last person in contact with the student to ensure continuing of community and relationship development between the institution and the prospective student (Hilts, 2018).

Maximizing the full capability of CRM software aligned with our values of equity and inclusion because it provides feedback on how to reach specific populations of students while maintaining individualized communications that have greater appeal to marginalized students (Dumas-Hines et al., 2001). Under-represented students realize significant barriers in navigating

higher education and its set of oppressive policies and practices that privilege dominant groups. In order to better understand how those policies and practices differently affect marginalized students, CRM data provides the metrics that can inform the evolution of policies and practices inclusive and responsive to the unique needs of marginalized applicants.

Still, even when fully utilized, this software does have limitations. Programs expect enrollment managers to employ a variety of strategies to complement CRM data—especially when increasing the accessibility of underrepresented students in their pursuit of graduate studies. Where funding is a critical component of a student’s decision to attend graduate school, programs can utilize a scholarship management tool to promote scholarship and financial aid opportunities for applicants in a real-time basis (Cason & Artiles, 2017; Hilt, 2018).

Enrollment managers can respond to CRM data and decide when to promote, manage, and track signups for campus tours—both on campus and virtual tours since many students are not completely sold on an institution until they ‘see’ the intuition (Cason & Artiles, 2017; Hanover, 2017; Hilt, 2018). The program should facilitate tours in a variety of languages, providing a variety of options for prospective students in different time-zones. Managers must align the marketing information for recruiting events such as fairs, alumni open houses, and preview days to draw in prospective students who become applicants and admitted students. Institutions must provide an application management system that offers a user-friendly and easily accessible online application accessible to those with limited knowledge and confidence with navigating technology. Managers and faculty program directors must follow-up with relevant and timely communications that include prompt admission decisions (Cason & Artiles, 2017; Hilt, 2018). Social reproduction theory suggests education reproduces the new members to statuses, roles, jobs, positions, and places (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Without gathering and analyzing the metrics that suggest reproduction of admitted graduate students, the program runs the risk of perpetuating cycle of

exclusion. When maximized, a CRM tool can present their institutions accurately in all areas of communication that moves leads to the status of admitted student. This is motivated by faculty and program directors who identify as underrepresented professionals, and allies who provide full access that respects the work and dignity of all who wish to pursue graduate studies (Kurt, 2015). The program can address student' anxiety through personal attention that recognizes the unique history faced by marginalized populations. Prospective students who receive personalized communication can ask the difficult questions that address their insecurities about institutional costs, application deadlines, decision and notification dates, deposit/refund policies, and program requirements.

**Recruitment recommendation five.** We recommend the program update printed and digital recruitment imagery and materials to reflect current SA program students and an alignment with the program goals for diverse cohorts. As suggested by CRT, hidden forms of oppression embedded into the educational system exist in covert and overt ways, and we believe that current and up to date recruitment material could highlight an intentional commitment to diverse representation of race, gender, roles, and opinions. Diversity of SA students' cohorts, their current and future roles in student affairs, as well as the institutional social environment should be portrayed in the recruitment material. Recruitment imagery and materials that intentionally highlight the intersectionality of social identities of students, faculty, and the institutional social environment could signal the SA program commitment to equity and justice and the inclusion of underrepresented groups in graduate education.

The SA program represents the welcoming, inclusive, and diverse environment of the program and institution by highlighting the diverse ethnic and cultural identities of students through recruitment materials. Additionally, this instantly demonstrates important messaging, institutional reputation, and ideology in visuals on printed and digital materials. This visual representation is an opportunity for the program and institution to purposefully demonstrate to prospective students the

current diversity of the program and reinforce a sense of alignment from students' lived experiences and the program's mission.

### **Admissions Recommendations**

We recommended the SA program adopt the five strategies to strengthen the admission policies and practices and their alignment with our principles and values for equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. Namely, we recommending: (a) making clear the true cost of college attendance before and after the designations of financial assistance; (b) clarifying and strengthening graduate assistantship and internship structure; (c) conducting a regular program assessment to strengthen equity and justice-oriented goals; (d) developing intentional collaborative practices across university departments; and, (d) implementing a developmental process to support applicants through the graduate admission process.

**Admission recommendation one.** We recommended the SA program clearly articulate the true cost of college attendance before and after the designations of financial assistance as education cost serves as a critical access point to graduate education. This includes clearly communicating the cumulative required tuition, fees, and other associated expenses needed for the entire program in an easily accessible manner. Clearly conveying the cost of education is especially important for historically marginalized students and individuals from lower socioeconomic status as financial barriers, actual or perceived, serve as a deterrent to accessing higher education (Harvey & Andrewartha, 2013). We believe the SA program must clearly articulate the requirements for all programs to avoid hidden expectations while providing support for students without the social and cultural capital to seek out the opportunities. Therefore, the program needs to engage in intentional efforts to acknowledge the cost of graduate education and align the costs and fiscal resources with equity and justice-oriented values. The program can discuss financial aid and discounted pricing whenever mentioning 'cost of attendance' by providing (a) easy-to-access and clearly stated

information about financial aid on all college, program, and graduate admissions' websites; (b) clearly articulating the availability of fee waivers and credit for prior learning; and, (c) using accurate and up-to-date information to estimate off-campus, non-academic costs.

We also recommend strengthening the clarity of information on available avenues for tuition assistance avenues. We found the SA program policies and practices, such as requirements to demonstrate need excluded certain populations of prospective students, particularly non-U.S. citizens, from seeking full and equitable access to education. We recommend the program re-evaluate the policies needed to prove financial need for scholarship awards to avoid compounding barriers to education (Harvey & Andrewartha, 2013). The SA program can engage in equitable oriented practice by offering alternative methods outside of the FAFSA application. The SA program can consider expanding need-based scholarships to include merit-based scholarships that ensure the recruitment of diverse student groups. The SA program can also invest in developing a database of federal and private grants with different eligibility requirements that make provisions for various student needs.

Furthermore, the SA program can also provide increased opportunities for financial funding sources specifically for graduate assistantships, paid internships, and loans to increase access to all populations. As graduate students increasingly rely on student loans to afford graduate education, the program can include a more robust financial literacy component of recruitment addressing student loans and graduate repayment requirements to help mitigate student loan debt (Dubeau & Mehta-Neugebauer, 2020; Mendoza, Villarreal, & Gunderson, 2014). Since not every student qualifies for student loans, we recommend the program clearly articulates opportunities for paid internships and graduate assistantships. We discuss graduate assistantships and internships further in the next section.



**Admissions recommendation two.** Graduate assistantships and internships serve as creative and critical methods of funding graduate education (Flora, 2007; Lunau, 2012). Our results indicated that students were initially unclear about the professional and personal growth opportunities associated with their internship and graduate assistantship experience. We believe the SA program needs to re-evaluate the structure of paid vs. unpaid internships and graduate assistantship process to avoid exploitative practices. The SA program can consider developing policies that serve as guidelines promoting fair and equitable work opportunities. This includes providing (a) clearly listed the number of paid vs. unpaid internships and graduate assistantships available during recruitment and admission; (b) transparent processes related to employment such interview process and timelines, pay rates and pay schedule, and employment benefits; (c) clarified roles, job duties, and responsibilities; (d) specific opportunities and avenues for articulating grievance and conflict management.

We recommend the SA program improve information accuracy distinguishing the requirements for paid Graduate assistantships and paid vs. unpaid internship requirements. Our data highlighted an over-reliance on unpaid student labor related to graduate assistantships and internships. Prospective students must be provided with accurate information about financial requirements early in the admission cycle since the financial considerations often serve as the ‘tipping point’ for students who decide to apply to graduate programs (AGEM, 2009). The SA program can also host alternative means of disseminating internship and graduate assistantship opportunities. For example, one university hosted video competition to celebrate the unique internships students participated in and released it on July 26, 2018, for National Intern Day (Maio, n.d.). This strategy served as a vehicle for ‘myth busting’ negative perceptions of students who perceive this requirement as ‘free labor.’ The SA program can achieve this recommendation through an easy-to-navigate website to create visibility and understanding. The program can also align all

areas of communication, including written materials, social media, website content, presentation, and discussions with prospective students to address inconsistency accuracy of information on the graduate assistantship and the required internship credits (AGEM, 2009).

Since a variety of respondents commented on the availability of assistantships as a primary appeal for applying to the SA program, leveraging these assistantships and internships would serve as a competitive advantage for the SA program as prospective students prioritize their application. Participants and the literature advise that enrollment managers keep abreast of their competition so that decisions on admitted students can be delivered either before or among other institution's admission timelines. Lastly, the university's practice of providing notification of acceptance to the SA program, with the dual offer of an earned assistantship, is an appeal for admitted students over other institutions who provide assistantships independent of an applicant earning admission at the institution.

