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Abstract

College access continues to be highly stratified across racial, socioeconomic, and first-generation status. Although there are numerous studies on college readiness programs, the research on the correlation between college proximity and college access is lacking or contradictory. Moreover, minimal research exists on college readiness programs within the context of place-based community engagement at a Jesuit university. This mixed-methods, action research case study investigated how to build accessible and equitable pathways to Jesuit colleges and universities within close proximity of historically underrepresented communities, focusing primarily on first-generation, low-income students of color from Northeast Spokane, Washington. Bordieu's theories of cultural and social capital as well as Conley's four facets of college readiness shaped the study. The results revealed that a college immersion program could have a positive and transformative experience on high school students' perceptions of higher education over the course of just three days, whereas interviews with high school counselors, university admission staff, and a public school district administrator indicated that long-term key strategies were essential to improving local recruitment and building a P-16 educational pipeline.

Introduction

What is the civic responsibility of a college or university to educate and serve its local underrepresented youth? For Jesuit institutions, whose Ignatian tenets underscore social justice and solidarity, this responsibility is key to its very existence. In fact, one of the characteristics outlined in a self-evaluation instrument created by the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) Task Force is service, and more specifically, community outreach.

What can schools do to improve their diversity and community outreach? While each school may have a unique geographical setting and context to consider, innovative and customizable solutions could increase college access and opportunity for students everywhere who may not apply to their local college or who may be overlooked otherwise. Therefore, this study addressed how to build accessible and equitable pathways to Jesuit colleges and universities within proximity of historically underrepresented communities,

focusing primarily on first-generation, low-income students of color from Northeast Spokane, Washington and their post-graduation plans.

Multiple factors contribute to a college-going culture, at the heart of which is student choice and college readiness. Both factors highly depend on opportunity and access to equitable resources across the educational continuum. Ample research confirms that college access continues to be highly stratified across racial, socioeconomic, and first-generation status.[1] Significant attention has focused on college readiness and P-16 collaboration, but studies on *geography of opportunity* – the importance in determining whether and where students decide to attend college – has been lacking, and the dearth of existing literature has produced mixed results.[2]

Tinto researched the effect of college proximity upon college attendance rates, questioning whether communities with a college send more high school graduates to higher education than communities without one. His findings, situated in

Illinois and North Carolina, demonstrate that the proximity of a college has little effect. Tinto conjectures, however, that access to and perceptions of college information may have skewed the results, thereby suggesting that college visibility may actually be more important than geography.[3]

Turley later contradicts Tinto's findings when she concludes that college proximity plays a major factor in the college-going process, especially for low-income students and students of color. Mapping the residence of approximately 17,000 high school seniors to the location of all U.S. postsecondary institutions within commuting distance, Turley determines that college proximity functions through a *convenience mechanism* as opposed to a *predisposition mechanism*. In other words, students near postsecondary institutions are more likely to apply to college, because the transition is "logistically, financially, and emotionally easier" – not because colleges in proximity raise educational aspirations of local youth.[4]

Examining this trend through an equity lens, the research of Chen and Zerquera support previous findings that females, Latinx students, and low-income students experience greater pressure to stay home for college, whereas students with higher academic achievement are more likely to attend college farther away. In order to support college access and educational mobility for historically underrepresented students, Chen and Zerquera recommend a combination of convenience and predisposition mechanisms. Without using that terminology per se, they highlight the importance of academic preparation; awareness of college affordability; social networks; and cooperation among postsecondary institutions, high schools, communities, and policymakers.[5]

Context

According to a recent report analyzing one hundred urban university-community partnerships, "repairing broken trust and building reciprocal, local relationships remain a challenge, particularly when universities wield significant social and economic power relative to their community partners."[6] This is certainly the case

with Northeast Spokane, Washington where the median household income in 2019 was approximately $32,000 in comparison to almost $60,000 for the rest of Spokane.[7] From 2012 to 2016, unemployment peaked at 9.1% for Northeast residents. Almost one out of four families (23.5%), approximately half of all single mothers (53.5%), and nearly two out of every five minors (38.9%) were living in poverty out of a total population of 57,457.[8] That calculates to over five thousand children living in financial distress within less than three miles of Gonzaga University's pristine campus.

The educational gap between Northeast Spokane and the rest of Spokane City is even wider. Only 61.4% of northeast residents twenty-five years or older is a high school graduate in comparison to 91% of Spokane City's overall population. At the bachelor's degree level or higher, that discrepancy becomes even more severe at 13.1% versus 50% respectively.[9] As college graduates earn, on average, $30,000 a year more than a high school graduate, the educational pipeline to a four-year postsecondary institution plays a significant factor in combatting generational poverty.[10]

Rogers High School (RHS) has made dramatic academic improvements with a current graduation rate of 84%.[11] In addition, 94% of their graduates in 2019 applied to a post-graduate program. Over the past decade or so, the percentage of RHS alumni attending college has risen from 21% to 50%, and the percentage of those college students persisting from their freshman to sophomore year has increased from 16% to 69%.[12] During the 2019-2020 academic year, 45% of the 1,565 enrolled students at RHS identified as a minority, gaining the high school a diversity score higher than the state average.

Gonzaga University (GU) is a predominantly white institution (PWI) with an undergraduate student body of 5,222 with a 94% freshman to sophomore retention rate.[13] The total cost of undergraduate attendance has risen to almost $75,000.[14] Although 98% of the undergraduates receive some level of financial aid, inclusive of student loans, only 13% of the students are Pell-eligible and only 14% are first-generation.[15]

With such an imbalance of power and privilege between university and community stakeholders, Yates and Accardi emphasize the importance of shared governance and decision-making in university-community partnerships.[16] GU asked 113 residents and community leaders what the university could do for Northeast Spokane. The number one response was educational programs and activities for youth. In response to the greatest challenge living in their neighborhood, poverty made the top of their list.[17]

As a Jesuit institution, GU has a civic responsibility to be "a good neighbor to its local communities" as well as "a resource for education, cultural outreach . . . and community growth."[18] This is not just a one-way relationship. Rather, the diverse perspectives and cultural values of students from Northeast Spokane would make GU more inclusive and enrich a liberal arts education that recognizes the importance of place-based community engagement and reciprocity.

Opportunity Northeast, GU's place-based initiative, aims to build a pipeline of support that improves educational access and outcomes for local youth. Two of GU's largest recruitment and retention diversity programs, Act Six and Building Relationships in Diverse Gonzaga Environments (BRIDGE), are highly regarded for supporting historically underrepresented students, but they have not changed very much in the fifteen plus years since they began. In contrast, and at the same time, GU has grown and changed dramatically.

In the decade between fall 2009, when the first Act Six cadre enrolled at GU, and fall 2019, the percentage of undergraduate students of color has more than doubled from 13% to 27% and the percentage of first-generation students has more than tripled from 4% to 14%. [19] It appears that Act Six may have served as the Catalyst to the changing demographics, but to what extent does the program still have this positive impact more than a decade later? Furthermore, how has Act Six affected other demographic variables of concern, such as socioeconomic status and geographic location? How is GU defining and measuring the program and scholars' success?

Significance

With a mission grounded in social justice and solidarity, GU has set several goals in its last University Strategic Plan to diversify its undergraduate student body. For instance, GU guarantees that all Pell Grant recipients will graduate with less than $10,000 in debt. By 2020, GU aimed to have 30% of its undergraduate students come from racially, ethnically, or culturally diverse populations.[20] This goal was achieved in fall of 2021 but the percentage of low-income students has plateaued and the number of students from Spokane County has decreased to nine percent.[21] This makeup suggests to K-12 community partners that GU exists to serve others outside of its' surrounding neighborhoods. In fall 2019, less than half of the undergraduate students were Washington residents, and 59% of those students came from the western side of the state.[22] Despite the diversity that exists locally, GU is contractually obligated to select half of its semi-finalists for the Act Six Program from the Seattle-Tacoma area. These percentages and contractual requirements challenge GU's commitment to "engage with community partners locally and globally to create opportunities for mutually beneficial engagement that address critical social needs."[23]

The root causes of Gonzaga's imbalanced student demographics and its existing relationship with one of the most economically challenged neighborhoods in Spokane are likely complex. Many K-12 community partners may perceive GU as inaccessible. Conversely, many university stakeholders may believe that the vast majority of Spokane's graduating seniors want to leave the area. They may also believe that GU must recruit elsewhere to diversify its student body, even though 45% of RHS students identify as students of color.[24] Opportunity Northeast strives to build a local educational pipeline, which aligns with Spokane Public Schools' (SPS) T24 initiative in preparing students to complete some form of higher education.[25]

From BRIDGE to Catalyst

The study investigates a pilot program that scaffolds and strengthens the relationship between GU and public schools in Northeast Spokane. The

plan is mutually beneficial, integrating moral and business imperatives while proactively mitigating academic reputational risk. Regardless of mission-driven desires to serve the most poor and vulnerable in the local community, GU is a tuition-dependent institution that boasts a 94% freshman to sophomore retention rate[26] whereas only 69% of RHS students return to college for a second year.[27] A revamped BRIDGE program that balances academic press and social support, emphasizing both academic rigor and sociocultural affective needs, can provide the foundation to increase college readiness and reduce the opportunity gap along racial, socioeconomic, and parental education lines that continue to divide the local school districts.

Conley expands the definition of college readiness into four concentric levels of interrelated components: (1) key cognitive strategies, (2) key content knowledge, (3) academic behaviors and attitudes, and (4) contextual awareness and skills. Using all but one of Conley's components for their framework, Radcliffe and Bos implemented a seven-year research study designed to build college and career readiness among middle and high school students. In response to discouraging graduation trends, the study involved one hundred sixth graders (over two-thirds of whom identified as students of color) along with thirty pre-service teachers (typically college seniors) and college faculty. Radcliffe and Bos outlined five goals and eight strategies that lead to advances in students' academic-related beliefs and strategies, positive personal achievement and goal orientation, stronger academic performance and perseverance in high school, and improved perceptions of college.

The positive impact of building accessible and equitable pathways to Jesuit colleges and universities in close proximity to historically underrepresented communities may be both exponential and iterative. Opportunity Northeast presents the infrastructure to reinvest in the local community, recognize the importance of place, and honor GU's connection to the people who live, learn, and work beside GU. Investing in local youth will make GU more inclusive and gradually improve the quality of life for Spokane. It will also increase and integrate GU's community domain, leading the organization to be real, whole, and

innovative in the highly competitive and somewhat volatile landscape of postsecondary education.[28]

Despite the rising cost of higher education, new research concludes that a college degree is still a wise financial investment that can lead to a higher standard of living and therefore help disrupt the cycle of generational poverty.[29] The factors that lead to a college-going culture highly depend on a community's opportunity and equitable access to resources across the educational continuum. Substantial research demonstrates that postsecondary enrollment continues to be highly correlated with racial, socioeconomic, and first-generation status.[30] With a mission rooted in social justice and solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, Jesuit colleges and universities have a moral and civic responsibility to outreach and educate students from historically underrepresented and traditionally marginalized communities.

This study focused on equity and local access to Jesuit higher education for historically underrepresented communities, focusing primarily on first-generation, low-income students of color from Northeast Spokane and their post-graduation plans. Using the emerging model of place-based community engagement (PBCE) in higher education,[31] a local student recruitment proposal that integrates moral and business imperatives, addresses academic and sociocultural student needs, and improves town-gown relations was developed.

Literature Review

Five themes on building local and equitable pathways to Jesuit postsecondary institutions, emerged: (1) college readiness, (2) PBCE in higher education, (3) school-university partnerships, (4) summer bridge programs, and (5) geography of opportunity.

College Readiness

In exploring the differences between high school and college, and addressing what students must do and know to be fully ready to succeed at a postsecondary institution, Conley outlines the following:

1. Key cognitive strategies, such as critical thinking and problem solving
2. Key content, including core academic subjects, such as but not limited to English, math, and science
3. Academic behaviors that involve self-regulation and metacognition
4. Contextual skills and awareness, also sometimes referred to as "college knowledge."[32]

Welton and Martinez, on the other hand, argue for a more culturally responsive and strengths-based approach. Their findings emerge from an epistemological collaboration between two independent qualitative studies on a group of twenty Latinx high school seniors in south Texas and a second group involving seventeen racially diverse and underrepresented high school students in central Texas. Collectively, the students' counter narratives are insightful, and their recommendations reflect previous research.[33] The student participants advise integrating college-level work into all high school courses and encouraging high school students to start early in earning college credit. Equally important, and perhaps even more so, they emphasize the importance of relationship building between school personnel and students of color – interactions that must be grounded in trust and authenticity.

Concerns around the educational opportunity gap for historically underrepresented students and national efforts to address this growing problem began near the end of the Civil Rights Movement with the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965.[34] This gave birth to TRIO – specifically Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services – the first federally funded educational programs that aim to increase college readiness and postsecondary enrollment among first-generation, low-income students of color with U.S. citizenship.

Unfortunately, not all schools, including GU and RHS, are eligible or have access to these competitive and federally funded grant programs. Cowan-Pitre and Pitre propose that "[m]any of the college preparation and transition experiences provided to students served by TRIO programs can be easily replicated in schools for little or no cost."[35] These activities include field trips, campus tours, student shadowing, summer residential experiences, student panels, and other school-university partnerships.

