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## The Emerging Scholars Issue: Continuous Learning Through a Personal and Professional Lens

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## **The Emerging Scholars Issue: Continuous Learning Through a Personal and Professional Lens**

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In 2019, Dr. Lakia M. Scott founded the Texas-NAME Emerging Scholars program “to provide a space where graduate students could network with others from various institutions and share about their experiences, while also having an opportunity to learn from those in the field” (Scott & Bunn, 2022, p. 1). Through this program, students receive ongoing mentoring, personalized feedback, and opportunities to enhance their scholarship individually and collaboratively. Participants are invited to present at the Texas-NAME annual conference and publish their research here in the Journal of Multicultural Affairs special issue for Emerging Scholars.

For many authors, this issue provides a new experience with academic publishing, especially as the sole author of a manuscript. The process toward publication is supportive of the emerging scholar’s vision and direction for the manuscript. First, emerging scholars are paired with a mentor to discuss their topic of interest. They meet with the mentor once/twice monthly to get direction on organizing a journal manuscript publication and develop a deeper understanding of the sections within the manuscript. Second, emerging scholars work towards completing an initial draft of their paper for the mentor to review. Some scholars extend work that spurred their interest in coursework, while some conduct new research and report on the findings. The manuscripts in this special issue include research briefs, policy briefs, and empirical research. After receiving feedback from the mentor, the scholar makes necessary revisions and additions to strengthen their

work. Authors then submit an improved draft to the Journal for peer review. Unique to this process, their mentor serves as one of the peer reviewers, alongside former emerging scholars, current authors, and the special issue editors as second or third reviewers. Not only does this practice lend a sense of legitimacy and skin in the game for collaborators, “Peer review is a bi-directional process, and the authors, editors, and reviewers all stand to gain from it as a learning experience and for developing new ideas” (Tennant & Ross-Hellauer, 2020, p. 7).

This collaborative process of researching, writing, and editing allows scholars to compare their work to their peers' manuscripts, strengthening their internal feedback process and improving their work (Nicol, 2021). Once the peer review process is completed, the manuscript is returned to scholars for consideration of suggested feedback and revision. During this time, scholars are still in communication with their mentors to prepare for conference presentation sessions that will highlight the findings of their work. Once a final draft is submitted for revision, journal editors review and proof the version before it is published.

In this issue, authors explored an array of topics impacting how our students learn, with many focusing on how students of color face disproportionate challenges. In “Is This the Best Way? The Impact of Out-of-School Suspension on Middle Grades Students,” Lianne Jones weighs the risks against the benefits of out-of-school suspensions, noting that students of color are more likely to experience this form of discipline. In “The COVID Games,” Taylor D. Bunn explores the impact of COVID-19 on the academic landscape through the perspectives of students, educators, parents, and social service providers. In “Against the Tide: Indigenous Knowledge and Education

for Humanization,” Arturo Rodriguez and Kevin Russell Magill analyze how neoliberalism and enculturation keep Indigenous students at the bottom of the social food chain. In “The Race, Social Class, and Place-Based Gap in Rural Turnaround Policy: A Policy Brief,” Karynecia E. Conner considers school turnaround for minoritized populations in rural areas. In “Bridging the Cultural Gap,” Patricia Ramos delves deeply into the cultural and academic experiences of one Latina student. In “Policy Analysis Report: Later Class Start Time for Adolescents,” Lee Anne Brannon considers the impacts of school start times on student outcomes. Finally, in “The Rise of Critical Race Theory: Current Perspectives and Policies on CRT in Education,” Nate Scholten debates both sides of the CRT argument impacting our schools.

As in previous special issues, authors gravitated towards topics of personal interest. Some researched policies that affected them personally, while others identified challenges they had seen in their professional roles. One scholar connected with a student who shared her cultural identity in a new generation. At the heart of each manuscript is a desire to change the academic landscape to ensure every student has an equal opportunity to learn and grow.

This special issue provides one place for the authors to learn and grow as scholars; as they continue to collaborate in this space and others, they will undoubtedly encourage their peers to join them in improving educational equality.

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