**Admission recommendation three.** We recommend the SA program identify an internal committee of current and prospective students, alumni, faculty, and staff responsible for the annual or semi-annual review of admission policies and practices. This committee would monitor progress on equity outcomes that unintentionally prevent students from full access into the program and, ultimately, higher education at the individual, institutional, and ideological level (Curry-Stevens et al., 2014; EDJE, 2019). This review can occur by conducting program assessments with stakeholders to identify how prospective students, admits, current students, and alumni experience the program's admission policies and practices. We recommend the program use the Education Deans for Justice and Equity [EDJE] framework (2019) to collectively and collaboratively assess policies and practices and determine implementation and action plans.

The EDJE framework provides potential questions related to priority work areas to prompt critical conversation about equity and justice-oriented practice. The priority areas include (a)

governance and finance, (b) teaching and learning, (c) faculty and staff, and (d) partnership and

public impact. Using the EDJE framework priority areas, the committee can ask questions such as, “

What are typical definitions of and assumptions about faculty “fit,” being “qualified,” or exhibiting

“success” or “excellence,” and how might these reinforce white privilege or demand

assimilation? Who has the social capital to raise funding more easily (because of connection or

cultural upbringing)? How historically have universities and education programs disproportionately

served the interests of the elite? Does our [admission and recruitment] plan include measurable

outcomes, clear activities and timelines, adequate supports and resources, appropriate assessments

and opportunities to revise in the interim, and so on (see, for example, the elements of the Action

Plan in the section below this chart)? What does it mean for decision-making processes to be

“democratic” and for leading to be a “collective” responsibility, especially in very hierarchical

environments? What forms of passive inertia or active resistance can we anticipate when leading

anti-oppressively, and what are examples inside and outside of our COE of resistances to democratic

governance and to collective leadership? To what extent are our decisions about allocations guided

by an action plan to advance diversity, equity, and justice, including plans that support

“reparations”? Through any or all the stages of the student experience, what are the expenses placed

on students that make our COE’s program financially inaccessible, particularly for students of

limited income and resources?” (EDJE, 2019, pp. 2 – 22).

Literature suggests that organizations must continually explore ways to reflect and observe

organizational practices to develop effective methods of engaging with the community and creating

innovative strategies (Bird & Stevens, 2018; Salicru et al., 2016). Program assessments allow the

SA program to collectively clarify problems and formulate new ways of envisioning organization

strategies and solutions (Stringer, 2014). Engaging in both internal review through program

assessment efforts will enable institutional leaders to identify and maintain leadership competencies

and characteristics required to address issues and challenges within the organization and community.

**Admission recommendation four.** We recommend intentional collaboration and coordination with partner offices, like the student development office, marketing, and graduate admissions. Results suggested that collaborations between the SA program and student development offices proved beneficial in providing timely information and deadlines about graduate assistantship opportunities for prospective students. We encourage the continuation of this practice and suggest the expansion and office cross-collaboration that provide a more seemingly and clear admission process. Partnership and collaboration with other campus units or offices should include an increased review of student applications, as the institution moved to a rolling admission, timely and proactive communication with prospective graduate student applicants, and identification of financial resources for students.

Intentional communication with prospective students throughout the admission process could provide an additional competitive advantage with other institutions' admission deadlines. Prospective students could benefit from a cross-collaborative admission process by getting faster responses to questions related to the complex admission process. Myriad university offices impact the graduate student admissions process; therefore, a shared understanding of graduate student needs could provide a better experience for potential students. For example, cross-collaboration should consider the prospective students need to complete the FAFSA, select courses, class enrollment, potential resources like financial aid opportunities, graduate assistantships, preparing for interviews, among others. Moreover, there is a need for a concerted effort from the program, college, and institution to harmonize the funnel work created by marketing and recruitment efforts that lead to students' admission. This could potentially minimize discrepancies in the presentation of program information, like conflicting costs listed, as shown by our results, while taking advantage of the

limited resources available. The intentional collaboration and synergy that comes from partnering with the other campus units will solidify a shared understanding of a cross-collaborative commitment for the admission process.

**Admission recommendation five.** Finally, we recommend implementing a developmental approach and process for denied applicants to reapply to the SA program. This recommendation is particularly critical for students who represent marginalized communities, first-generation or low-income background, since less likely to bring the skills, social capital, or confidence to assemble a portfolio of materials that demonstrates their preparedness for graduate studies (Caldwell et al., 2007; Hospon, 2014; Kilburn et al., 2019; Oluo, 2018). The work of the SA program is a significant commitment to the development of future professionals from diverse backgrounds. As a steward of the profession, extending support and expertise to develop applicant abilities for acceptance demonstrates the essence and foundation of student affairs and student development programs. We do not suggest admitting individuals unprepared for the academic rigor of graduate education or sacrificing admissions standards. Instead, we recommend the SA program implement a developmental process that acknowledges various individual starting places and experiences and the benefit of understanding areas of improvement for future consideration into the SA program after receiving admission rejection. The developmental process would include a conversation with a SA program employee to review the reason for denial and suggestions regarding improvement steps for future application. Evaluating applicants through a developmental process aligns with the institutional and program mission and ideology, as well as our values and principles of equity and inclusion.

A developmental process begins by clearly articulating admission standards and procedures to the applicant. We found that prospective applicants lacked awareness and understanding of the admission evaluation process and rubric. It is unjust to evaluate and assess potential applicants

according to a hidden rubric hidden and unfamiliar standards and procedures. Bringing transparency and clarity to the acceptance process will support the development of future SA professionals and increase admissions into the SA program. It would be helpful for the program website or other resources to describe detailed evaluation procedures allowing prospective students to benefit from knowing the criteria used in admission decision-making process. Additionally, potential candidates would benefit from the program identifying and implementing industry-reflective languages such as Student Development, Student Affairs, or Student Services in recruitment materials. This change in industry-reflective language will increase student awareness of the program and speak to the profession's role in higher education.

We recommend the developmental process begin once an applicant receives the denial letter enabling the student to seek support from the program and develop goals to meet the desired competencies and skills that lead to future program acceptance. A SA program employee would write this plan identifying application strengths, and personal and professional growth areas with an accompanying completion timeline. We recommend the SA program provide suggestions for developmental opportunities such as mentorship, volunteer experiences, workshops focused on improving writing skills, resume or letter of intent, tips for garnering recommenders who can speak to the applicant's ability with greater clarity, and opportunities for follow up conversations with the program. The evaluation process should cite the strengths of the admission packet and note areas of growth as a stimulus for ongoing professional or personal development.

### **Conclusion**

In this convergent mixed-methods intrinsic case study, researchers addressed structural forms of oppression embedded in societal systems, including educational access, and equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion in schools and colleges of education. The purpose of this study was to interrogate recruitment and admission policies and practices of a private West Coast Jesuit

university's Student Affairs (SA) graduate program and determine the extent to which they aligned or misaligned with equity and justice-oriented principles (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova, 2015). We further examined equity and justice principles through inherent values for inclusion and diversity to determine if different or overlapping levels of injustice and inequities existed in recruitment and admission policies and practices at the individual, institutional, and ideological levels. Three frameworks guided this study, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), and the Education Deans for Justice and Equity (EDJE) Conceptual Framework. Participants included currently enrolled students of the SA program and employees with a formal role in the recruitment or admissions processes. Data collection occurred in April and May 2020 and consisted of one-on-one interviews, focus group sessions, e-surveys, and a review of the SA program, COE, and university artifacts.

In an interactive process, researchers coded data systematically with interviews, focus group transcripts, and artifacts using InVivo coding methods. We exported quantitative survey data from Qualtrics into IBM SPSS. Researchers simultaneously analyzed each set of qualitative and quantitative data and organized results by research question with student, employee, and artifact results revealing multiple ways current practices aligned and misaligned to principles of equitable- and justice-oriented practices as well to corresponding values of diversity and inclusion. From these results researchers identified four overarching themes: (a) recognition of mission-driven philosophy; (b) alignment of practices and value; (c) expansion of fiscal resources; and (d) development of human capital. We reviewed each theme using the ideological, institutional (university and college) and individual (program) levels of the EDJE framework to organize aspects of each theme as to whether it aligned or misaligned to equitable- and justice-oriented practices.

Researchers recommended a series of recruitment strategies to meet the principles of equity- and justice-oriented practices. Recommendations included: (a) creating and implementing a

graduate enrollment management plan; (b) collaborating with key stakeholders to develop policies and clear role responsibilities; (c) expanding and diversifying recruitment and outreach strategies; (d) using CRM data to leverage a return on investment of recruitment activities; and, (e) updating recruitment imagery on printed and digital materials. Researchers also recommended a series of strategies to advance equitable and just admission policies and practices. These included, (a) articulation of the true cost of attendance relative to financial assistance; (b) clarifying and strengthening graduate assistantship and internship structures; (c) conducting a regular program assessment to strengthen equity and justice-oriented goals; (d) developing intentional collaborative practices across university departments; and, (d) implementing a developmental process to support applicants through the graduate admission process.