Many TRIO activities and services drive Radcliffe and Bos's longitudinal mixed-methods study on strategies to prepare middle school and high school students for college and career readiness. Beginning with one hundred "at risk" sixth graders, most of whom are students of color, Radcliffe and Bos use three-fourths of Conley's college readiness framework to design their investigation, including key content, academic behaviors, and college knowledge. Considering that key cognitive strategies are at the heart of Conley's four concentric circles, it may have been a poor design choice for the researchers to leave out this one integral facet.

Moreover, although Radcliffe and Bos's eight strategies indicate a positive correlation with the treatment group's academic beliefs and performance, goal orientation, perseverance in high school, and perception of college, the longitudinal study suffers from high attrition rate. Almost 40% of the student participants eventually leave the treatment group over the course of six years due to unrelated factors, such as a change in school boundaries or families moving out of the school district.[36]

While compelling evidence suggests that middle school is the most critical time to intervene around college readiness,[37] Royster et al. reason that it is not necessarily too late for high school students with college aspirations and college preparatory coursework. Royster et al. also conduct a longitudinal mixed-methods study, but they follow a much larger cohort of 6,443 students from an urban, public school district. Using a positivist paradigm and event history analysis, their results support that "[s]tudents who did not become college ready early in high school were less likely to become college ready as time progressed."[38]

Place-Based Community Engagement (PBCE) in Higher Education

PBCE is "a long-term university-wide commitment to partner with local residents, organizations, and other leaders to focus equally

on campus and community impact within a clearly defined geographical area."[39] Outside of this defined framework, Yamamura and Koth critique many community engagement efforts for prioritizing student learning and faculty research often at the expense of community interests and complex social problems. They advocate that PBCE leads to numerous mutual benefits for postsecondary institutions and targeted neighborhoods, including but not limited to centralized strategic planning, enhanced visibility to external stakeholders, potential for increased funding, a more enriched learning environment, as well as deepened and expansive partnerships.

Even more relevant, PBCE can improve the local outreach of university admissions and enrollment management through strategic and long-term partnerships with K-12 schools. Just as important if not more so, PBCE creates an opportunity to do this outreach with a steadfast focus on racial justice, especially for PWIs like GU.[40] In cultivating a sense of place, colleges and universities with a place-based initiative can invest in significant and sustainable transformation.

In contrast, disparate events, programs, or individuals practicing community engagement may come across as transactional and short-lived as McNall et al. promotes systemic engagement as a different approach to social problem solving within the context of place-based initiatives:

universities and communities collaborate to design and implement interventions that address a particular problem, with limited attention paid to the contextual factors that perpetuate the problem. Such interventions… may have strong short-term effects within a narrow range of outcomes for targeted populations, but the dynamics of the larger system that generated the problem remain unchanged. In addition, isolated-impact efforts are frequently conducted as stand-alone projects that are disconnected from other related efforts, thereby failing to realize the synergies possible with more coordinated strategies.[41]

In other words, an educational initiative like a college immersion or summer bridge program may fall short of its potential impact if it is not fully embedded in a larger campus and community framework.

Building on the five main concepts of PBCE, McNall et al. advance six key principles of systemic engagement to integrate what they refer to as "systemic approaches to community change." If PBCE provides "the what," then systemic engagement extends that concept and concentrates more on "the how." For both types of engagement, "the why" is fundamentally the same – "working with people to transform the places in which they live."[42]

Table 1. Principles of Place-Based Community Engagement + Principles of Systemic Engagement = Systemic Approaches to Community Change

Place-based community engagement	Systemic engagement
1. A geographic focus 2. Equal emphasis on campus and community impact 3. Long-term vision and commitment 4. University-wide engagement that animates the mission and develops the institution 5. Drawing upon the concept of collective impact	1. Systems thinking 2. Collaborative inquiry 3. Support for ongoing learning 4. Emergent design 5. Multiple strands of inquiry and action 6. Transdisciplinarity

Sources: Data from Yamamura and Koth (2018), 19; McNall et al. (2015), 2.

McNall et al. apply the principles of systemic engagement to *Wiba Anung*, a successful place-based partnership focused on early childhood education research among Indigenous tribes and postsecondary institutions in the state of

Michigan. Despite the success of *Wiba Anung*, the researchers highlight the barriers to pursuing systemic engagement among faculty, who may be unfamiliar with this approach or socialized within their academic disciplines and institutions to

undervalue this type of humanistic and engaged scholarship in pursuit of more traditional and extrinsic professional rewards.

The literature focuses on the operational roles and functions of colleges and universities in reaction to the changing landscape of American politics and higher education. Dostilio outlines the difference among stewardship of place, anchor institution, and metropolitan university frameworks in order to situate neighborhood-emplaced centers within the larger national discussion to define and operationalize community engagement in postsecondary institutions. Although not mutually exclusive, the various roles and frameworks are distinct enough to merit some discussion, especially as GU establishes its institutional identity through Opportunity Northeast.

As Dostilio clarifies, "[t]he three frameworks are similar and often work in concert with a single institution's efforts to engage its local communities but differ in the range of geographies engaged and the specificity of the strategies entailed."[43] Stewardship of place applies to publicly engaged institutions that often receive major public funds and operate under the strong influence of publicly elected or appointed officials. Anchor institutions, on the other hand, tend to be research-intensive universities that prioritize economic and partnership development with its local community. In contrast, metropolitan universities work with their entire metropolitan region as opposed to a smaller geographic area.

Yamamura and Kont differentiate anchor institutions from PBCE in three important ways. The latter concentrates on a more defined geographic location, places less emphasis on economic development, and draws its leadership from across the campus and grassroots community (as opposed to primarily from senior level administration). While Yamamura and Kont make no mention of metropolitan universities, the discrepancy between a large metropolitan area and a more targeted neighborhood (or set of neighborhoods) is one of the five key principles already mentioned of PBCE. Dostilio recognizes that the large scope of metropolitan universities poses a challenge in that "the demands of a metropolitan region are multifaceted and numerous."[44]

Much of the place-based literature centers around the competencies and skills required of community engagement professionals. As Yamamura and Kont point out in their qualitative study of 190 faculty, staff, students, and off-campus partners across five different postsecondary institutions, "there is no leadership playbook" as this field is so contemporary and continuously evolving. Yamamura and Kont identified three key leadership areas: (1) navigating and bridging different geographies of place and space, (2) ensuring a fifty-fifty approach in town-gown relations, and (3) demonstrating cultural competence and inclusive practices.

The last competency in particular deserves more attention as Yamamura and Kont caution around the dangers of "White Saviors."[45] This is especially important, because community engagement departments tend to be rather homogenous, even more so than the rest of campus and certainly more than the communities they generally serve.

Kuttner et al. investigated how staff members' social identities complicate and contribute to PBCE. Following both an interpretive and critical approach, they base their findings on three separate projects using diverse methods (ethnography, participatory action, and survey) and involving multiple stakeholders (partnership managers, staff, and resident leaders) to emphasize the importance of introspection regarding positionality as well as shifting power. Kuttner et al. do not only question what competencies are required but interrogates, "Who needs to be on staff in order for the organization to have the full range of necessary competencies."[46]

Training, skill-building, and good intentions aside, multicultural competence and inclusion cannot take seed in a primarily monocultural environment. Unlike Yamamura and Kont who focus on multicultural competence, Kuttner et al. center desired qualifications around cultural humility: "In contrast to the idea of cultural competency, which assumes there is a body of knowledge about a culture that an individual can master, cultural humility is a lifelong commitment to learn with others."[47]

Providing an even more concrete and pragmatic example, Trentaz shares the following as a way to bridge university and community:

> …we would no longer teach classes *about* ministry, but we would invite our students to *participate in* the work of ministry with ministers and in fruitful ministry contexts in a carefully and communally facilitated way, therefore strengthening the practice of rooting in place, the possibilities for participating in place making in that place and, doing so alongside neighbor-mentors.[48]

Despite their emphasis on mutuality and shared vision, the Ministry and Community Engagement Program is still guilty of focusing more on internal outcomes.[49] Both studies identify the uncertainty and financial challenges around long-term sustainability.[50] These lopsided practices and lack of ongoing investment can hurt university-community partnerships, for which trust must be built and often rebuilt over time.

School-University Partnerships

School-university partnerships have existed for decades. These partnerships increased by 75% from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s as a way to address the changing demographics of traditional college-age students and the education opportunity gap across race and socioeconomic status.[51] In a comprehensive survey, Laguardia gauges the structural characteristics of sixteen multi-institutional partnerships aimed at improving K-12 academic performance as well as raising college enrollment and completion for minority and disadvantaged students. Across the sixteen partnerships, forty out of forty-eight representatives from K-12 and higher education participated in this research study.[52]

Survey results reveal five important characteristics of successful school-university partnerships, including a written agreement, a dedicated coordinator, an advisory board, generous funding, and clearly defined, measurable goals. The most important characteristics center on the leadership of one individual balanced by collaboration between institutions with less significance placed on community interests. "Immediate external pressures appear to have little influence on the formation of these partnerships; only twelve percent of respondents identified community demand as the most significant factor in the formation of their partnerships."[53] This finding contradicts one of the main premises of PBCE that attempts to equalize campus and community goals.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 has funded at the federal level educational programs aimed at increasing college readiness and postsecondary enrollment among first-generation, low-income students of color with U.S. citizenship.[54] Starting with TRIO programs in the mid-1960s and supporting later programs like GEAR UP in the late 1990s, these federal educational reforms provide academic, social, and financial support to historically underrepresented students as early as middle school and throughout college.[55]

The effectiveness of one such GEAR UP model at St. John's University in New York City is the focus of Morgan et al.'s quasi-experimental, mixed-methods study that tracks almost 300 students from seventh grade to college. Employing questionnaires, focus groups, individual interviews, alumni surveys, high school transcripts, and program participation records, Morgan et al. collect ample quantitative and qualitative data that corroborate and inform strategies that can advance high school-family-community partnerships. Based solely on the 95% high school graduation rate of GEAR UP students in comparison to the less than 60% average graduation rate of non-GEAR UP students, it is evident that this program works at the high school level. "Many [of the GEAR UP alumni] expressed concerns that there were not enough programs at the collegiate level that provided ongoing support in the manner in which STJ GEAR UP did while they were in high school."[56]

Catelli et al. developed a checklist of ten questions that administrators and teacher-educators should critically ask themselves before engaging in a school-university partnership. Catelli et al.'s checklist reflects institutional concerns around faculty politics, reward system, and resource distribution. In fact, only one question broaches matters outside of the ivory tower: "Who benefits from the action research conducted? The school? The university? The teacher? The teacher-

educator? Is action research in the context of a school-university really worth the time and effort?"[57] Notably, there is no mention of the research benefit on students, although Catelli et al. conclude that Project SCOPE enhanced pre-service and in-service professional development, which in turn strengthened school curriculum and student learning experiences.

Washington established the Collaborative Schools for Innovation and Success pilot program, providing $500,000 annually to bring together colleges of education, school districts, families, and their students with an emphasis on English learners and from low socioeconomic backgrounds to increase academic achievement, prepare teacher candidates, and improve current teachers in underperforming schools.[58]

Schaefer investigated two exemplary case studies that take place at a private university and a public college, both located in a northeast urban setting of the United States. For one week of college classes and co-curricular activities, both institutions welcome to their campuses fifty to eighty middle school students, who are primarily first-generation, struggling academically, and from low-income, immigrant families. Schaefer employs Conley's four facets of college readiness to evaluate the student participants' understanding of postsecondary expectations and college life.

Drawing from surveys, interviews, and field notes, Schaefer deduces that both college immersion programs are a big success in that the student participants develop college knowledge and consider postsecondary possibilities. By 'doing' college, students generate deeply positive understandings about college and college life. They are active participants in their learning… College is not frightening but familiar – no longer out of reach but a realistic goal for many."[59]

Summer Bridge Programs

Douglas and Attewell illuminate the vital role that summer bridge programs can serve around academic preparation and academic momentum in their quantitative study. They examine the transcripts of the approximately 15,000 undergraduates who participated in a survey along with a second data set of about 10,000 entering first-year students in a multi-campus community college system from 2010 to 2012. After completing a regression model and propensity score matched analysis, Douglas and Attewell determine that completing a summer bridge program correlates with higher graduation rates.

Specifically, results indicate that the graduation rates are 10% points higher at nonselective schools with the largest positive effect on students who identify as African American, Latinx, first-generation, and/or academically underprepared. The lack of preparation relates to academic momentum in that bridge can serve as an "academic boot camp" to address any deficits in educational skills or knowledge.[60] "By succeeding in a bridge program… [students] have avoided detouring into a sequence of noncredit remedial or developmental courses – courses that often lead to dropping out…"[61]

Summer bridge programs have become rather popular within the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as a way to attract and retain more students.[62] Conducting a systematic review of forty-four reports published over twenty-five years on thirty STEM summer bridge programs, Ashley et al. identified fourteen distinct program objectives that fall under one of the following three categories: academic, psychosocial, and departmental.

Table 2. STEM Summer Bridge Goals

Academic success goals	Psychosocial goals	Department-level goals
1. Remediation	7. Interest in major	13. Major recruitment
2. Content knowledge	8. Sense of belonging	14. Diversity of major
3. Grade point average (GPA)	9. Sense of preparedness	
4. Research participation	10. Self-efficacy	
5. Retention	11. Networking with students	
6. Graduation	12. Networking with faculty	

Source: Michael Ashley, Katelyn M. Cooper, Jacqueline M. Cala, and Sara E. Brownell. "Building Better Bridges into STEM: A Synthesis of 25 Years of Literature on STEM Summer Bridge Programs." *CBE—Life Sciences Education* 16, no. 4 (2017): es3.

Ashley et al. concluded that while many of the thirty programs under review report success in meeting their objectives, there is still a lot more to discover about the impact of STEM summer bridge programs in all three categories. To build a more robust and comprehensive literature, they call for their STEM colleagues to report on and widely publish their bridge goals and outcomes, both successes and lessons learned, and to include implementation details others may adapt to their own institutions.

STEM is not the only academic discipline that has capitalized on the summer bridge platform. A small, private university in the Southeast United States received a one-year grant to pilot summer bridge in other disciplines after the success of their institution's biology summer bridge program and living learning community (LLC).[63] Using a social capital framework, Davis and Bost Laster venture into the social sciences to launch a summer bridge program and LLC for twenty-three incoming psychology and criminal justice majors. Through a mixed methods approach, including a survey upon bridge completion coupled with institutional data on GPA, credits earned, and retention, the researchers "find optimism regarding the expansion."[64]

The students' high levels of comfort and confidence in navigating their first year of college, as self-reported on the bridge survey, seem to indicate that "the students were able to develop a social capital base in order to aid their transition to the institution."[65] Some of Davis and Bost Laster's recommendations address the importance of clearly identifying and aligning student population with programmatic goals and design as well as the vital role of cross-campus collaboration and peer/community mentors.

In addition to academic discipline, designing a summer bridge program by demographic student population is yet another common approach. Slade et al. describe a comprehensive, residential, six-week summer academic boot camp at North Carolina A&T State University, where 88% of the undergraduate students were African American. Under the guidance of Tinto's interactionist theory regarding attrition, wherein student and institutional characteristics should intersect and complement each other, Slade et al. propose three necessary ingredients for effectual summer bridge programs: (1) rigorous academic engagement, (2) concern for affective needs, and (3) acculturation to college life. These broad elements reflect the best practices found in the summer bridge literature.

Focused on forty predominantly Black students who are also first-generation and academically underprepared, the Aggie Impact Scholars Program leads to overwhelmingly positive results.[66] For both the 2011 and 2012 cohorts, 95% or more of the student participants persisted from fall to spring and from first-year to sophomore year. Furthermore, 93% or more were in good academic standing, with more than a third or more than a half respectively for 2011 and 2012 on the Dean's List. Beyond grades and retention, many of the Aggie Impact Scholars earn campus leadership positions and membership into honor societies. Slade et al. believe that the "lessons learned from expanding academic support, introducing pedagogical innovation, modeling habits of success, and engaging students more intentionally can benefit other institutions as they either build or strengthen comprehensive bridge programs."[67]

Not all bridge programs target "at risk" populations but rather combine demographics and field of study to further support academically talented students. Such is the case with the Meyerhoff Scholarship Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, which has experienced success in attracting and retaining talented Black STEM students.[68] Tracking 134 Meyerhoff participants in a qualitative and longitudinal study, Stole-McAllister interviews entering bridge students to doctoral graduates and learns that participants in every focus group perceive the program as immensely beneficial. Unlike Douglas and Attewell who assume a deficit approach to summer bridge, Stole-McAllister builds on the strengths that the student participants bring to the program through a holistic and collective sense of family and group accountability. While their program mirrors other residential and intensive academic boot camps that incorporate affective needs and acculturation, the Meyerhoff Summer Bridge seems far more balanced across academic, social, and professional domains, as well as far more structured. The students take three college courses (math, Africana studies, and physics or chemistry), participate in professional development and public speaking workshops, visit cutting-edge research laboratories, and dedicate all weekends and some evenings to group bonding and community service activities.

Notably, in the Meyerhoff program description, there is no mention of peer mentors as these role models tend to be an integral staple in other summer bridge programs. Kiyama et al. suggest that "peer mentors [can] become active agents in their own education, leaders on campus, and… part of creating a cycle that continues to foster successful engagement and retention of underrepresented students."[69]

Their findings from an intrinsic case study on a summer bridge program at a southwest research university affirm that this paraprofessional role leads to academic and social development. Reviewing text narratives from online essays and conducting four focus groups of twenty-five peer mentors, Kiyama et al. conclude that the subjects increased their sense of belonging; developed new skills around listening and social justice; and

broadened their understanding of higher education and student retention.

As a result, the researchers recommend the integration of peer mentors in existing retention initiatives and goes as far as proposing a partnership between student affairs and higher education programs that may offer academic credit for this type of student leadership experience. Without explicitly calling it youth participatory action research, Kiyama et al. promote the inclusion of students in evaluating and assessing retention initiatives. "An often-overlooked source of knowledge, students can serve as powerful participatory partners when collecting and analyzing data."[70] This recommendation would advance the social and cultural capital framework of many modern bridge programs, thereby exploring a more innovative terrain where educators collaborate with students as social change leaders.

Peer mentors are effective, because they offer personal guidance that is not far removed from the students they are trying to support, but can this support be as impactful in an online environment? Addressing this question is the purpose of Eblen-Zayas and Russell's study on a high touch online summer bridge program at a small, residential, liberal arts college. They describe in detail their programmatic design that blends academic affairs and student affairs based on best practices to support first-generation students.[71] Focusing on quantitative skills, this summer bridge program uses ACT and SAT math scores to invite one hundred students, from which twenty students ultimately participate.[72] The combination of positive program evaluation results, first-term completion data, and pre-to-post math scores indicates that the online summer bridge format opens up many academic and community building opportunities.[73]

Geography of Opportunity

Research on the relationship between geographic location and postsecondary enrollment has generated mixed results.[74] Additional variables around student demographics, such as gender, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and parental education, adds to the complexity of this relationship.[75] In building a P-16 pipeline with

local schools through PBCE, it is an important question to consider if local youth with college aspirations are more likely to go away for their education or to stay near home. It is an even more important question at a place like GU, where less than 10% of the student population currently comes from the surrounding area and more than half are out-of-state residents.[76]

In one of the earlier studies on this topic, Tinto investigated the effect of a college's geographic accessibility on the proportion of high school graduates pursuing a higher degree. Relying on the School to College: Opportunities for Postsecondary Education instrument, along with Census data, Tinto tracked over 20,000 high school graduates from Illinois and North Carolina, approximately 93% and 94% respectively of the graduating population. Through a multivariate regression analysis, he concluded that the overall effect of college proximity on local postsecondary enrollment is minimal. Only students of lower academic ability seem to increase their attendance if a public junior college is nearby.[77] This study is significant in that it delineates the difference between geographic accessibility and aspirational visibility.

The factors that contribute to a student's choice in attending a local college versus one far away can fall under one of two mechanisms that Turley categorized as convenience or predisposition. Turley argues that college proximity primarily functions through a convenience mechanism in that it makes the transition from high school to a local college "logistically, financially, and emotionally" easier.[78] In contrast, under a predisposition mechanism, local colleges and universities help "increase educational aspirations among local youths."[79] However, predisposition mechanisms assume that colleges and universities are actively building positive relationships with their local community and strategically recruiting students from within their city or metropolitan area.

Turley borrows the phrase "geography of opportunity"[80] from housing literature that originally describes the importance of residential location in determining educational opportunities to illustrate the parallel between college proximity and the college-going process. She finds that

"each additional college in proximity is associated with a small but significant increase in the odds of applying to college."[81] She draws her results from a national sample of high school seniors and a data set of over 10,000 postsecondary institutions from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System for the 1991-1992 academic year. Like Tinto, Turley concludes that the effect of college proximity is small in comparison to other factors. Nonetheless, geographical context still matters in the college choice process, especially for low-income families with high school students and their place of residence.

Mattern and Wyatt examine the median distance that students travel for college. They reviewed the data of almost one million students using the National Student Clearinghouse and the College Board's 1999 College Bound Seniors database. However, their restricted sample controlling for individual characteristics only includes the 697,610 students who took the SAT. Mattern and Wyatt discover that the median distance students go away for college in the U.S. is ninety-four miles, with 25% traveling twenty-three miles and 75% traveling 230 miles.

The individual characteristics of students carry significant influence on their college decisions. Not surprisingly, students with higher academic achievement, socioeconomic status, and parental education move farther away for college.[82] The difference in median distance between male and female students is less than ten miles, with females at ninety-three miles and males at 101 miles. The discrepancy across race and ethnicity is far starker. Considering that White and American Indian students travel more than two and a half times the median distance of their Latinx counterparts, further investigation is warranted on why the latter group stays much closer to home.

Martinez examined the role that *familismo* plays in Latinx students' college choices. Conducting a study in South Texas, Martinez interviewed four high school counselors and twenty Mexican American seniors of diverse academic and socioeconomic backgrounds with a balance of males and females and more than half identifying as first-generation college students or as first-generation immigrants.

From semi-structured interviews and typological analysis, Martinez categorized the students into three groups. The first group chose a college closer to home for familial support, the second group renegotiated their original aspirations of leaving home out of familial loyalty and constraints, whereas the third group perceived leaving as a long-term benefit and sacrifice for themselves and for their family. Gender also influenced their decisions but in different ways. Male students stayed closer to home out of obligation to financially contribute to the family, whereas female students tended to stay "out of respect for parents' wishes."[83]

Regardless of the three groupings, all of the parents in this research ultimately ended up supporting their students' college decisions, but the importance of *familismo* and parental outreach, especially around finances, cannot be underestimated. Family-centered college access programs, such as *Abriendo Puertas*, can help address the cultural complexity and facilitate the transition from high school to college, especially for first-generation students and their parents.[84] It is also worth noting that, while *familismo* may be intrinsic to the Latinx culture, external forces such as income inequality, turns *familismo* into a collective survival strategy.

In order to build pathways, Chen and Zerquera undergird the importance of "[c]ooperation between communities, high schools, higher education institutions, and policymakers that aims to support college access and education mobility for historically marginalized populations."[85] More specifically, female, Latinx, and low-income students experience greater pressure to stay home for college.[86]

Examining the effect of distance in their mixed methods study of 7,688 high school students from a Midwest metropolitan region, Chen and Zerquera infer that both individual characteristics and social contexts, such as school district, influence a student's college decisions. Using an equity lens and a multinomial logistic regression, their conclusion emphasizes the significance of social networks, academic preparation, and awareness of college affordability.

However, affordability is only one of the reasons that may affect why university participation varies by distance to school according to Frenette who differentiates between financial costs and emotional costs as well as perception of return on investment. Clearly, students who stay home for college will save money, but the cost of leaving their support network of family and friends may enact an even higher price, which for many historically underrepresented communities is not worth the investment.

Turley juxtaposes convenience mechanisms versus predisposition mechanisms to understand the factors that make up a student's decision on whether or not to attend the local college. Parker et al. recommends the "need to focus on providing resources that mean young people do not have to sacrifice their connection to their community in order to attend university."[87] This may include earlier intervention, as early as age fifteen, to offer diverse career models and additional financial aid.[88]

Whatever the costs may be for students as they make their college decisions and how far they are willing to move, universities and colleges must also weigh the costs and benefits of its student recruitment and enrollment strategies. At a Jesuit, Catholic, and humanistic institution like GU, this discernment starts with university mission and a balanced commitment to academic excellence and diversity through responsible stewardship.

In launching Opportunity Northeast in February of 2020, GU publicly declared its commitment to improving the quality of life for the youth and families of Northeast Spokane through a community partnership based on respect and reciprocity. The foundation for building accessible and equitable pathways to Jesuit colleges and universities is likely to be much stronger and strategic through PBCE. Whereas school-university partnerships are nothing new, the collaborative and innovative developments through PBCE may afford universities the ability to proactively support a college-going identity and culture among its local youth.[89]

The Catalyst Pilot

In less than an academic year, and for less than $10,000, a small group of campus and community partners developed a three-day curriculum and itinerary to expose sixteen high school students to college life. The programmatic highlights, survey results, and lessons learned will help inform the proposed improvements for the second annual Catalyst.

The college immersion program sends the message to historically underrepresented students and their families who reside in GU's own backyard that they are wanted and that they would bring value to the university. Catalyst embodies the merging interests between community engagement and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Catalyst has the potential to proactively address generational poverty and gentrification in Northeast Spokane. Mutually beneficial, it can also help diversify the student body at GU, which can be more than just "a destination college" for more than 80% of the students who come from over 200 miles away.