Educational inequity and broader social injustices lie predominantly with those from historically marginalized groups (EDJE, 2019). Therefore, core offices involved in the recruitment and admission of aspiring graduate students must evaluate the extent to which the program provides access to education and various opportunities to demonstrate the ability to meet academic standards, particularly among historically marginalized students, likely underserved by their previous educational systems (EDJE, 2019) Application of the EDJE framework allowed for exploration and interrogation of the student experience throughout all stages of the recruitment, admission, orientation, retention, and beyond. This study explored students, faculty, and staff experiences through the different stages of admission and recruitment. The results provided relevant guidance about equitable and justice-oriented practices that serve as a foundation for advancing access and equity for all who desire to pursue higher education. We hope future SA programs can use the literature, participant voices, opinions, and data captured in this study to benefit the current and future work of developing future leaders in higher education.



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March 31, 2020

Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, Heather James-Anderson,  
Kunbi Ajiboye, Jennifer Fountain  
College of  
Education Seattle  
University



Dear Alejandro, Heather, Kunbi, and Jennifer,

Thank you again for your hard work and such quick adaptation in these unusual circumstances. As I indicated in my March 26 email, your protocol **FY2020-015 “Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices,”** is now approved until **June 1, 2020**.

IRB approval expiration for student principal investigators aligns with anticipated graduation dates, and continuing approval depends on registered status at Seattle University. The SU IRB cannot provide oversight for research studies led by non-active SU affiliates, such as alumni or unregistered students.

Carefully review the following post-approval policies, for which your faculty adviser is jointly responsible to ensure that you follow. Always use the most updated forms on our [website](#).

- If you want to make any changes to the protocol during the course of the study (including an extension due to a later graduation date), you must submit an **IRB Modification Request** before implementing the change. You may not initiate any modifications without *written* IRB approval.
- If you conclude data *collection* and will no longer work with or contact participants (i.e., data analysis stage only), you may submit a **Downgrade to Exempt** request, eliminating the requirement for further IRB oversight or closeout.
- Otherwise, by **June 1, 2020**, you must notify the IRB of your study ending, so we can officially close the protocol to remain compliant with Federal and SU human subjects protections policies. In the report you will clarify what will happen to any identifiable data (e.g., will be retained/stored by faculty adviser) as described in the approved protocol.
- If you wish to continue with the project beyond the IRB approval period, you will need to submit a **Modification Request** to transfer lead PI status to your faculty adviser. You may then continue to work in collaboration with the SU faculty affiliate in the role of an unaffiliated co-investigator.
- Finally, if for any reason, you discontinue the project, please notify the IRB immediately, so we can mark the protocol as withdrawn.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrea McDowell', written in a cursive style.

Andrea McDowell, PhD  
IRB Administrator

Email: [irb@seattleu.edu](mailto:irb@seattleu.edu)

Phone: (206) 296-2585

Running head: RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSION PRACTICES

cc: Dr. Deanna Sands & Dr. Brendon Taga, Faculty Advisers

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

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**APPENDIX B - PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL**



## **Student Focus Group Recruitment Initial Email**

Greetings [Participant],

We are a team of four doctoral students at Seattle University's (SU) Educational Leadership program. We are required to engage in an action research project to fulfill the degree requirements of the EDLR program. We are conducting a mixed-methods study on the recruitment and admission policies and practices of [the SA] program and their alignment, or misalignment, with equitable- and justice-oriented principles. We are asking that students in the [SA] program participate.

Please consider participating in one of our focus groups. These focus groups will be held virtually via Zoom, given the current context of the coronavirus. You will be invited to meet with two members of our research team for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Available times include:

### **Year 1 Students:**

Monday, April 13 from 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Thursday, April 16 from 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Saturday, April 18 from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

### **Year 2 Students:**

Tuesday, April 14 from 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Friday, April 17 from 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Saturday, April 18 from 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Please sign up for a time that works best for you on this link.

<https://forms.gle/fGx7dAwDepFGGrPZw9>

Attached is an information statement/consent to participate that provides you with more information about this study. As you review this document, please note that we need to record the interview, only with the purpose to facilitate the synthesis of themes across all interviews conducted. These themes will be used to formulate results related to the purpose of the study and the analysis will be published in the doctoral dissertation. Personal identifiers such as names, phone numbers, and job titles will not be included at any point during this process. Moreover, the audio recordings will be made available only to the researchers and only the transcripts will be used during the analysis.

We look forward to connecting with you and learning about your experiences with the [SA] program.

Please fill out the google form indicating your interest in participating and we will soon follow-up with additional details. We deeply appreciate your consideration of this request.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Should you have any questions, please contact Kunbi Ajiboye at [ajiboyea@seattleu.edu](mailto:ajiboyea@seattleu.edu).

Respectfully,

Adekunbi Ajiboye, Jennifer Fountain, J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, and Heather Anderson-James

### **Student Focus Group Recruitment Follow Up Email**

Greetings [SA] Students,

We hope this email finds you healthy and well. As we wrap up the final stage of our data collection activities, we wanted to thank those of you who have participated in a focus group. We would also like to extend a final invitation to those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to participate. Your voice matters and we would love to hear from you!

We would like to invite you to participate in a focus group via Zoom. We are seeking to discover the degree to which recruitment and admission policies and practices of the [SA] program are aligned or misaligned with principles of justice and equity.

You will be invited to meet with two members of our research team for approximately an hour. We are happy to make ourselves available at your earliest convenience. We look forward to connecting with you and learning about your experiences with the [SA] program. Available times include:

#### **Year 1 Students:**

Monday, May 4 from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
Thursday, May 7 from 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM  
Saturday, May 9 from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

#### **Year 2 Students:**

Monday, May 4 from 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM  
Wednesday, May 6 from 6:00 PM - 5:00 PM  
Saturday, May 8 from 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Please sign up for a time that works best for you on this link and we will soon follow-up with additional details.

<https://forms.gle/X3ZpfLfc2AfkVaqR7>

We deeply appreciate your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Should you have any questions, please contact Kunbi Ajiboye at [ajiboyea@seattleu.edu](mailto:ajiboyea@seattleu.edu)

Respectfully,

Adekunbi Ajiboye, Jennifer Fountain, J. Alejandro Vega-Gutiérrez, and Heather Anderson-James

### **Student Survey Recruitment Initial Survey Email**

Greetings [SA] Students,

We are a group of doctoral student researchers at Seattle University Educational Leadership program. Currently, we are researching the College of Education's recruitment and admissions policies and practices for the [SA] program. More specifically, we want to know how and to what extent these policies and practices align or misalign with equity and justice-oriented principles. In this study, we pursue the improvement of the educational system by engaging in inquiry with the understanding that Colleges of Education hold a social responsibility to prepare future leaders and educators for justice- and equity-oriented work.

We invite you to participate in a brief survey designed to give us some insight into student's perceptions and experience with recruitment and admission at the [SA]. Please click on this [link](#) to complete the survey.

[https://seattleu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9yom1PplEkXU3g9](https://seattleu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9yom1PplEkXU3g9)

**Note:** Some students have previously signed up for focus groups, please note the survey is different. We hope you will accept our invitation to participate in the survey even if you signed up for a focus group. The survey asks different information, and EVERYONE is invited to participate. The survey should take less than 10 minutes. This is really important to hear the voices of [SA] students.

Attached is an information statement/consent to participate that provides you with more information about this study. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. All information you provide is strictly **private and confidential**. Your professors or any other faculty member in the program will not have access to this study data. No individual respondents will be identified in this study and your responses will not be linked to your email or IP address.

Should you have any questions, please contact J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez at [vegaguti@seattleu.edu](mailto:vegaguti@seattleu.edu).

Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief survey and for your commitment to equitable student success!

Respectfully,

J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, Jennifer Fountain, Adekunbi Ajiboye and Heather Anderson-James

### **Student Survey Recruitment Follow Up Survey Recruitment Email**

Greetings [SA] Students,

We hope this email finds you healthy and well. As we wrap up the final stage of our data collection activities, we wanted to thank those of you who have participated in the survey. We would also like to extend a final invitation to those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to participate. Your voice matters and we would love to hear from you!

This brief survey is designed to give insight into student's perceptions and experience with recruitment and admission at the [SA]. Please click on this link to complete the survey.  
[https://seattleu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9yom1PplEkXU3g9](https://seattleu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9yom1PplEkXU3g9)

**Note:** Some students have previously signed up for focus groups, please note the survey is different. We hope you will accept our invitation to participate in the survey even if you signed up for a focus group. The survey asks different information and EVERYONE is invited to participate. The survey should take less than 10 minutes.

We deeply appreciate your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Should you have any questions, please contact Kunbi Ajiboye at [ajiboyea@seattleu.edu](mailto:ajiboyea@seattleu.edu)

Respectfully,

Adekunbi Ajiboye, Jennifer Fountain, J. Alejandro Vega-Gutiérrez, and Heather Anderson-James

### **Employee Interview Recruitment Initial Employee Recruitment Email**

Greetings,

We are a team of doctoral students in Seattle University's (SU) Educational Leadership program conducting a mixed-methods research project on the degree to which recruitment and admission policies and practices [the SA] program are aligned or misaligned with principles of justice and equity. As a faculty, staff, or leadership member, your experiences and insight into these processes are critical for our research.