Although GU has over twenty-five years of community engaged programming with Northeast Spokane, these efforts were not necessarily connected until the official launch of Opportunity Northeast on February 7, 2020.[90] By focusing on common goals and a designated geographic area, PBCE can result in strategic and sustainable transformation that is mutually beneficial to all stakeholders.[91] Before Opportunity Northeast launched, GU's Center for Community Engagement (CCE) conducted a Neighborhood Mapping Assets and Promoting Strengths (MAPS) Project in 2015 and then a Northeast Listening Project in 2019. In response to what GU could offer its local community, the latter revealed educational programs and activities for youth as the top answer.

However, GU's recruitment and retention programs of historically underrepresented students, such as Act Six and BRIDGE, do not focus entirely or even heavily on local outreach. GU enrollment trends reveal that only about 10% of its undergraduate student body comes from Spokane County.[92] While students of color at Gonzaga University have dramatically increased

over the past decade, the percentage of first-generation and Pell-eligible students have consistently decreased in the same timeframe.[93]

The review of the literature did not yield any study that triangulated the perceptions of students, high school counselors, and university admissions staff in relation to a college immersion program involving PBCE at a Jesuit postsecondary institution. Because PBCE in higher education is relatively new, more studies are needed to contribute best practices to follow and common pitfalls to avoid. As Yates and Accardi conclude in their field guide and report analyzing one hundred urban university-community partnerships, "questions of sustaining true community partnership built upon equity, inclusion, and even, in some cases, reparations, remain pressing at most institutions and within most communities." Yates and Accardi stress the importance of shared governance and decision-making among all stakeholders to address the power imbalance between university and community partners.

Although Opportunity Northeast has an Advisory Council of over thirty-five members, the primary planners of Catalyst included five to seven educators and student affairs practitioners with varying levels of involvement. Along with the Assistant Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, Community, & Equity, the main drivers were the Director of Strategic Partnerships and the Assistant Director of Youth Programs in the Center for Community Engagement (CCE) at GU. Two faculty members, one from the English Department and one from Communication Studies, co-taught the personal narrative writing course and participated in all co-curricular activities.

The head of GU Outdoors and the Associate Director of Admission at GU were involved to a lesser degree along with the SPS Diversion Liaison of the Restore, Inspire, Sustain, and Educate (RISE) Program. For other schools looking to build similar college immersion programs, more engagement from the school district and university enrollment management is recommended. Specifically, for future Catalyst planning committees, early representation from Shaw Middle School, Rogers High School (RHS), and GU's Office of Undergraduate Admission

would help streamline the school-university partnership and better support the student participants.

The total budget for Catalyst amounted to approximately $10,000 with almost two-thirds of the expenses going toward faculty stipends and food. Table 3 lists all of the major expense categories and estimated spending for Catalyst 2021, which was only three days long. The last column estimates the cost for expanding Catalyst to five days with forty students. Despite the increase in length and capacity, some of the expenses would not need to grow proportionally. For example, the chartered bus for ground transportation was nowhere near capacity.

Table 3. Catalyst Budget Overview

Major Expense Categories	Estimated Total Cost for 3 Days and 31 People	Estimated Total Cost for 5 Days and 55 People
Food (snacks and three meals per day)	$3,800	$11,000
Honoraria for two faculty	$2,500	$4,200
Outdoor activity (river rafting)	$1,650	$3,000
GU swag (T-shirts, water bottles, lanyards, etc.)	$1,000	$1,000
Ground transportation (chartered bus between RHS and GU and to the Spokane River)	$400	$400
Program supplies and thank you gifts	$650	$900
Total	$10,000	$20,500

Note: Expenses for three days covered a total of thirty-one people, including sixteen RHS students, ten GU Summer Fellows, and five GU faculty/staff members. Expenses for five days jumped to forty RHS students and the same number of Summer Fellows and GU faculty/staff, bringing the total to fifty-five people. Stipends for Summer Fellows were not included in this budget as they are funded through the Civic/Wolff Fellowship Program.

Daily Itinerary and Programmatic Highlights: Beginning at 9 a.m. and running between ten to thirteen hours each day, the Catalyst schedule included a morning and afternoon class session as well as three meals. The personal narrative writing course focused on the theme of "Becoming (and Overcoming)," whereby students wrote stories of identity and goals. To role model, GU faculty and staff members also shared their personal and professional journeys. Co-curricular activities were sprinkled throughout the three days, such as a campus scavenger hunt and a group movement exercise facilitated by a GU dance professor.

In order to mirror the college experience, some teambuilding opportunities and unstructured time were also provided so that students could work on their personal narratives, attend faculty office hours, or simply socialize. Beyond taking a college course, student participants noted that they most enjoyed the downtime when they could build community with each other and Summer Fellows over delicious meals and fun games, such as kickball and mafia. Undoubtedly, the biggest highlight of the entire program was rafting down the Spokane River on the second day. Survey results also indicate that students learned a lot from the admission and financial aid presentations that were offered to them and their families.

Methodology

Participants

The first group of participants included thirteen ninth and tenth grade students who participated in the Catalyst three-day college immersion program. As part of Opportunity Northeast, the college immersion program took place on the GU campus in July of 2021. Priority was given to students who identified as first-generation, low-income, and/or as a student of color; demonstrated a willingness to share social identity development through personal narrative; and expressed a desire to build self-efficacy and future goals.

Secondly, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with RHS and GU counselors along with an SPS District administrator. Each interview took place online for approximately one hour and

was recorded with Zoom transcription. All RHS counselors assigned to a grade level were invited to participate in this study, but only one accepted, so the invitation was extended to a long-time RHS college and career specialist based on the recommendation of several other interview participants. All of the GU Admission staff interviewed held an Assistant Director title or higher, so they could speak with some authority to undergraduate enrollment goals, trends, and strategies.

Data Sources and Collection

Guiding Questions:

1. How does the experience of a college immersion program influence rising ninth and tenth grade participants' perceptions of higher education and their postsecondary aspirations?
2. What role do high school counselors and college admissions counselors play in a student's decision to apply to different types of local postsecondary schools?

This study targeted: (1) early high school students and (2) working professionals who support students through college readiness programs, in their post-graduation plans, or via the college admissions process. The data collected from these diverse perspectives allowed for a more holistic view of the pathway to higher education between a private Jesuit Catholic university and a local public high school situated in a much more diverse and low-income neighborhood.

Data came from four different sources. The first was a college immersion pre- and post-survey. The second source was through semi-structured interviews with GU and RHS counselors and an SPS district administrator. The last two sources were publicly available SPS Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and GU Factbooks.

The overall purpose of the pre- and post-survey was to answer the first guiding research question. After several consultations with CCE staff, RHS counselors, and SPS administrators, all of whom work closely with middle or high school students, revision took place with some of the language on

the survey questions and a simplified Likert scale that was more age appropriate.

The student survey (Appendix A) comprised of seven parallel sections focused on plans after high school, thoughts and feelings about college, preferences for different types of postsecondary institutions, college knowledge and support, and academic preparation. Multiple choice or a five-point Likert scale structured most of the sections, often asking students to respond to a statement with their level of concern or agreement. Several open-ended questions at the end covered hopes and lessons learned from Catalyst, the comparison between college and secondary schools, as well as pre- and post-perceptions of GU.

Each section of the survey related to a specific aspect of the study's theoretical and conceptual framework. For example, a couple of the survey sections, such as "College Support," posed questions that drew heavily from Bourdieu's theory of cultural and social capital. Two other sections, titled "College Knowledge" and "Academic Preparation," relied on Conley's four facets of college readiness. Influenced by *geography of opportunity*, another section of the survey called "College Selection" focused on the different types of local postsecondary institutions available to graduating seniors in Northeast Spokane.

Questions were borrowed from two other instruments: CCE's Mentoring Programs Pre- and Post-Survey for 7th-12th Grade Youth and Willis's *College-Going Culture Survey*. Based on another college-going culture survey developed by the College Board in 2006, the latter was used in the education course 2980 at the University of North Texas to measure the college-going mindset of urban high school students. CCE's instrument also used survey questions from *The Measurement Guidance Toolkit* developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's National Mentoring Resource Center. Because no single survey existed that touched on college readiness, proximity, and selection as well as cultural and social capital, a study specific instrument was created for more detail and agility in the data collection.

For the high school counsellors and GU administrators' surveys (Appendices B & C), five

interview questions were developed, three of which paralleled each another so as to conduct a direct qualitative comparison of multiple perspectives. For example, one interview question touched on the relationship between GU and RHS, whereas another question invited participants' thoughts on the impact of Opportunity Northeast on local recruitment and postsecondary enrollment. Themes around college readiness, geography of opportunity, school-university partnerships, and PBCE framed most of the interview protocols, whereas the remaining questions focused on each school or district's goals around postsecondary enrollment of first-generation, low-income students of color.

For historical context data, GU Factbooks and SPS KPIs covered a period of ten years from 2011 to 2021, including RHS post-graduation plans and GU undergraduate enrollment trends. Specifically, document analysis focused on year-to-year changes for historically underrepresented students. The study also included data on geographic location and residence, namely from where GU recruits its students. Although GU Factbooks and SPS KPIs are both publicly available documents, requests were also made for more drilled-down data points of how many RHS students apply, get admitted, and enroll at GU in comparison to other local colleges and universities through the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics training was completed and SPS, GU's Associate Provost for Enrollment Management, and GU's IRB approved the study as non-exempt research with minimal risk. Participation in the study was not anonymous but was confidential and voluntary. All participants were assigned a pseudonym and/or identification code to remove personal identifying information. Only limited demographic data was collected as part of the college immersion program application. Invitation to participate in the pre- and post-survey was also part of the application, and letters clearly indicated that completing the survey was optional and would have no bearing on their acceptance.

Because all of the college immersion participants were minors, consent forms for parents/guardians and assent forms for the high school students

accompanied the invitations. Making the invitation and consent/assent form part of the application provided students and their parents/guardians several weeks to consider and discuss in private whether or not they would like to participate in the study. Students were allowed to withdraw from the study at any point or skip any section(s) on the pre- and post-survey without consequence.

For interviews, six participants were invited via email, and six interviews were conducted. Their email addresses were publicly available on their respective school or district websites. Invitations also included consent forms and the interview questions. Although artifacts, such as the GU Factbooks and SPS KPIs, are publicly available documents, more detailed post-graduation and enrollment data were requested from interview participants. Lastly, permission was granted to conduct and record the interviews and then transcriptions were shared with each participant at multiple stages to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis

With the college immersion pre- and post-survey results, the difference in total counts, averages, and percentages revealed changes in student perception of higher education and postsecondary aspirations. For open-ended questions, manual deductive coding, relying on Conley's four facets of college readiness and Bourdieu's theories of cultural and social capital to develop a hierarchical coding frame, was employed. For Likert scale questions, paired t-test parametric statistics were used since all of the student subjects were assigned an identification code in order to track their individual responses before and after the college immersion program. Quantitative findings were reported in tables and graphs accompanied by brief summaries, whereas the themes that emerged from the open-ended questions were documented as a narrative.

For the interviews, qualitative comparative analysis was used, specifically inductive and iterative manual coding to develop a flat coding frame. A narrative presented the emerging themes from coding and recording the interview transcriptions, comparing and contrasting the key differences in high school counselors' and university admission staffs' perceptions of a

student's decision to apply to different types of local postsecondary schools.

Lastly, document and artifact analysis were conducted with the GU Factbooks and SPS KPI Annual Reports, focusing on the postsecondary enrollment trends and patterns over the past ten years across parental education, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, and geographic location (student's permanent residence). Data were combined from each annual report to illustrate the changes over time via tables and graphs.

Results

GU Undergraduate Enrollment Trends

No more than half of GU's undergraduate student body has come from the state of Washington from 2011 to 2021. Within that same decade, 8.0% to 11.6% of the undergraduate students have come from Spokane County. GU recruits the large majority of its undergraduate Washington residents from the west side of the state, namely King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties.[94] For example, in 2020, more than 50% of the undergraduate Washington residents came from these three counties alone, whereas less than 30% hailed from eastern Washington, which is comprised of twenty counties and includes Spokane, the second largest city in the state.[95]

In contrast, there has been significant change in the percentage of undergraduates who identify as first-generation, Pell-eligible, and/or as a student of color. Although the number of undergraduate students of color has steadily increased from 16% to 26% over ten years, the percentage of first-generation students and Pell grant recipients has simultaneously decreased. In eight years, the number of first-generation students has dropped five percentage points from 19% to 14%, whereas Pell grant recipients has nearly been cut in half from 20% to 12% in nine years. This decrease continued despite GU's pledge, starting in 2018-2019, to cover tuition for Pell-eligible students from the state of Washington. While visible diversity across race and ethnicity may be on the rise, invisible social identities involving first-generation and socioeconomic status has not fared as well in GU's admission process.

Two of the goals outlined in GU's Strategic Plan state that "30% of each entering undergraduate class will comprise students from racially, ethnically, or culturally diverse populations" by 2020 and that GU will "meet full undergraduate financial need such that all Pell grant recipients graduate with less than $10,000 of debt" by 2021.[96] The data so far indicate that GU is meeting these metrics, but how have these strategic goals affected recruitment strategies overall – in other words, where does GU choose to focus its efforts geographically and what types of diversity does GU prioritize? In support of the university mission to "serve the most poor and vulnerable," what is the ideal balance across race and ethnicity as well as first-generation and socioeconomic status as GU strives to be a good neighbor and partner through Opportunity Northeast?

RHS Demographics, Graduation Rates, and Postsecondary Enrollment Trends

Although Spokane City is 84.7% White according to the United States Census Bureau population estimates as of July 1, 2019, RHS has a 45% minority enrollment.[97] It also has a diversity score of 0.66, which is higher than the state average of 0.64. In addition, RHS ranks among the top 20% of public schools in Washington for students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Whereas the Washington state average is 36% for free lunch and 7% for reduced lunch, the percentages for RHS are 68% and 13% respectively.[98]

RHS graduation rates have steadily increased since 2015, but their already low postsecondary enrollment decreased by over 10% from 2015 to 2018.[99] In 2019, RHS dramatically turned things around when 94% of their seniors applied for post-graduate programs, including two- or four-year colleges, trade schools, apprenticeships, or the military.[100] Over the past decade or so, the percentage of RHS alumni attending college has more than doubled from 21% to 50%, and the percentage of those college students persisting from their freshman to sophomore year has also grown from 16% to 69%.[101]

Despite the improvement in their graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, and persistence in college, RHS students have not had as much

success in the GU admission process. As Table 4 exhibits, RHS applicants, admits, and confirmations to GU have been historically low. Every year since 2014, only around ten to twenty RHS students out of approximately 325 seniors apply to GU annually, which comes out to an average of five percent of their graduating class. No more than nine RHS students per year have been admitted to GU from 2011 to 2021, and the average number of RHS students who end up enrolling in the same period has been two students per year.

Table 4. Number of RHS Students who Apply, are Admitted, and Enroll at GU

Academic Year	RHS Students	Applicants	Admits	Confirms
Fall 2011	n/a	18	7	0
Fall 2012	n/a	11	6	2
Fall 2013	n/a	10	2	1
Fall 2014	334	16	6	1
Fall 2015	339	21	9	4
Fall 2016	339	20	9	6
Fall 2017	311	13	3	0
Fall 2018	337	14	5	1
Fall 2019	325	11	7	3
Fall 2020	292	16	6	2
Fall 2021	322	10	9	2

Note: The number of RHS graduating seniors was retrieved from the Office of Superintendent Public Instruction (OSPI) on November 26, 2021 from https://data.wa.gov/Education/Report-Card-Enrollment-2019-20-School-Year/gtd3-scga but only went back as far as 2014.[102]

In comparison, the number of students from the SPS District who enroll at GU is not that much higher in terms of percentage. According to Figure 1, no more than 2.5% of all graduating seniors in the SPS District, a number that ranges between 1,688 to 1,811 students, have enrolled at GU each year since 2012.

Figure 1. Number and Percentage of SPS Students Who Enroll at GU

SPS Students Who Enroll at GU

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
SPS students who enroll at GU	33	39	24	43	34	25	25	17	20
SPS high school graduates	1688	1699	1668	1717	1779	1803	1864	1826	1811
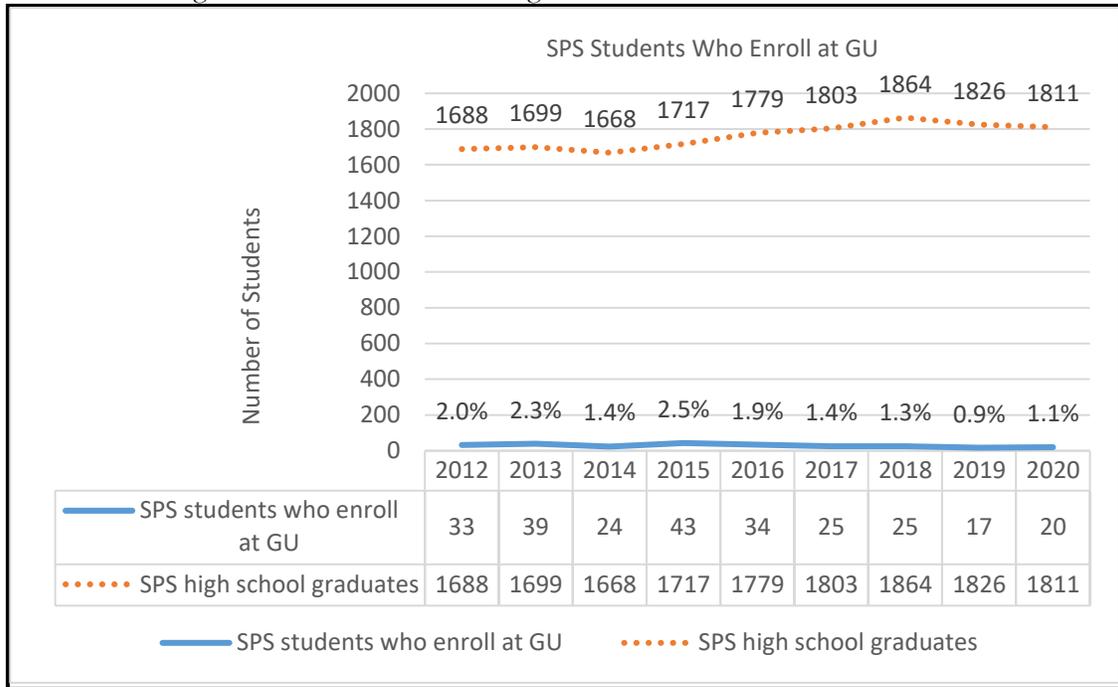
Note: To be fair, not all graduating seniors apply to a post-graduate program. Table 5 presents the number and percentage of SPS high school graduates who enroll at GU in comparison to the number and percentage of SPS graduates who enroll in any postsecondary program. Either way, the enrollment of SPS students at GU is comparably much lower.[103]

Table 5. Comparison of SPS Graduates Who Enroll at GU and Other Postsecondary Programs

Academic Year	SPS Graduates	SPS Graduates Who Enroll in a Postsecondary Program	SPS Graduates Who Enroll at GU
2016	1,779	1,051 (59.1%)	34 (3.2%)
2017	1,803	907 (50.3%)	25 (2.8%)
2018	1,864	969 (52%)	25 (2.6%)
2019	1,826	1,023 (56%)	17 (1.7%)

Note: Postsecondary enrollment was not tracked beyond the year after high school graduation, and percentages were retrieved November 26, 2021 from https://www.spokaneschools.org/Page/2372.[104]

Figure 2 illustrates that most college bound RHS students enroll at Eastern Washington University (EWU), Spokane Community College (SCC), or Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC). For instance, in 2017, approximately half of the graduating seniors from RHS attended one of those three schools. From 2017 through 2020, around a dozen RHS students or fewer attended Washington State University (WSU), University of Washington (UW), Whitworth University (WU), or Central Washington University (CWU) in that order from greatest to least. The number of admitted students seemed to change significantly from year to year, especially in 2020 when COVID-19 hit and only one RHS student enrolled at both UW and CWU.

Figure 2. Local Postsecondary Enrollment of RHS Students

	EWU	SCC	SFCC	WSU	UW	WU	CWU
2017	56	51	49	8	10	7	8
2018	47	25	27	13	4	9	0
2019	50	39	39	10	4	6	4
2020	36	32	16	6	1	8	1
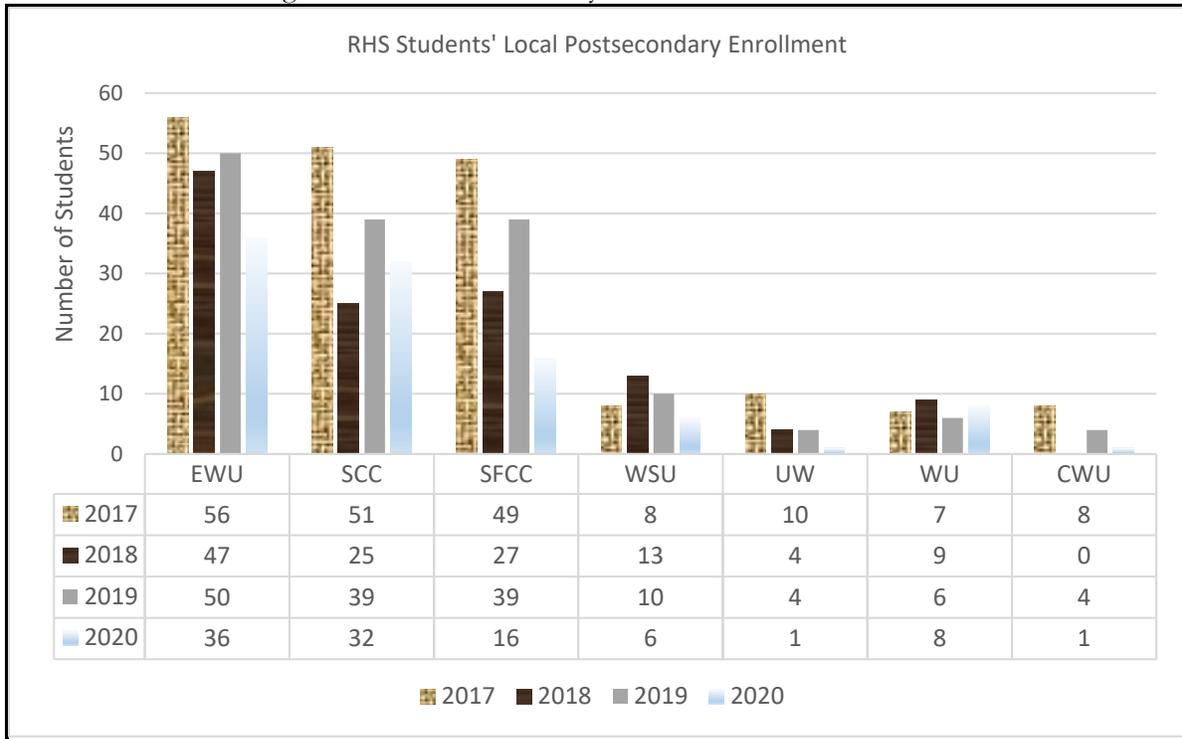
Note: Postsecondary schools that admitted only five students or fewer from RHS were not included in the figure.[105]

Student Survey Results

All thirteen RHS students identified as first-generation, low-income, a student of color or multiracial, or some combination of two or more of these characteristics. In terms of race, five students identified as multiracial, four as White/Caucasian, two as Hispanic/Latino, and one as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The vast majority were on free or reduced lunch (n=10) whereas two were not. The same numerical breakdown applies to first-generation status in that ten students would be the first in their family to graduate from college, but two students had at least one guardian with a bachelor's degree. One

student opted not to answer any of the demographic questions, which were an optional section of the Catalyst application and not part of the survey itself.

Section 1: Plans After High School. The first section of the Catalyst survey asked students about their plans after high school. It listed six different options that included (1) apprenticeship, (2) technical school, (3) two-year community college, (4) four-year college or university, (5) military, or (6) other. Students could select "yes," "no," or "not sure" for each of these options. Table 6 presents the results of these items.

Table 6. Change in Student Plans After High School

	Apprenticeship		Technical		Two-Year		Four-Year		Military		Other	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
% Yes	30.7	15.4	7.7	15.4	23.1	23.1	100.0	100.0	15.4	15.4	0.0	0.0
% No	23.0	23.1	30.8	23.1	23.1	15.4	0.0	0.0	46.2	30.8	15.4	15.4
% NS	30.7	15.4	38.5	15.4	30.8	15.4	0.0	0.0	15.4	15.4	7.7	7.7
% n/a	15.4	46.2	23.1	38.5	15.4	46.2	0.0	0.0	23.1	38.5	76.9	76.9

Note: N = 13. NS = not sure, n/a = no answer

Results indicate that the most change occurred in response to the apprenticeship and technical school options. For apprenticeship, the percentage of students who marked "yes" and "not sure" decreased by almost half, whereas the percentage of students who provided no answer at all nearly tripled. For technical schools, the percentage of students who answered "yes" doubled, "no" decreased by a quarter, "not sure" went down by more than half, and non-responses grew by two-thirds. Less change occurred in response to both the two-year community college and military options with the percentage of students who selected "yes" staying the same. Notably, all thirteen students marked "yes" to a four-year university before and after Catalyst, revealing that the students in this program were already predisposed to this pathway.

Section II: Thoughts and Feelings About College. The second section questioned students' general attitude about college. When asked which word best describes their feelings via a multiple-choice question with the option to write in their own word, six students selected "excited," three students chose "curious," another three picked "worried," and one wrote in the response "excited yet scared." Just three days later, at the conclusion of the program, students were no longer "worried" or "scared." Instead, four respondents were "curious," and nine respondents were "excited." Six of the responses remained the same, whereas six others changed to a more positive emotion, such as going from "worried" to "curious." One student even jumped from "worried" to "excited," although another student did change their response from "excited" to "curious." Overall, Catalyst participants seemed to have a more favorable outlook about college after completing this program.