We are hoping to set up an interview with you via web-conference (Zoom). You will be invited to meet with two members of our research team for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. If this is something you are amenable to, we would like to schedule with you during the week of April 13-24. We are happy to make ourselves available at your earliest convenience. We look forward to connecting with you and learning about your experiences with the [SA] program.

Please reply to this message indicating your agreement to participate and send us preferred days of the week and times of days during the time frame noted above. We deeply appreciate your consideration of this request.

Attached is an information statement/consent to participate that provides you with more information about this study. As you review this document, please note that we need to record the interview, only with the purpose to facilitate the synthesis of themes across all interviews conducted. These themes will be used to formulate results related to the purpose of the study and the analysis will be published in the doctoral dissertation. Personal identifiers such as names, phone numbers, and job titles will not be included at any point during this process. Moreover, the audio recordings will be made available only to the researchers and only the transcripts will be used during the analysis.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Should you have any questions, please contact J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez at [vegaguti@seattleu.edu](mailto:vegaguti@seattleu.edu).

Respectfully,

J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, Jennifer Fountain, Adekunbi Ajiboye, and Heather Anderson-James

### **Employee Interview Recruitment Follow Up Email - Accepted Participants**

Greetings [Participant],

Thank you for signing up to participate in our focus group. Two researchers will be present and will be asking you a series of questions. The researchers will ask you questions about your experiences in the recruitment and admission process to the [SA] program.

The focus group will meet [Date], at [Time]. The Zoom Meeting ID is [insert zoom ID] and Password [Interview]. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study. We look forward to listening and learning from you.

Kind regards,

J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, Jennifer Fountain, Adekunbi Ajiboye, and Heather Anderson-James

### **Employee Interview Recruitment Follow Up Interview Email – No Response**

Greetings,

As a faculty, staff, or leadership member, your experiences and insight into the recruitment and admission processes of [Student Affairs] program are critical for our research. We would like to

request an opportunity to interview you via Zoom. We are seeking to discover the degree to which recruitment and admission policies and practices of the [SA] program are aligned or misaligned with principles of justice and equity.

You will be invited to meet with two members of our research team for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. If this is something you are amenable to, we would like to schedule with you during the week of April 6-24. We are happy to make ourselves available at your earliest convenience. We look forward to connecting with you and learning about your experiences with the [SA] program.

Please reply to this message indicating your agreement to participate and send us preferred days of the week and times of days during the time frame noted above. We deeply appreciate your consideration of this request.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Should you have any questions, please contact J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez at [vegaguti@seattleu.edu](mailto:vegaguti@seattleu.edu).

Respectfully,

J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, Jennifer Fountain, Adekunbi Ajiboye, and Heather Anderson-James

### **Employee Survey Email**

Hello [Employee]

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our research project this week. Your responses during our interview will lend a significant contribution to this important field. We know your time is valuable and we recognize the professional insight and perspectives you've shared. We've learned a great deal from you in our short time together.

The last phase of our research asks you to participate in a brief electronic survey. We invite you to participate as your continued insight will lend great reflection for us in addressing our research questions.

**Please click on this link to complete the survey:** [https://seattleu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0SUEZ4IMrIKoVj7](https://seattleu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0SUEZ4IMrIKoVj7)

We hope you will accept our invitation to participate in the survey and please know that the survey asks different information and everyone that participated in the interviews is invited to participate. The survey should take less than 10 minutes.

Like before, attached is an information statement/consent to participate that provides you with more information about this study. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions

or concerns. All information you provide is strictly **private and confidential**. Your professors or any other faculty member in the program will not have access to this study data. No individual respondents will be identified in this study and your responses will not be linked to your email or IP address.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at [vegaguti@seattleu.edu](mailto:vegaguti@seattleu.edu).

Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief survey and for your commitment to equitable student success!

Respectfully,

J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, Heather Anderson-James, Jennifer Fountain, and Adekunbi Ajiboye

**APPENDIX C - DEFINATION OF TERMS  
(DIVERSITY, EQUITY, JUSTICE, AND INCLUSION)**





Seattle University  
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program  
Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice

Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices

Definition of Terms use in the Study

**University Admissions.** A structured process that determines entry into an educational institution, often based on the cumulative data of student's transcripts, letters of recommendation, test scores, or interview results. Different institutions have varying determinants (My College Options, n.d.).

**Diversity.** The presence of different perspectives, ways of making meaning, lived experiences as influenced by such things as ability, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, culture, and values to name a few. Diversity can appear in representation, climate and intergroup relations, curriculum and scholarship, or institutional values and structures (Phillips, 2019).

**Equity.** The consideration of systemic oppression and a commitment to challenge such oppression in order to afford access to resources, opportunities, representation, and inclusion of historically marginalized populations. Equity is grounded in fairness and not sameness (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003; Braveman, 2014; Garces, 2014).

**Justice.** To seek full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is equitable, and its members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007).

**Recruitment.** An institution's effort to attract students that will graduate and promote the school's brand through their achievements. Often, there is a mutual desire between institutions and students to find the right match (Posecznick & Bialostok, 2015).

**Postsecondary/higher education institutions.** Institutions that grant an associate, bachelor, master, and/or doctoral degree and whose students are eligible to participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Postsecondary/higher education institutions include almost all 2- and 4-year colleges and universities (NCES, 2019)

**APPENDIX D – CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEETS**



**Seattle University  
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program  
Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice**

**Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices**

**Student Focus Group  
Information Statement Sheet/Consent to Participate in Research**

- TITLE:** Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices
- INVESTIGATOR(S): J.** Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, Educational Leadership, Seattle University, College of Education  
Adekunbi Ajiboye, Educational Leadership, Seattle University, College of Education  
Jennifer Fountain, Educational Leadership, Seattle University, College of Education  
Heather Anderson-James, Educational Leadership, Seattle University, College of Education
- ADVISOR:** Dr. Deanna Sands, Professor Emeritus, College of Education, Seattle University
- PURPOSE:** You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to explore and interrogate the student recruitment and admission policies and practices [of the SA graduate] program and to what extent policies and practices align or misalign with equity and justice-oriented principles. Through this work, we intend to acknowledge potential hidden forms of inequities and injustices embedded in educational institutions and the role Colleges of Education play in perpetuating—as well as transforming—inequities and injustices.
- You will be asked to complete a 13-question focus group about your experience with [the SA Program’s] recruitment and admissions policies and practices, your expectations, how these recruitment and admission policies and practices align or misalign with justice and equity, and your thoughts on equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment and admissions policies and practices.
- SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Seattle University.

**RISKS:**

There are no known risks associated with this study. The study does not include any questions or information that can link the participant to the answers. Participants can stop the interview at any time without penalties to avoid any unforeseeable risks and/or discomforts, including physical, psycho-social, or legal risks.

The focus groups will be recorded only with the purpose to facilitate the synthesis of themes across all interviews conducted. These themes will be used to formulate results related to the purpose of the study and the analysis will be published in the doctoral dissertation. Personal identifiers such as names, phone numbers, and job titles will not be included at any point during this process. Moreover, the audio recordings will be made available only to the researchers and only the transcripts will be used during the analysis.

**BENEFITS:**

Participants' responses will help the researchers explore the complexity of potential inequalities and injustices in higher education. This could inform a critical analysis of educational injustice and inequity and serve as a guide for action planning and future transformation.

Other individual benefits include an affirmation of or improvements:

- Affirmation that workplace policies and procedures adhere to justice-oriented practices or suggestions as to improvements.
- This work could provide practical solutions to address exclusionary practices in recruitment and admissions policies to increase access to higher education for historically marginalized populations.
- Increased awareness of leaders, faculty, and staff perceptions of admissions and recruitment practices.

Societal benefits include improvements:

- Towards achieving college mission and goals of creating a just and equitable world.
- In the development of equitable opportunities for future students in the program.

**INCENTIVES:**

You will receive no gifts or incentives for this study. Participants will not be awarded an incentive. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Personal identifiers such as names, phone numbers, and job titles will not be included at any point during the study. Your name will never be used in any public dissemination of these data

(publications, presentations) and all research materials will be stored in accordance with SU policies.

Human subjects research regulations require that data be kept for a minimum of three (3) years. When the research study ends the data will be destroyed in accordance with SU policies.

You may choose not to share certain information about yourself and opinions at any time during the study.

Within focus group settings, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. We ask all participants to respect others' privacy and keep all information shared. However, if we learn you intend to harm yourself or others, we must notify the authorities.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:** Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:** A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. Once completed, this dissertation work will be available at the Seattle University library. For further questions about the study, you can contact J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez at [vegaguti@seattleu.edu](mailto:vegaguti@seattleu.edu).

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:** I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any concerns about my participation in this study, I may [contact] J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, who is asking me to participate. If I have any concerns that my rights are being violated, I may contact Dr. Michelle DuBois, Chair of the Seattle University Institutional Review Board at (206) 296-2585.



**Seattle University**  
**Educational Leadership Doctoral Program**  
**Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice**

**Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices**

**Faculty, Staff, and Leadership Interview**  
**Information Statement Sheet/Consent to Participate in Research**

- TITLE: Funnel** Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices
- INVESTIGATOR(S):** J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, Educational Leadership, Seattle University, College of Education  
 Adekunbi Ajiboye, Educational Leadership, Seattle University, College of Education  
 Jennifer Fountain, Educational Leadership, Seattle University, College of Education  
 Heather Anderson-James, Educational Leadership, Seattle University, College of Education
- ADVISOR:** Dr. Deanna Sands, Professor Emeritus, College of Education, Seattle University
- PURPOSE:** You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to explore and interrogate the student recruitment and admission policies and practices [of the SA graduate] program and to what extent policies and practices align or misalign with equity and justice-oriented principles. Through this work we intend to acknowledge potential hidden forms of inequities and injustices embedded in educational institutions. More specifically, we are interested in the role Colleges of Education play in perpetuating—as well as transforming—inequities and injustices.
- You will be asked to respond to 26-question interview about your role in students' recruitment and admissions policies and practices, your expectations, how these recruitment and admission policies and practices align with justice and equity, and your thoughts on equitable and justice-oriented recruitment and admissions policies and practices.
- SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Seattle University.
- RISKS:** To minimize the risks in this study, your responses will not be link back to you. Audio recordings will only be used for the transcripts and identification of themes and no names, job titles, or positions will be recorded. Additionally, results from the leadership, staff, and faculty groups will be aggregated and reported together. Participants can stop the interview at any time without penalties to avoid any unforeseeable risks and/or discomforts, including physical, psycho-social, or legal risks.

**BENEFITS:**

Participants' responses will help the researchers explore the complexity of potential inequalities and injustices in higher education. This could inform a critical analysis of educational injustice and inequity and serve as a guide for action planning and future transformation.

Other individual benefits include an affirmation of or improvements:

- Affirmation that workplace policies and procedures adhere to justice-oriented practices or suggestions as to improvements.
- This work could provide practical solutions to address exclusionary practices in recruitment and admissions policies to increase access to higher education for historically marginalized populations.
- Increased awareness of leaders, faculty, and staff perceptions of admissions and recruitment practices.

Societal benefits include improvements:

- Towards achieving college mission and goals of creating a just and equitable world.
- In the development of equitable opportunities for future students in the program.

**INCENTIVES:**

You will receive no gifts or incentives for this study. Participants will not be awarded an incentive. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Personal identifiers such as names, phone numbers, and job titles will not be included at any point during the study. Your name will never be used in any public dissemination of this data (publications, presentations) and all research materials and will be stored in accordance with SU policies.

Human subjects research regulations require that data be kept for a minimum of three (3) years. When the research study ends, any research data will be destroyed in accordance with SU policies.

All information you provide will be kept confidential. You may choose not to share certain information about yourself and opinions at any time during the interview. However, if we learn you intend to harm yourself or others, we must notify the authorities.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. Once completed, this dissertation work will be available at the Seattle University library. For further questions about the

study, you can contact J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez at [vegaguti@seattleu.edu](mailto:vegaguti@seattleu.edu).

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**

I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any concerns about my participation in this study, I may [contact] J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez, who is asking me to participate,. If I have any concerns that my rights are being violated, I may contact Dr. Michelle DuBois, Chair of the Seattle University Institutional Review Board at (206) 296-2585.



**APPENDIX E - EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS**



Seattle University  
 Educational Leadership Doctoral Program  
 Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice

**Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices**

**Faculty, Staff, and Leadership Interview Protocol and Questions**

<b>Name of Researchers Conducting the Session:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	
<b>Date/Time:</b>	
<b>Number of People Attending:</b>	

**STEP I: WELCOME**

- A. Introduce yourself as a student in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program in the College of Education at Seattle University (SU), and that you are working with a group on your doctoral dissertation. Note that your community partner is the College of Education and that you are working together on examining the recruitment and admission practices within [the Student Affairs] program and to what extent practices align or misalign with equity and justice-oriented principles.
- B. State that “as doctoral students in an Education Leadership program, our dissertation work is an initial effort to acknowledge and interrogate the potential hidden forms of inequities and injustices embedded in educational institutions. More specifically, we are interested in the role Colleges of Education play in perpetuating—as well as transforming—inequities and injustices”.
- C. Explain that the purpose of this interview is to learn about their role in students’ recruitment and admissions, their expectations, if these recruitment and admission policies and practices align/misalign with justice and equity, and their thoughts on equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment and admissions.

**STEP II: PARTICIPANT ORAL CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

- D. Explain to participants that throughout the interview, we will be taking notes and audio recording the session to facilitate the synthesis of themes across all interviews conducted. These themes will be used to formulate results related to the purpose of the study and the analysis will be published in the doctoral dissertation. Personal identifiers such as names, phone numbers, and job titles will not be included at any point during this process. The notes and audio recordings will be made available only to the researchers.
-

- E. Remind the interview subjects that participation in this study is *voluntary*. Participants may withdraw consent to participate at any time without penalty. Participant withdrawal will not influence any other services to which they may be otherwise entitled.
- F. Remind participants that they do not have to answer a question if it makes them feel uncomfortable.

### IMPORTANT ITEMS TO MENTION

- We are taking notes and recording in order to synthesize themes across everything that is mentioned today and across all interviews.
- Responses are confidential, so your responses will not be traced back to your name in the results of our doctoral research work.
- “This interview will be audio recorded for the purpose of ensuring that what you mentioned is captured, to share with our team members that cannot be available, and for transcribing and usage of quotes in our final report”.
- A printed Information sheet (consent to participate) with the study details will be provided.

### STEP III: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- G. Inform participants that we have 26 questions to ask and we anticipate the interview will take about 60 - 90 minutes to complete.
- H. *NOTE TO INTERVIEWER:* Conduct the interview, ask all questions, adapt if time limit necessitates. Allow participants to provide specific examples and context related to topics of the dissertation work. Remind the participant that whenever ‘[SA]’ is mentioned, we are referring to the Student Affairs program.
- I. **Before the first question**, notify the participant that we will provide them with the definitions for equity and justice that inform this work. Give them a copy of the definitions for them to reference when needed. Also give them the rank order list for question number 19
- J. Questions:

<b>Faculty, Staff, and Leadership Interview Questions</b>
<p><b>Recruitment Questions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What role and level of decision-making do you play in recruitment activities for the [SA] program?</li> <li>2. Describe the philosophy that informs recruitment practices for the [SA] program.</li> <li>3. Describe the policies that regulate recruitment practices for the [SA] program.</li> </ol>

4. Describe the specific practices employed for the recruitment into the [SA] program (e.g. materials, target audience, geographical reach, social media)
5. What goals inform recruitment for the [SA] program?
6. Describe the process and who is involved in determining those goals?
7. Describe the ideal student who should be the focus of recruitment into the [SA] program.
8. Describe the avenues by which recruitment is achieved for the [SA] program (e.g. printed material, social media, info days, information sessions, others).
9. How is that ideal student reflected in recruitment materials and activities?

**Remind them of the definitions that were provided to them and then ask:**

10. Describe what equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment practices mean to you?
11. Do you believe sufficient resources (e.g. marketing dollars, collateral, reach of information, etc.) are allocated to support just and equitable recruitment strategies for the [SA] program? If not, what would you add?
12. What if anything would you improve on the [SA] recruitment practices?

**Admission Questions**

13. What role and level of decision-making do you play in admission decisions for the [SA] program?
14. Describe the philosophy that informs admissions decisions for the [SA] program.
15. Describe the policies that regulate admission decisions for the [SA] program.
16. What goals inform admissions decisions for the [SA] program?
17. Describe the steps, requirements, and materials required of prospective students who apply to the [SA] program.
18. Describe the process, criteria by requirement (in other words, how is each requirement assessed by student), and who is involved in admission decisions?
19. Out of all the admissions requirements rank, with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important, those most critical when considering who to accept into the program. (bachelor's degree, GPA, transcript, letter of intent, resume, recommendation letters, or self-evaluation)

**Provide them the handout that has the admission requirements**

20. For the highest three you ranked, what is it about each that is most important? Why?

21. Who has the ultimate decision of who is admitted or denied to the [SA] Program? If a group makes the decision and there are disagreements among group members, how are decisions made?
22. If there are two, equally qualified students but only one can be admitted, how would that decision be made? On what information would the decision be based?
23. In the end, describe the kind of student that you most want to be admitted to the [SA] Program.  
  
Remind them of the definitions that were provided to them and then ask:
24. Describe what equitable- and justice-oriented admissions practices mean to you?
25. Do you believe sufficient resources (e.g. scholarships, graduate assistantships, support for student research, attending conferences, etc.) are allocated to support just and equitable admission strategies for the [SA] program? If not, what would you add?
26. What if anything would you improve about the admissions practices in the [SA] program?