The next section asked students to reflect on the common reasons for and barriers against going to college. Common reasons included learning new things, making more money, having more career options, leaving home to start fresh, and making new friends. As Table 7 exhibits, the difference per question between the pre- and post-survey average scores was minimal. "To leave home and start fresh" garnered the biggest change with 0.38 points, whereas "to make more money" did not change at all. Moreover, the total average, 20.62 for the pre-survey and 21.00 for the post-survey, as well as standard deviation, 2.69 for the pre-survey and 2.71 for the post-survey, were also very close. Overall, the students marked every reason as somewhat to moderately important before and after Catalyst.

Table 7. Difference in Students' Average Pre-Post-Survey Scores for Common Reasons to Attend College

Common Reasons	Pre-Survey Average	Post-Survey Average	Difference
To learn new things	4.46	4.69	0.23
To make more money	4.23	4.23	0.00
To have more career options	4.54	4.50	-0.04
To leave home and start fresh	3.62	4.00	0.38
To make new friends	3.77	3.92	0.15

Note.\: N = 13. Not at all important = 1, Slightly important = 2, Somewhat important = 3, Moderately important = 4, Extremely important = 5.

What stood out most for common reasons for going to college was a couple of the fill-in-the-blank responses to "other" and the difference in responses to "leave home and start fresh." For the latter, eight out of thirteen students changed their answers with six of them becoming more concerned and two becoming less concerned about leaving home. This suggests that many of the students, or more specifically the ten who selected "moderately" to "extremely concerned" in the post-survey, may prefer to attend a local college or university. Two students also wrote in the post-survey: "to help other people when they are needing my help" and "to be one of the first of my family to go to college." Notably, they did not share these reasons in the pre-survey, suggesting that Catalyst may have instilled a sense of altruism and pride for these two students.

Similar to the common reasons for going to college, responses to the common barriers demonstrate little change with one exception. According to Figure 3, the pre- and post-survey averages for each barrier convey that "sense of belonging / lack of diversity (not seeing people like me)" changed the most, starting with 2.92 – or "somewhat concerned" – to 2.08 – moving much closer to "slightly concerned."

Figure 3. Difference in Students' Average Pre- and Post-Survey Scores for Common Barriers to College
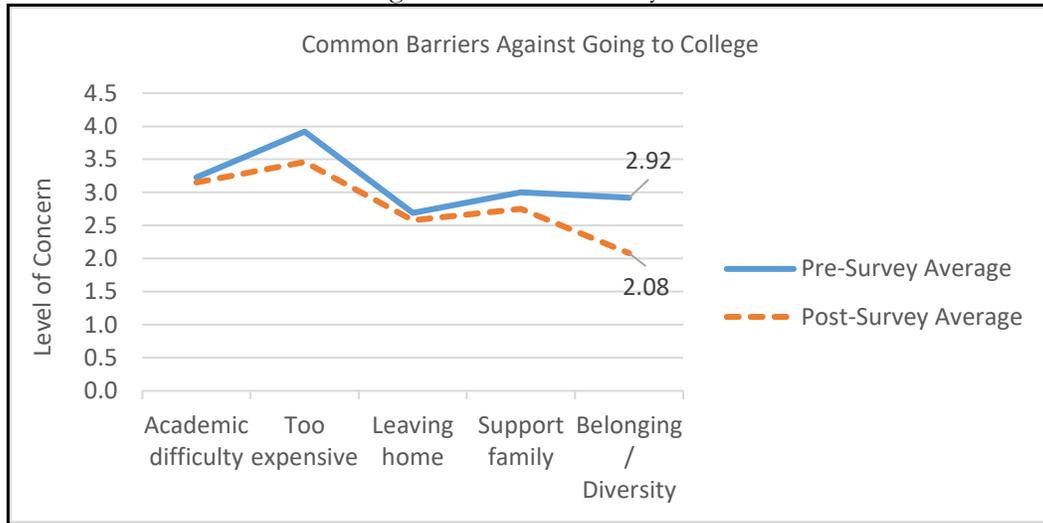
Note: N = 13.

By the end of Catalyst, more than half of the students became less concerned with sense of belonging / lack of diversity, although two students did become a little more concerned. The rest of the students did not change their answer. The presence of diverse Summer Fellow college students may have put some of the high school students at ease, demonstrating that people who look like them or share similar backgrounds can also succeed in higher education. Figure 4 reveals that nine out of the thirteen students were "somewhat" to "extremely concerned" about belonging and diversity at the start of Catalyst, but by the end of the program, ten out of the thirteen students were not at all concerned or only slightly concerned.

Figure 4. Change in Students' Concern About Belonging and Diversity
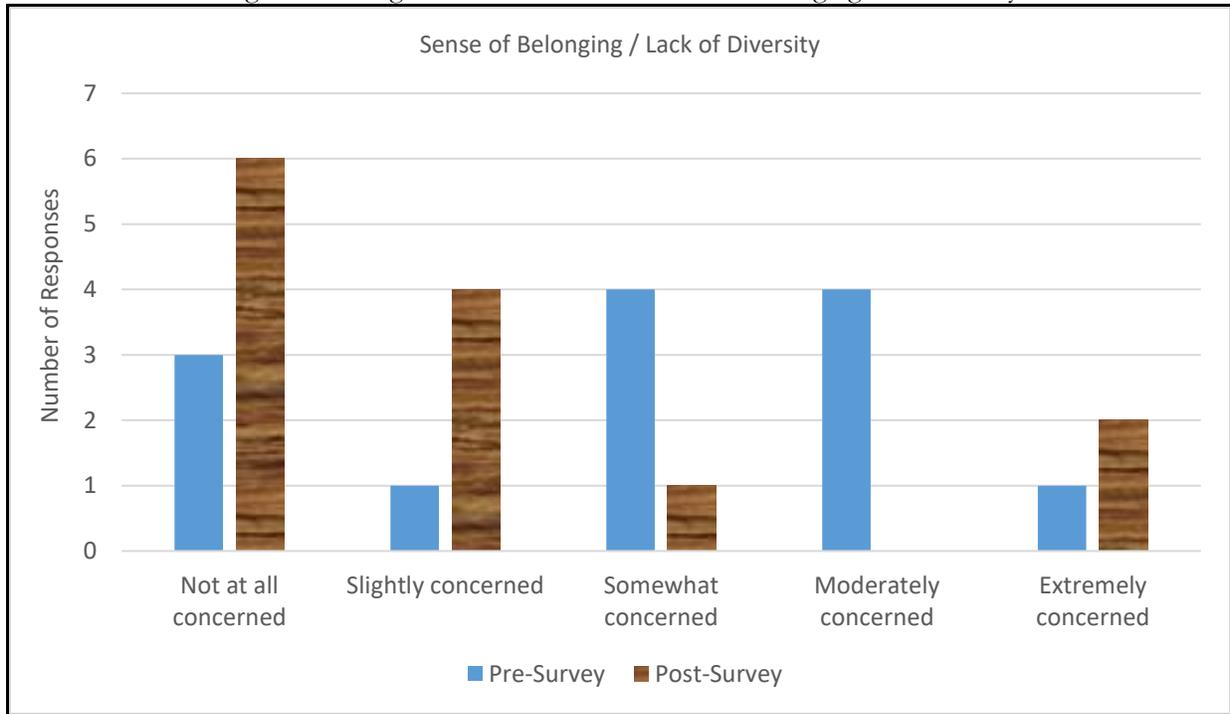
Section III: College Selection. Students were asked about their preferences for different types of postsecondary institutions via six multiple choice questions, covering such characteristics as institutional size and public or private status. The biggest change in student responses involved their attitudes toward faith-based versus secular institutions and distance from home. Half of the students who chose secular schools no longer had a preference at the end, and the number of students who wanted to attend school within

thirty-five miles from home more than doubled from two to five.

Section IV: College Knowledge. The fourth section measured students' college knowledge, specifically their understanding of course requirements, co-curricular activities, standardized testing, financial aid, the College Bound scholarship, and admission process. As Figure 5 depicts, most of the participants increased their college knowledge dramatically as a result of Catalyst.
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Figure 5. Difference in Each Students' Total Scores on College Knowledge
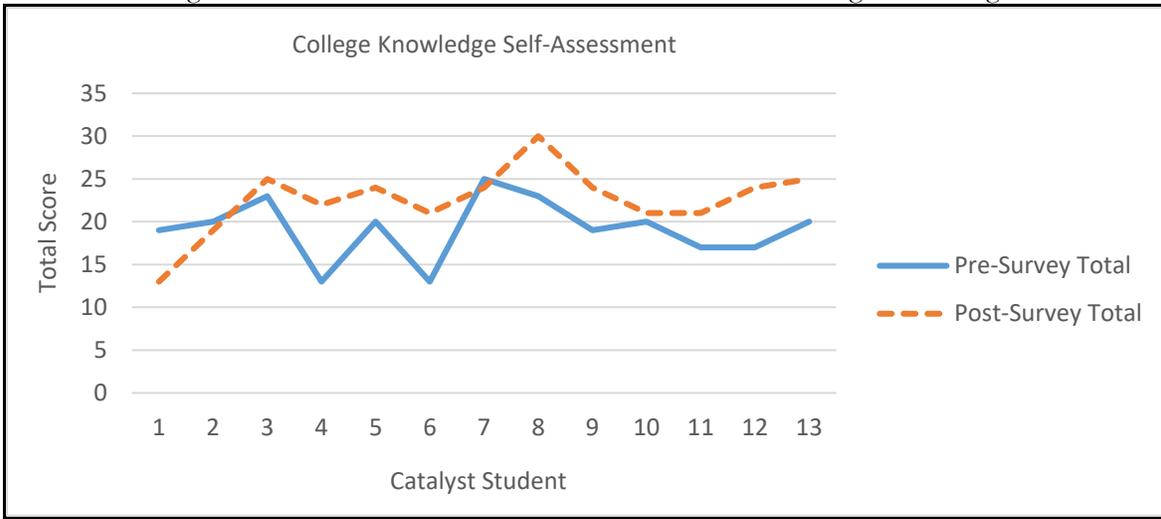
Note: Each student could score a total of thirty points for the self-assessment on college knowledge, which covered required classes, co-curricular activities, standardized tests, financial aid, scholarships, and the admission process.

As could be expected, ten out of the thirteen students scored higher totals at the end of Catalyst, with the largest increase being nine points and the smallest point increase being only one. The average increase for all ten students was 5.2 points or a 17% increase in familiarity. Three of the students scored lower totals in the post-survey, although a couple only by one point. The respondent who scored six points lower appears to be an anomaly.

An average of pre- and post-survey responses per question demonstrate that understanding of the admission process increased the most by 0.96 points, followed by an understanding of financial aid, course requirements, and co-curricular activities at an increase of 0.62 to 0.69 points. However, as Figure 6 conveys, both the pre- and post-survey average for admission process was considerably lower than the responses to all of the other questions. Also, students' pre- and post-survey average score was the highest for financial aid and the scholarships, conveying that they felt most familiar with these two topics at both the start and conclusion of Catalyst. In contrast, their familiarity with standardized testing barely changed.

Figure 6. Difference in Students' Average Scores on College Knowledge
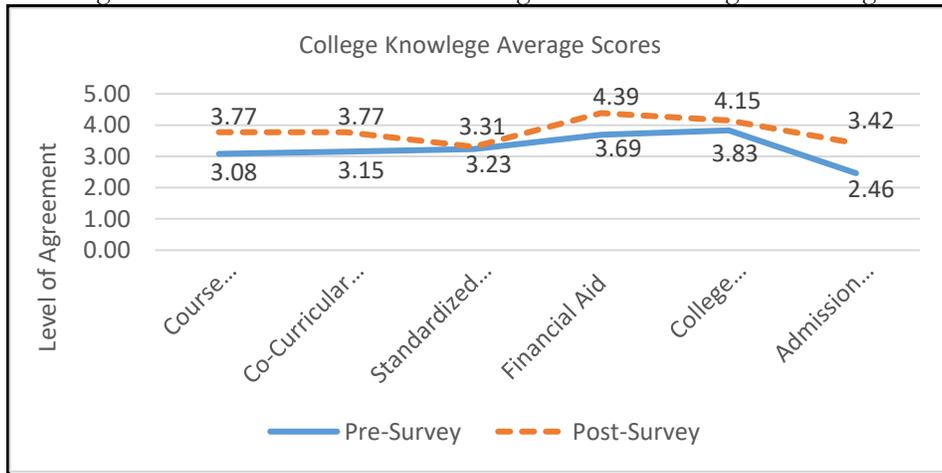
Note: N = 13

Section V: Academic Preparation. In the fifth section, students were asked to report their level of confidence in their academic skills, such as reading and writing, and their level of comfort with matters related to academic preparation, such as asking a teacher for help and working with peers on writing assignments. Figure 7 illustrates how the average scores per question improved from the pre-survey to the post-survey, with approximately half a point increase for both time management and group work with peers. Writing skills and asking teachers for help came next, improving by 0.30 and 0.38 points respectively. Reading ability trailed last with only a 0.15 point increase.