#### **STEP IV: CLOSING**

- J. Thank participants for participating in the study. Let them know we deeply value their time and efforts
- K. Remind participants that a summary of the results of this research will be supplied, at no cost, upon request.
- L. If participants have further questions about the study, please contact J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez at [vegaguti@seattleu.edu](mailto:vegaguti@seattleu.edu).
- M. Be sure to thank once again.

**APPENDIX F - STUDENT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS**



**Seattle University**  
**Educational Leadership Doctoral Program**  
**Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice**

**Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices**

**Student Focus Group Protocol and Questions**

<b>Name of Researchers Conducting the Session:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	
<b>Date/Time:</b>	
<b>Number of People Attending:</b>	

**STEP I: WELCOME**

- A. Introduce yourself as a student in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program in the College of Education at Seattle University, and that you are working with a group on your doctoral dissertation. Note that your community partner is the College of Education and that you are working together on examining the recruitment and admission practices within the [Student Affairs] program and to what extent practices align or misalign with equity and justice-oriented principles.
- B. This study is an effort to acknowledge the potential hidden forms of inequities and injustices embedded in educational institutions and the role Colleges of Education play in perpetuating—as well as transforming—inequities and injustices.
- C. Explain that the purpose of this interview is to learn about their experience with Seattle University's recruitment and admission policies and practices, their expectations, how these recruitment and admission policies and practices align or misalign with justice and equity, and their thoughts on equitable- and justice-oriented recruitment and admissions.

**STEP II: PARTICIPANT ORAL CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

- D. Explain to participants that throughout the focus group, we will be taking notes and audio recording the session to facilitate the synthesis of themes across all interviews conducted. These themes will be used to formulate results related to the purpose of the study and the analysis will be published in the doctoral dissertation. Personal identifiers such as names, phone numbers, and job titles will not be included at any point during this process. The notes and audio recordings will be made available only to the researchers.
  - E. Remind participants that within focus group settings, we acknowledge that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, we ask all participants to respect others' privacy and keep all shared information confidential. However, if we learn that participants intend to harm themselves or others, we must notify the appropriate authorities.
-

- F. Remind focus group subjects that participation in this study is *voluntary*. Participants may withdraw consent to participate at any time without penalty. Participant withdrawal will not influence any other services to which they may be otherwise entitled.
- G. Remind participants that they do not have to answer a question if it makes them feel uncomfortable.

#### **IMPORTANT ITEMS TO MENTION**

- We are taking notes and recording in order to synthesize themes across everything that is mentioned today and across all interviews.
- Responses are confidential, so your responses will not be traced back to your name in the results of our doctoral research work.
- “This interview will be audio recorded for the purpose of ensuring that what you mentioned is captured, to share with our team members that cannot be available, and for transcribing and usage of quotes in our final report”.
- A printed Information sheet (consent to participate) with the study details will be provided to them.

#### **STEP III: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- H. Inform participants that we have 12 main questions to ask and we anticipate the focus group will take about 45 - 60 minutes to complete. If time permits, we have an additional question that participants may choose to answer.
- I. *NOTE TO INTERVIEWER:* Conduct the focus group, ask all questions, adapt if time limit necessitates. Allow participants to provide specific examples and context related to topics of the dissertation work. Remind the participant that whenever ‘[SA]’ is mentioned, we are referring to the Student Affairs Administration program.
- J. **Before the first question**, notify the participant that we will provide them with the definitions for equity and justice that inform this work. Give them a copy of the definitions for them to reference when needed.
- K. Questions:

<b>Student Focus Group Questions</b>
<p><b>Recruitment Questions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What factors/information influenced your decision to apply to [the SA] program?</li> <li>2. Through what avenues were you engaged with or exposed to information about the [SA] program prior to applying to the program? (e.g. social media, materials, advertising, information sessions, etc.).</li> </ol>



3. Describe the messages you perceived through this activities/information about the type of student the [SA] program hoped to recruit.

Remind them of the definitions that were provided to them and then ask:

4. Do you believe the various avenues of information that you experienced in learning about the [SA] Program aligned with equity- and justice-oriented principles, why or why not?
5. What aspects of the [SA] program recruitment process are strengths especially for recruiting individuals from historically marginalized populations?
6. What specific actions, if any, could [the SA] program take to improve their recruitment activities, particularly for individuals from historically marginalized populations?

**Admission Questions:**

7. What steps and requirements were expected from you as you applied to the [SA] program?
8. What admission steps or requirements felt “inviting” to you? Explain why.
9. What admission steps or requirements felt challenging to you? Explain why.
10. Based on your experience and the [SA] admission steps and requirements, describe your idea as to the ideal student sought for admission into the [SA] program?

We will be using the same definition previously read for justice-oriented principles. (Re-read definition if needed).

11. Do you believe your admission experience aligned with justice-and equity-oriented principles? Why or why not?
12. What specific action if any, could the [SA] program take to better align to justice-and equity-oriented principles?

**If time permits:**

13. Is there any additional information you would like to share about your recruitment or admissions experience at [the SA program]?

**STEP IV: CLOSING**

- L. Thank participants for participating in the study. Let them know we deeply value their time and efforts.
- M. Remind participants that a summary of the results of this research will be supplied, at no cost, upon request.

- N. If participants have further questions about the study, please contact J. Alejandro Vega-Gutierrez at [vegaguti@seattleu.edu](mailto:vegaguti@seattleu.edu).
- O. Be sure to thank once again.

**APPENDIX G - SURVEY INSTRUMENTS**



Seattle University  
 Educational Leadership Doctoral Program  
 Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice

Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices

Student Survey

SECTION 1 - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your **current** affiliation with [the SA program]? You may choose multiple options from this list, if more than one applies.
  - Graduate student
  - Doctoral student
  - Other (please explain):
  
2. Which gender do you identify as?
  - Female
  - Male
  - Non-binary
  - Transgender
  - Prefer not to say
  - Other (please explain):
  
3. What is your racial identity? [check all that apply]
  - African American, Black
  - Asian-American, Asian
  - Hispanic, LatinX
  - American Indian, Alaska Native
  - Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander
  - White, Caucasian
  - Multi-racial, more than one race or ethnicity
  - Prefer not to say
  - Other (please explain):
  
4. What is your credit load?
  - Full-time 6 or more quarter credits.
  - Three-quarter time (4 - 5 quarter credits)
  - Half-time (3 quarter credits)
  - Less than half-time (1 - 2 quarter credits)
  
5. How long have you been enrolled in the [Student Affairs] Program (SA)?
  - One Year
  - Two Years
  - Three Years

Other

6. How many credits have you completed in the [SA] Program?

- 0 - 3 credits  
 4 - 15 credits  
 16 - 30 credits  
 31 - 45 credits  
 46+ credits

**The next sections ask you to respond to questions on the topics of recruitment and admission for [the SA] program. Please consider the following definitions when responding to these survey questions.**

**Diversity.** The presence of different perspectives, ways of making meaning, lived experiences as influenced by such things as ability, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, culture, and values to name a few. Diversity can appear in representation, climate and intergroup relations, curriculum and scholarship, or institutional values and structures (Phillips, 2019).

**Equity.** The consideration of systemic oppression and a commitment to challenge such oppression in order to afford access to resources, opportunities, representation, and inclusion of historically marginalized populations. Equity is grounded in fairness and not sameness (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003; Braveman, 2014; Garces, 2014).

**Justice.** To seek full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is equitable, and its members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007).

**Inclusion -** Intentional consideration of certain individuals or groups. Inclusion could be seen as a diverse representation. Inclusion considers power, equality, and involvement (Nguyen & Ward, 2017).