Figure 7. Difference in Students' Average Scores on Academic Preparation
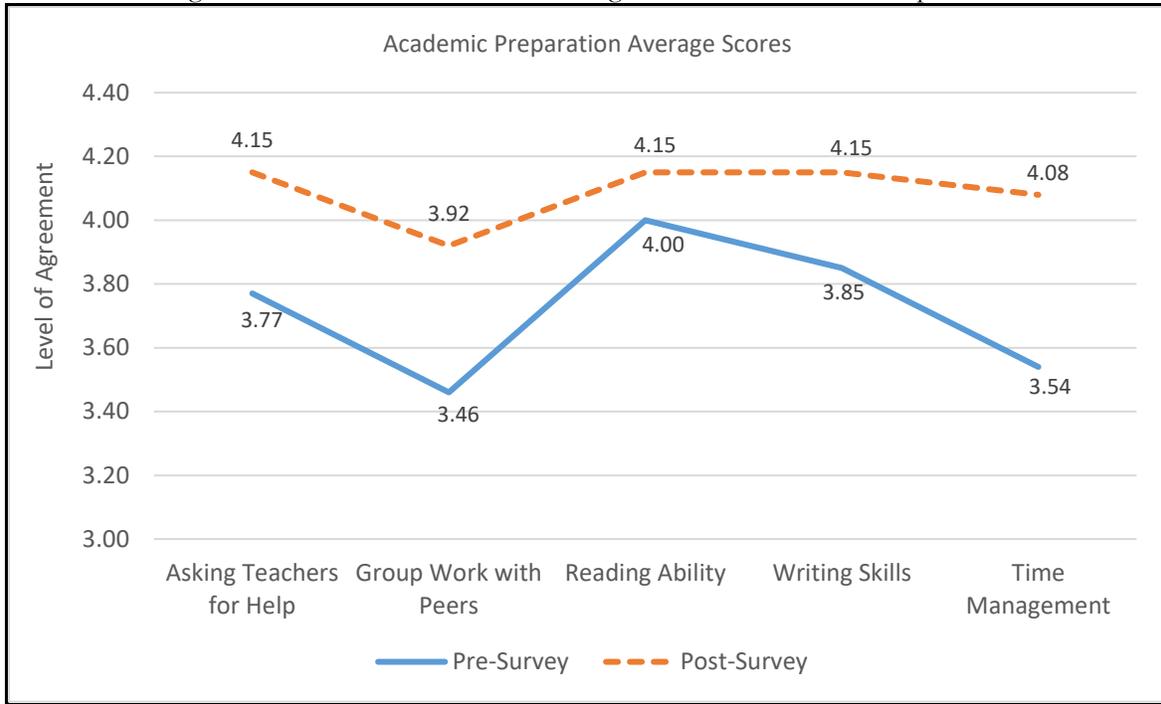
Note: N = 13.

Section VI: College Support. The sixth section of the survey focused on the level of support for college that Catalyst participants receive from different groups of people, such as their family, friends, teachers, and counselors. As shown in Figure 8, the biggest difference was 0.47 points in response to the statement, "I know people I can talk to if I have questions about college." In contrast, there was no change in the average pre- and post-survey scores for how students perceive their family's support, all of whom agreed or strongly agreed that their families are supportive with the exception of one respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 8. Difference in Students' Average Scores on College Support
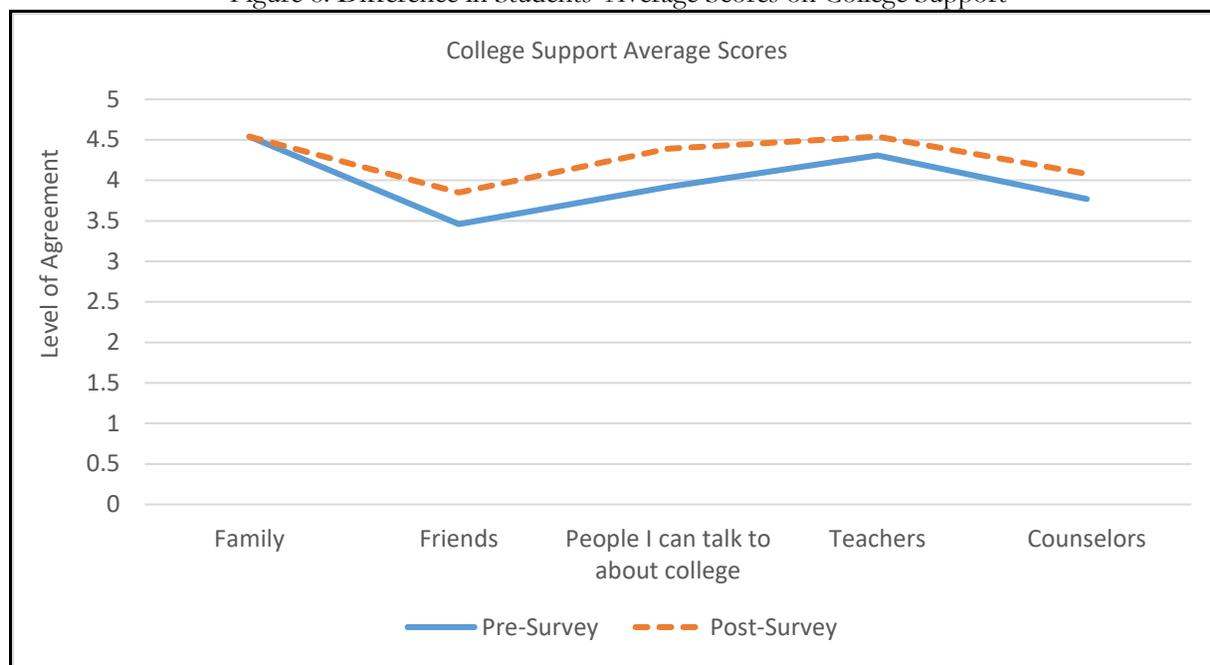
Note: N = 13. College support refers to how supported students feel by their family, friends, teachers, counselors, and other people knowledgeable about postsecondary options.

Section VII. Open-Ended Questions. From the open-ended questions, key themes emerged regarding Catalyst students' hopes and lessons learned, their comparison of college and secondary school, and their changed perceptions of GU. Hopes for the program centered on experiencing college life, learning how to apply and prepare for college, clarifying postsecondary options, and strengthening academic as well as social skills. In turn, students gained a glimpse of college life, learning more about themselves and boosting their self-confidence along the way. They also gained pragmatic knowledge about college preparation and financial aid.

A comparison of college and secondary school courses prompted students to point out the key differences in academic difficulty; student independence; stress related to financial costs; and class sizes, schedules, and variety, but there were mixed responses in comparing college professors with high school or middle school teachers. Regardless, Catalyst afforded an opportunity for RHS students to build relationships with college professors, humanizing them in the process. The word "fun" even appeared multiple times in the post-survey when students were asked to use three words to describe GU. All of their words, pre- and post-, were overwhelmingly positive, and survey results altogether suggest that Catalyst was effective in improving students' perceptions of higher education and raising their postsecondary aspirations.

What students gained from Catalyst falls into three major categories: experiencing a glimpse of college life, understanding financial aid, and increasing their level of preparation and self-confidence. The experiences that students shared of college life ranged from the abstract to the concrete. Whereas only one student mentioned scholarships on the pre-survey, almost half of the students discussed financial aid in their post-survey responses.

Perhaps the biggest lessons learned came through students' understanding of themselves and what it would take to prepare for college. A few students named very specific things, such as "participating in after school activities in high school will look good on college applications." A couple of other students mentioned how they had "learned a few new words" and "learned more about how to improve my writing." The most powerful statements, however, portrayed the growth in students' self-confidence and self-efficacy: "I learned that college is way less complicated than

others say it is" and "I learned that college isn't as scary as I thought it would be and I'm really excited."

Overall, the survey results suggest that Catalyst had a positive influence on RHS students' perceptions of higher education and their postsecondary aspirations. Although all thirteen respondents were already aspiring to attend a four-year university at the start of the program, several of them indicated that they were worried and scared, emotions that gave way to curiosity and excitement by the end of Catalyst. At the same time, students became less concerned about sense of belonging and lack of diversity as a college barrier. The most significant difference in self-assessment came through college knowledge, especially understanding the admission process, and academic preparation, namely time management and group work with peers. In contrast, there was minimal change in student responses to common reasons for attending college and their preferences in postsecondary options.

Themes Emerging from the Interviews

From iterative readings, (re-)coding, and categorizations of the interview transcriptions, four major themes emerged. While there were many similar responses, such as recognizing finances and standardized tests as both common and inequitable barriers to college access, there were also unique perspectives offered on how the university could address these types of challenges proactively. Despite the good relationship between GU and RHS counselors that was indicated by all interview participants, everyone still had recommendations on what more could be done to facilitate local and equitable access to Jesuit higher education.

Theme 1: Demystifying College Admission Criteria

In describing their respective roles in a student's decision to apply to college, all of the interview participants addressed to some degree the need to demystify admission criteria, specifically for GU. According to GU-AC-3, the newest of the admission counselors interviewed, GU evaluates six standard criteria on a point system when they review college applications, including: (1) GPA, (2) test scores, (3) letter of recommendation, (4) extracurricular activities, (5) quality of writing, and (6) interaction with the university. GU-AC-3 also added that, more recently, after consulting with GU's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, "discrepancy points" were developed to recognize a student applicant's diverse qualities and personal hardships. Nonetheless, despite this internal rubric, some confusion remains on how the criteria will be evaluated from year to year, and from that confusion, a slight tension arises on how to balance holistic review with transparency and consistency.

In general, GU admission counselors emphasized a range of qualifications, such as GPA. They refuted the notion that students need perfect grades, as GU-AC-2 asserted in response to the common misconception she hears from prospective students and their families, "'Like I don't have a 4.0. I can't go to Gonzaga.' –Whoa! Everybody doesn't have a 4.0 here."

Helping high school students navigate that process, longtime college and career counselor RHS-CCC expressed great pride in building relationships and asking questions to "know all of the facts" beyond "what's on paper." She clearly understood the competitive nature of GPAs and the difference between public and private institutions when she remarked, "A 2.0 is not what's going to get a student into a four-year university . . . And I'm talking state, because that's posted, you know, as opposed to private school." However, even with her nineteen years of experience and a close working relationship with GU's admission counselor assigned to Spokane, RHS-CCC still had several anecdotes that conveyed her surprise on whether or not one of her RHS students was accepted into GU.

The confusion or subjectivity around criteria even extends to GU as GU-AC-3 admitted, "Even for me, for myself, I don't really understand what that cutoff [for minimum GPA] exactly is." GU-AC-3 understood that many factors go into the selection process. "Normally, we wouldn't enroll students with like a 3.1 GPA . . . but this year also we had to keep in mind like we don't know how many students are going to be enrolled." Budgetary constraints and context, both for the individual

students who apply and the university at large, matter.

GU-AC-3 confirmed, "There is no definition . . . It just kind of depends on the year. It depends on the student and depends on like what they were going through also." Grades aside, GU-AC-1 underscored "the importance of upwards trends," considering context that may warrant discrepancy points, and "look[ing] for a bounce back." The holistic review of college applications is intended to be more inclusive, not less, but communicating the range and sometimes changing criteria clearly, directly, and succinctly comes with its challenges.

All of the counselors interviewed at both the high school and university identified standardized tests as a barrier to college access, pointing out the inequity in test preparation and questioning whether standardized tests could accurately predict college success. GU-AC-2 noticed the increase in college applications since GU went test optional and reflected on what this permanent change could mean for the university's reputation and student body diversity moving forward. Unlike the other counselors, GU-AC-3 was the only one to clarify that, even though GU is test optional now, they will still accept test scores and evaluate them, which means that lower scores could still hurt a student's chances of getting admitted.

While certain admission criteria may be hard to reach and inequitable for certain student populations and their families, how that criteria are communicated is just as critical in determining college access. When there are guidelines and ranges of qualifications versus explicit definitions and requirements, the effect on first-generation students and other groups with less access to college knowledge can be detrimental.

Theme 2: Understanding College Affordability and Financial Aid

The area that seems to cause the most confusion and serves as one of the biggest barriers to higher education is cost and financial aid. Encumbered with unfamiliar terminology, the financial aid process can be complex and challenging to navigate, especially when students and their families do not have the cultural and social capital

to see past the initial price tag. Different ways to save money, such as going to community college first or living at home instead of on campus, come with their own costs and benefits. Finally, the lack of explicit and targeted marketing around scholarships and other financial resources further exacerbates the problem.

All of the interview participants underscored the need for more financial aid literacy and defined their respective roles in helping break down "the sticker price" and financial options. When asked what she thought are the common barriers to RHS students attending GU, GU-AC-1 responded, "Our sticker price . . . would be a huge barrier, and terminology around financial aid is not that accessible. If the students don't interact with us, it's really hard for us to explain like this could be free." Similar to GU-AC-1, GU-AC-2 shared that she tries to decode Pell-eligibility "in terms that students might be able to understand" by saying things like, "if you get free and reduced lunch right now, you may be eligible." As the first in her family to attend college, GU-AC-1 empathized, "So I know like how foreign a college campus is like, all the different vocab, the Bursar's Office . . . and not wanting to ask, because I felt like I was supposed to know."