## SECTION 2 - RECRUITMENT EXPERIENCE

7. Based on the definition above, the [SA] program evaluates its recruitment policies and practices for justice.

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

8. Based on the definition above, the [SA] program evaluates its recruitment policies and practices for equity.

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. Based on the definition above, the [SA] program evaluates its recruitment policies and practices for diversity.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. Based on the definition above, the [SA] program evaluates its recruitment policies and practices for inclusion.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. The advertisements for student recruitment in the [SA] program are accessible (e.g., different languages, print, and social media, etc.).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions included explanations of academic expectations.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions included necessary steps to apply to the [SA] program.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions presented application deadlines.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions presented how applicants would be evaluated.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions included resources for financial planning.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

17. The [SA] program's marketing materials represent a diverse group of students and faculty. (e.g., gender, race, occupation, age, ability, religion).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18. The [SA] program considers the cultural norms of prospective students during the recruitment information sessions (e.g. personal values, cultural/racial/religious traditions, cultural practices).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

19. The [SA] program's faculty, staff, and leadership are prepared to support the disparities facing marginalized communities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

20. The [SA] program's commitment to equity is visible through signage (in multiple languages), art, and pictures that are representative of communities being served.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

21. The [SA] program includes current and active students in recruitment planning, decision making, and activities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

22. The [SA] program includes active faculty involvement in recruitment planning, decision making, and activities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

23. The [SA] program provides additional resources and accommodations specifically dedicated to supporting marginalized students and their families throughout the recruitment process (e.g. financial assistance).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### SECTION 3 - ADMISSION EXPERIENCE

24. Based on the definitions above, the [SA] program evaluates their admission process and practices for equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

25. Your previous educational experience allowed you to meet the [SA] program admission requirements.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

26. The [SA] program's admission practices target a diverse group of students.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

27. Individual bias influences the decisions about who gets admitted or not admitted into the [SA] program.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



28. The policies and procedures for admission to the [SA] program facilitate the evaluation of applicants without bias.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
29. The [SA] program has policies and practices that mitigate barriers that impact a student's ability to navigate the admission process.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
30. The [SA] program's admission team is qualified to support students who have diverse needs.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
31. The [SA] program admission policies and practices eliminate advantages to certain groups of students.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
32. Important information about the [SA] program admission requirements are easily accessible.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
33. What do you think is the most important priority when evaluating a prospective student's application materials (e.g. grades, entrance examination, interview with university faculty and/or staff, professional recommendations)? Rank order the following items as to their level of importance in assessing an applicant's materials (8 is the most important, to 1 as the least important).
- Online application
  - Transcripts from the last 2 years of the baccalaureate degree and any post-baccalaureate coursework.
  - GRE, GMAT, MAT (one of these scores are only required of students who have earned degrees from institutions issuing a non-graded transcript); or who have a GPA below a 3.0).
  - College of Education Self-Evaluation Form
  - Current resume
  - Letters of recommendation

- Two three-page autobiography showing the evolution of career interests.
- For students looking to secure an assistantship, a cover letter in response to: *In relation to Seattle University's educational mission and values, (a) share your current work history and leadership experience, and (b) describe which specific departments and/or areas in student development you are most interested in learning about through an assistantship and why.*

34. The [SA] program admission process accounts for the unique lived experiences of diverse students.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



**Seattle University**  
**Educational Leadership Doctoral Program**  
**Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice**

**Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices**

**Faculty, Staff, and Leadership Electronic Survey**

**SECTION 1 - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

1. What is your **current** affiliation with [redacted] university? You may choose multiple options from this list if more than one applies.
  - Full-time faculty member
  - Adjunct faculty member
  - Staff
  - University supervisor
  - Other (please explain)
  
2. Which gender do you identify as?
  - Female
  - Male
  - Non-binary
  - Transgender
  - Prefer not to say
  - Other
  
3. What is your racial identity? [check all that apply]
  - African American, Black
  - Asian-American, Asian
  - Hispanic, Latinx
  - American Indian, Alaska Native
  - Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander

- White, Caucasian
- Multi-racial, more than one race or ethnicity
- Prefer not to say
- Other

**The next sections ask you to respond to a series of questions on the topics of recruitment and admission for [the SA] program. Please consider the following definitions when responding to these survey questions.**

**Diversity.** The presence of different perspectives, ways of making meaning, lived experiences as influenced by such things as ability, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, culture, and values to name a few. Diversity can appear in representation, climate and intergroup relations, curriculum and scholarship, or institutional values and structures (Phillips, 2019).

**Equity.** The consideration of systemic oppression and a commitment to challenge such oppression in order to afford access to resources, opportunities, representation, and inclusion of historically marginalized populations. Equity is grounded in fairness and not sameness (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003; Braveman, 2014; Garces, 2014).

**Justice.** To seek full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is equitable, and its members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007).

**Inclusion** - Intentional consideration of certain individuals or groups. Inclusion could be seen as a diverse representation. Inclusion considers power, equality, and involvement (Nguyen & Ward, 2017).

## SECTION 2 - RECRUITMENT EXPERIENCE

4. Based on the definition above, the [SA] program evaluates its recruitment policies and practices for justice.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  
5. Based on the definition above, the [SA] program evaluates its recruitment policies and practices for equity.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  
6. Based on the definition above, the [SA] program evaluates its recruitment policies and practices for diversity.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree

Strongly Disagree

7. Based on the definition above, the [SA] program evaluates its recruitment policies and practices for inclusion.

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

8. The advertisements for student recruitment in the [SA] program are accessible (e.g., different languages, print, and social media, etc.).

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

9. The [SA] program's marketing materials represent a diverse group of students and faculty. (e.g. including but not limited to gender, race, occupation, age, ability, religion).

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

10. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions included explanations of academic expectations.

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

11. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions included necessary steps to apply to the [SA] program.

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

12. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions presented application deadlines.

Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

13. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions presented how applicants would be evaluated.

Strongly Agree  
 Agree

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. The [SA] program's recruitment information sessions included resources for financial planning.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. The [SA] program considers the cultural norms of prospective students during the recruitment information sessions (e.g. personal values, cultural/racial/religious traditions, cultural practices).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16. The university has explicit recruitment goals for diversifying the student population.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

17. The [SA] program's faculty, staff, and leadership are prepared to support the disparities facing marginalized communities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18. The [SA] program's faculty, staff, and leadership engage in continuous learning about their own biases, assumptions, and stereotypes that impact recruitment decisions.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

19. The [SA] program's commitment to equity is visible through signage (in multiple languages), art, and pictures that are representative of communities being served.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

20. The [SA] program includes current and active student involvement in their recruitment planning, decision making, and activities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

21. The [SA] program continuously reviews demographic data, with a disparity's analysis, in order to identify access barriers (e.g. under-performing/under-served communities, entrance/admissions fees, required exams).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

22. The [SA] program provides additional resources and accommodations specifically dedicated to supporting marginalized students and their families throughout the recruitment process (e.g. financial assistance).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

#### **SECTION 4 - ADMISSION EXPERIENCE**

23. Based on the earlier definitions, the [SA] program evaluates their admission process and practice for equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

24. The [SA] program's admission practices target a diverse group of students.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

25. The admission process is consistent for all prospective students who apply to the [SA] program.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

26. Individual bias influences the decisions about who gets admitted or not admitted into the [SA] program.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

27. The policies and procedures for admission to the [SA] program facilitate the evaluation of applicants without bias.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
28. The [SA] program has policies and practices that mitigate barriers that impact a student's ability to navigate the admission process.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
29. The [SA] program's admission team is qualified to support students who have diverse needs.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
30. The [SA] program admission policies and practices eliminate advantages to certain groups of students.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
31. Important information about the [SA] program admission requirements is easily accessible.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
32. What do you think is the most important priority when evaluating a prospective student's application materials (e.g. grades, entrance examination, interview with university faculty and/or staff, professional recommendations)? Rank order the following items as to their level of importance in assessing an applicant's materials (8 is the most important, to 1 as the least important).
- Online application
  - Transcripts from the last 2 years of the baccalaureate degree and any post-baccalaureate coursework.
  - GRE, GMAT, MAT (one of these scores are only required of students who have earned degrees from institutions issuing a non-graded transcript); or who have a GPA below a 3.0).
  - College of Education Self-Evaluation Form
  - Current resume
  - Letters of recommendation
  - Two three-page autobiography showing the evolution of career interests.
  - For students looking to secure an assistantship, a cover letter in response to: *In relation to Seattle University's educational mission and values, (a) share your current*

*work history and leadership experience, and (b) describe which specific departments and/or areas in student development you are most interested in learning about through an assistantship and why.*

33. The [SA] program admissions process accounts for the unique lived experiences of diverse students.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



**APPENDIX H - EXAMPLES OF DATA CODING AND ANALYSIS**

## Codebook Example

Parent Code 1	Sub Code 1	Sub Code NOTE: Only put subcodes when it is specific to that subcode and not common to other parent codes	Definition	Qualifications or Exclusions (Valence)	REMINDER Connection to Theory (EDJE, CRT, SRT)	Example from Transcript (REMINDER TO HIGHLIGHT QUOTES OR OTHER EVIDENCE)
<b>Section = Admissions</b>						
<b>Admission Philosophy</b>						
	Mission Driven		Admissions efforts initiated and executed by the mission and ideological values of the university.	Institutional, Organizational, (college and/or program level)		
	Affirmative Action		the practice or policy of favoring individuals belonging to groups known to have been discriminated against			
	Staffing		Refers to number of positions and roles and responsibilities associated with each position.			
	Transparency		The requirements for admission are easily accessible and understandable.			
	Developmental Lens		application viewed as a growth opportunity for students w/ feedback			
	Program driven		The goals values and ideals of the program determine decision making			
<b>Admission Goals</b>						
	Faculty Driven		A set number of desired students to enroll in the program. This goal is set in consideration of fiscal responsibility and program goals/purpose. Faculty beliefs and expectations of who is the ideal candidate for the program			
	Numbers of Students		Selective institutions are those that receive more applications than they accept and whose enrolled students have high levels of academic			
			Total enrollment mix of students to meet university and program fiscal and ideological goals. Can be characterized by international student status, resident vs. non-resident status, demographic (or specific information) related to the human population, and numbers of students required to meet university's fiscal goals.			
<b>Admission Materials</b>						
	Application		Steps and artifact an applicant completes to apply to the program	Enrollment target vs. value		
	Test Scores		Electronic tool used that is required for all prospective students to complete in order to set up their admissions profile and to begin tracking their required materials.	Online versus printed form		
	Personal Statement		The graduate record examination (GRE) is a standardized exam used to measure one's aptitude for abstract thinking in the areas of analytical writing, mathematics, and vocabulary. The GRE is commonly used by many graduate schools in the U.S. and Canada to determine an applicant's eligibility for the program.	Dependent on GPA		
			a written description of one's achievements, interests, etc., included as part of an application for a job or to an educational program.			
<b>Section = Recruitment</b>						
<b>Recruitment Philosophy</b>						
	Jesuit Ethos		The principles are driving levers about decision making around recruitment. Recruitment is a progressive group of strategies designed to build brand awareness and expand the pool of student inquiries for future class. Recruitment requires multiple touchpoints during each stage of the process. Enrollment managers/admissions staff implement inquiry-generation strategies by which a university communicates, in as personalized fashion as feasible, with the right messages to the right target markets at the right time through the right communication channels and actions.	The presence or absence of		
	Value beyond degree		Process of getting students through inquiry to admissions	Institutional, Organizational (at the college and/or the program level)		
	Program driven recruitment		SU guiding philosophy of education that challenges students to think clearly, think for themselves, and test commonly accepted knowledge. Encourages student to develop personally, spiritually developing a sense of responsibility for themselves and their community, and learning about making ethical choices in their lives. They learn to balance self-reliance with interdependence, knowledge with spirituality, and mind with heart.	Positive and Negative	EDJE - Ideological level	
	Ideal students		The value of the program is more than just a degree. Value - quantity over numbers	positive and negative		
	Teachable		Recruitment efforts initiated and executed by the financial goals and ideological values of a specific program. Often is administered independent of the university's campus-wide recruitment plan.	The presence or absence of	EDJE	
	Justification of values		Refers to the specific group of people who the graduate program intends to reach with their recruitment strategies. They are the students who are united by common characteristics (like demographics and behaviors) and are most likely to represent the values of the program and/or university, follow-through with enrollment. This group demonstrates the capacity to persist toward program completion. This group may or may not demonstrate a longer-term commitment to the program/university beyond graduation.	Impact on the world	EDJE, CRT, SRT	
	assumptions about prospects		The ability to learn or unlearn concepts, ideals, beliefs	Postive and negative		
	Self motivated		ideal students ability to speak to their values	positive and negative		
	Student Affairs		A held belief that faculty has towards a possible student.			
			Ability to do what needs to be done, without influence from other people or situations.			
	Recruitment Funnel		The field known as student affairs in higher education is made up of professionals dedicated to supporting the academic and personal development of individuals attending college or university. Other common names for this sector include student services, student success or student personnel.	Positive and negative (The profession is not explained in any materials/artifacts).		
<b>Section = Common subcodes to recruitment and admissions</b>						
	Role confinement		defined by the culture of an org. It's an expectation to ensure an employee "stays in their own lane". The intent is to avoid duplication of tasks, inconsistent decision-making, and "mission creep.			
	Power Dynamics		The way different people or different groups interact with each other where one of these sides is more powerful than the other	Faculty to faculty, faculty to staff, faculty to students, faculty to leaders, students to students		
	Role Expectations	generalized knowledge	actions or qualities expected of the occupant of a position, often codified	Faculty to faculty, faculty to staff, faculty to students, faculty to leaders, students to students, negative and positive		
	Holistic Cohort		Staff required to know everything about various topics.			
	Target Students		A cohort purposefully designed by faculty to include a diversity of gender, race, backgrounds, identity, voice, and viewpoints			
		Current Education/Job Status	Prospective students that are targets of marketing campaigns and admissions	(Historical) data valence code - yes or no		
		Community college students working in student affairs				
		Marginalized Identities - historical				
	Decision Making		The ability to make a decision in consideration of varying	Institutional, Organizational, (College and/or		

### Analysis Matrix

76	INTERVIEW Q's	#1 I-C912		#2 I-F922		#3 I-K2L2		#4 I-7YO2		#5 I-5T52		#6 I-VYG2		#7 I-PX02		
77	5. What goals inform recruitment for the SDA program?			Recruitment philosophy	mission driven			Admission goals	# of students			Recruitment philosophy	ideal student	Diversity	diversity of opinions	
78		(4) Recruitment Philosophy	Inquiry	Leads	Recruitment Philosophy	Jesuit ethos	(19) R Fiscal capital	tuition driven	Recruitment goals	candidate qualifications	Fiscal capital	private vs public	program driven recruitment		diversity of ideas	
79			Target student		Ideal student		(7) Access	Admission decisions	perceptions of selectivity		tuition driven	value beyond degree		diversity of roles		
80			holistic cohort	SDA program appeal	piplene/pa thrways	professional identity	(4) Recruitment philosophy	target student	Access	faculty access	recruitment philosophy	ideal student	faculty driven recruitment	diversity of background		
81		(13) Recruitment Goals	# of students			professional goals		holistic cohort	R Fiscal capital	human capital	Recruitment goals	# of students	Inclusion	postive	Recruitment philosophy	ideal student

**APPENDIX I - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **Funnel Vision: Through the Looking Glass of Recruitment and Admission Practices**

### **Executive Summary**

This study addressed structural forms of oppression embedded in societal systems, including access to and diversity and inclusion in schools and colleges of education. The purpose of this study was to interrogate recruitment and admission policies and practices of a west coast private Jesuit university's Student Affairs (SA) graduate program and determine the extent to which they aligned or misaligned with equity and justice-oriented principles. We examined equity and justice principles through inherent values for inclusion and diversity to determine whether different or overlapping levels of injustice and inequalities existed in recruitment and admission policies and practices at the individual, institutional, and ideological levels.

The following two research questions guided this inquiry: (1) How and to what extent do the Student Affairs graduate program recruitment policies and practices align or misalign with equitable- and justice-oriented principles? (2) How and to what extent do the Student Affairs graduate program admission policies and practices afford students with equitable and just access to its programs?

Three frameworks guided this study, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), and the Education Deans for Justice and Equity (EDJE) Conceptual Framework. Four equity- and justice-oriented principles guided the analysis of recruitment and admissions practices: namely, equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity. A literature review of these principles generated specific examples of implementation methods in recruitment and admission policies, practices, and operational definitions.

Researchers used a convergent mixed-methods intrinsic case study design to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the SA program. A purposive, non-random sampling was employed,

participants included currently enrolled students of the SA program and employees with a formal role in the recruitment and/or admissions processes. Seven employees consented to participate in individual interviews, and five completed the survey. Eight students participated in focus groups, while 16 completed the survey.

Data collection occurred in April and May 2020. Researchers administered video-based one-on-one interviews with employees and focus group sessions with students. Employees and students also took separate electronic surveys. In addition, the researchers reviewed program artifacts and websites for the university, COE, and program.

Strengths of the study included a mixed methods research design that supported triangulation of data, resulting in a comprehensive data analysis and report of implications and recommendations. Another strength was the Thematic Dissertation in Leadership Practice research inquiry, which provided a team-based approach, allowing for collaboration with a community partner organization on an authentic problem of practice with stakeholder input. Limitations of this study include that data collection occurred during the global health pandemic of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the impact of subsequent regulations at the national, state, and institutional levels. In addition, a small sample size limited the generalizability of the findings. A delay in receiving critical documents after developing the data instruments negatively impacted the line of questioning we pursued, as some items lacked applicability to the SA program.

We organized the results by research question with student interviews, employee focus groups, and artifact results revealing multiple ways that current recruitment and admissions practices both align and misalign with principles of equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. We identified four overarching themes including (a) recognition of mission-driven philosophy, (b)

integration of practices and values, (c) expansion of fiscal resources; and (d) development of human capital. We reviewed each theme using the ideological, institutional (university and college) and individual (program) levels of the EDJE framework to organize aspects of each theme as to whether it aligned or misaligned with equitable- and justice-oriented practices.

Researchers recommended a series of recruitment strategies to meet the principles of equity- and justice-oriented practices. Recommendations included: (a) creating and implementing a graduate enrollment management plan; (b) collaborating with key stakeholders to develop policies and clear role responsibilities; (c) expanding and diversifying recruitment and outreach strategies; (d) using CRM data to leverage a return on investment of recruitment activities; and, (e) updating recruitment imagery on printed and digital materials.

Researchers also recommended a series of strategies to advance equitable and just admission policies and practices. These included, (a) articulation of the true cost of attendance relative to financial assistance; (b) clarifying and strengthening graduate assistantship and internship structures; (c) conducting a regular program assessment to strengthen equity and justice-oriented goals; (d) developing intentional collaborative practices across university departments; and, (d) implementing a developmental process to support applicants through the graduate admission process.