On the other end, high school counselors are trying to help students navigate every step of the financial aid process as well as see the big picture long-term. Before working at the district level, SPS-D said that he would visit every senior English class as a high school counselor to outline financial options and repayment plans. RHS-9/10GC observed the same behavior from his RHS students, who "see that sticker price, not realizing that's not ultimately what . . . [they] are going to pay. They see that. They just move on."

In a similar vein, RHS-CCC did not think that money is a huge barrier to college access for the majority of her students: "I actually feel fortunate that most of our kids are in poverty, because they get their college paid for." Between the College Bound scholarship, state need grants, and federal money, "they're well taken care of," but because of the first two resources, "they're probably forced to stay here." In terms of the role RHS-CCC plays in students' decisions on how far to go

away to college, she does require them to apply to at least one state school.

When asked if students were aware of the GU scholarships and financial resources available to them, such as Act Six and the Magis Commitment, RHS-CCC was quick to answer that these financial resources are "well marketed." RHS-9/10GC, who has worked at RHS less than half the time as RHS-CCC, was also aware of Act Six but primarily because he knew a student who won the scholarship years prior. On the other hand, he had never heard of the Magis Commitment before and had no idea that GU would cover the tuition for all Washington state Pell-grant recipients, even though this practice has been in place since 2018. In fact, he had several follow-up questions when he first learned about the Magis Commitment during his interview: "No, that's good to know. So, for the Latin word, whatever it was . . . I know like Whitworth will require I think it's a 3.25 for College Bound kids to get their tuition covered. Does Gonzaga have one?"

Whether or not RHS counselors are equally familiar with GU's scholarships and financial resources, all three of the GU admission staff interviewed acknowledged that they needed to do a much better job publicizing these opportunities. GU-AC-2 also gave important historical context that the Magis Commitment was intentionally "a slow rollout because we weren't really sure. We wanted to make sure we could sustain it." Although it has been in place for three years, GU did not have a name for it until recently.

Beyond perceptions, the reality is that all three GU admission staff shared personal anecdotes of admitted Pell-eligible students and their families not understanding or even knowing that they could take advantage of the Magis Commitment. Because the Magis Commitment had no name until this year and GU has not "yet seen a big increase," GU-AC-2 explained that GU admission counselors "called every single Pell-eligible student" this year to "walk them through the packets." She also gave an example of talking to one student and his mother in this process: "They had no idea that this was such a huge financial help to them, and the student is enrolled for this fall, because we took that time…"

It seems that communication around the Magis Commitment occurs during the acceptance stage from Student Financial Services as opposed to the recruitment or application stage. Due to concerns around financial sustainability, this strategy is more often used to yield Pell-eligible students who have already applied to the school instead of attracting new applicants. According to GU-AC-1, the Office of Admission coordinated with Student Financial Services to follow up with phone calls after the financial aid letters went out to admitted students and their families: "And sure enough, anyone we talked to, they were like, 'Wait, it's free? Like the tuition is covered? Are you kidding me?!'"

GU-AC-1 pointed out cost savings for local residents who choose to live at home instead of on campus, as did many of the other interview participants: "And then calling Spokane students, 'Like if you really want to live at home, you can, and then you don't have to pay for room and board.' And [that] just completely changed some people's lives…" RHS-CCC echoed this strategy in her responses around college affordability. Although she did not think that the cost of higher education was as significant a barrier for her low-income students but mostly for the middle class, she did acknowledge the challenge of paying for room and board: "Well, the money is not a barrier for Gonzaga or Whitworth if a student has a higher GPA, which gives them a little bit greater scholarship, and they can live at home and go. Being on campus, probably not."

At the district level, SPS-2 pushed back a little on this cost-saving strategy. He identifies for high school students the benefits of living on campus in terms of retention and academic success. SPS-D presumed that students would prefer to live on campus, as the Catalyst survey results indicated. Out of the thirteen high school students who completed the post-survey, eleven preferred to live on campus whereas only one preferred to live off campus and one respondent was not sure. Instead, SPS-D placed the onus on the university to either waive the on-campus living requirement, as EWU did, or better yet, to make it less of a financial barrier: "If you're going to require that, that's totally fine. Just make it way more financially affordable and a total package for students to understand." Overall, SPS-D

emphasized the importance of communicating college affordability and financial aid in a way that is explicit, simple, and early enough in the process: "And that's on us and everybody about financial literacy that we don't prioritize for our kids."

Theme 3: Improving School-University Interactions

While everyone interviewed generally portrayed a good rapport between GU admission and RHS counselors, each participant also had tangible suggestions on how to improve school-university interactions. RHS counselors tended to focus on reaching students early, sometimes even before middle school, and advocated for community college transfer pathways. GU admission counselors openly identified their capacity challenges as to where and when to distribute their time and energy due to finite human resources and budget constraints. Almost all of the interview participants touched on the importance of mentoring and how GU student leaders could be better trained to engage and support local youth with college aspirations. For instance, GU-AC-1 referenced a conference session she had attended about recruiting underserved students: "And I have no idea where this data came from, and I don't know if it's true. They said students decide in the fourth grade whether or not they're going to go to college."

RHS counselors supported initiating college conversations earlier, but early interventions should not be so much about going to college as much as they should be about encouraging kids to think about their future: "Start with not where do you want to go to college, but to say what do you want to be when you grow up? Oh, okay . . . Here are your pathways." RHS-9/10GC echoed similar sentiments about broadening young students' future possibilities through early exposure, but he also wanted to make sure that postsecondary pathways remained open and visible. For example, he recommended advertising the Magis Commitment much earlier: "So, they know that if I want to go to Gonzaga, I get the grades, it's not going to make me financially burdened for the rest of my life." When asked for his thoughts on what GU could do to attract local youth, RHS-9/10GC identified more mentoring and campus visits.

At the district level, SPS-D also underscored the long-lasting positive impact that campus visits can have but encouraged reaching even younger students. The SPS District T-2-4 initiative includes getting all fifth and sixth graders on a college or university campus. With the exception of GU, all of the postsecondary schools in Spokane, whether public or private, are very accommodating and hospitable with these requests. SPS-D pointed out that Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC) even provides a tour of their planetarium for the fifth-grade classes that have the solar system within their science unit.

Opportunity Northeast, including Catalyst, aims to provide familiarity. When asked how she thought this place-based initiative would impact local recruitment and enrollment of students from Northeast Spokane, GU-AC-2 answered, "I think it's going to be really positive. I think it's going to take time, because it's just not something that happens overnight . . . I think it will help break down some of these barriers that we've talked about."

Financial barriers have not only impacted prospective students but also where GU spends its time and resources recruiting geographically. Due to a "slight tension between budget and recruitment," GU-AC-1 reasoned that her department has to "think really strategically" and "use our data to identify where should we be." She referred to GU as "a destination school" where 83% of the students come from over 200 miles away.

Historically, not many RHS students enroll at GU. Both RHS counselors conveyed that most of their students attend one of the community colleges or EWU. Nonetheless, as the GU admission counselor for Spokane, GU-AC-2 revealed that she has the most contact and familiarity with RHS having completed her master's internship there as a counselor-in-training. GU-AC-2 also acknowledged her limited bandwidth in trying to respond to all of the various requests she regularly receives from local schools, "but I do try to keep up with those relationships."

Despite her close contact and familiarity with RHS, GU-AC-2 revealed, "In general, I don't feel like I have quite as many prep events that I'm

invited to at Rogers as I do at some of the other schools." With her assigned territories in California and Central Washington, GU-AC-3 confirmed the same strategic and data-driven recruitment approach that the GU admission director had outlined, but GU-AC-3 also pointed out a bias toward private high schools. She explained that the same approach would apply to local high schools in Spokane, prioritizing the schools that have "a good number of students that are applying and confirming with us." GU-AC-3 seemed hopeful about the impact that Catalyst could have on recruiting and admitting students of color "that are in our own backyard, because it just doesn't make sense that we have students who are from further away, you know, applying and confirming with us versus our students here in the area."

In addition to building and sustaining early relationships with elementary and middle schools, both RHS-CCC and SPS-D promoted the idea of establishing formal pathways and partnerships with the local community colleges. "Whatever that pipeline is to get our students to Gonzaga," RHS-CCC urged, "that it can happen. You know so whether it has to be the community college route, that we know that there's a good viable option for that." She recommended that Gonzaga design a program similar to Destination Eastern where students could dually enroll at EWU and one of the community colleges. Essentially, this partnership afforded students advising every term to ensure that they were taking classes that would transfer and count towards their four-year degree. In addition, according to RHS-CCC, students would receive an EWU identification card and bus pass and attend monthly get-togethers with an EWU advisor present.

SPS-D also strongly supported the community college route for two separate reasons: affordability and the opportunity for students to reset their GPA. Earning an associate degree at a community college nearly cuts in half higher education expenses and requires less student loans. He explained that going to community college first and then transferring to a four-year university – with that pathway already laid out from the very beginning – provides a fresh start from "whatever barriers, whatever life experiences, whatever trauma" students may have

endured in high school. He centered on "the hope that could be created for that student in high school . . . when they're in their senior year and they're looking at options."

Besides investing in relationships with elementary schools or community colleges, the common area that all six interview participants could agree on was the importance of mentoring. For example, RHS-9/10GC referenced the Sparks Mentoring Program between GU and RHS and its positive impact on their students. He noted that GU is probably the most active out of all the local universities in sponsoring these types of mentoring partnerships. When RHS-9/10GC first learned about the BRIDGE program at GU, he appreciated how much it could help first-generation students.

RHS-CCC affirmed the powerful influence of mentoring, both in terms of starting early and managing realistic expectations in sharing her thoughts about Catalyst and college students as summer fellows. She was adamant, however, in pointing out that mentors should be supportive but also help students establish realistic goals.

GU-AC-1 thought that student leaders at GU could use more training to accurately communicate what it takes to successfully apply to college. If they had the resources, GU-AC-1 would even love to run "a boot camp on campus" to help dispel any misinformation. GU-AC-2 loved the idea of inviting GU students who volunteer to mentor youth in the community to a basic training on college admission. The goal would not be to make them responsible for delivering this information to younger students but rather to raise their awareness in their mentoring relationships.

GU-AC-2 defined this potential collaboration as a "win-win" that would "help students keep their doors open." She acknowledged the youth who have taken advantage of GU's community mentoring programs but then ultimately are not admitted into the university: "Those are very difficult conversations to have because it is about preparation… When they come here, we want students to be able to succeed. And we didn't find that we thought that they would, based it off… their applications."

Theme 4: Connecting Cultural Identity with a College-Going Identity.

Closely related but not as formal or structured as peer mentoring, the counselors at both RHS and GU referred to the importance of role modeling to help foster a college-going culture. RHS-9/10GC shared, "A lot of our kids have known kids who go to SCC or even Eastern. Those [schools are] probably a little more comfortable for a lot of our kids, whereas they may not know very many Gonzaga students." He went on to clarify that building these early connections between RHS students and GU students would make GU feel more attainable: "I think the more that kids are exposed to individuals that go to the school and can get on campus… and it's not just basketball… Just any exposure for our kids is good exposure in making that connection."

SPS-D underscored the benefits of role modeling for historically underrepresented and traditionally marginalized students who rely heavily on personal recommendations from within their community to make post-graduation decisions. SPS-D paralleled this discernment process with African American students who consider whether or not to attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Not wanting to feel like a token minority, students may choose to go somewhere where they can feel comfortable and not representative of their entire race.

GU-AC-1 experienced firsthand the connection between cultural identity and college-going identity through her previous work teaching at a high school. She expressed excitement about Opportunity Northeast, referring to other colleges and universities that have similar college preparation programs in their area for underserved students. She "always thought that would be super cool if our office could do that" but acknowledged that they lacked "the people power to pull something like that off." The beauty of Opportunity Northeast is the built-in collaboration that invites campus departments and community partners to work collectively towards shared goals.

Role modeling, however, should not just occur at the high school level and then end once students get into college, according to a couple of the counselors from both RHS and GU who stressed the significance of promoting and growing University student resources. For instance, RHS-9/10GC suggested, "Advertising the supports that are on campus once they get there, like you can get a mentor for your first year of college. You know some of those things that make it less scary for our kids." Even GU-AC-3, who was the only admission counselor of color interviewed at GU, recommended expanding the Student Affairs department of Diversity, Inclusion, Community, & Equity (DICE) when asked what she would change to improve underrepresented student recruitment. Rather than focus on additional resources for her own department, she thought that bolstering diversity resources on campus would be most effective.

RHS-CCC had the most to contribute around parent outreach as a way to bridge cultural identity with college-going identity. She had encountered many parents who were at first resistant to their child going to college. In response to one mother who initially refused to let her daughter, an Act Six scholarship recipient, live on campus at WU, RHS-CCC convened "a very caring group of individuals that knew this student well" to have a meeting with the parent. Eventually, the mother changed her mind and let her daughter go.

As a former first-generation student herself, GU-AC-1 understood the disadvantages that affect not only first-generation students but low-income families in general. She discussed at length the college-pushing culture of wealthy families who pay for their kids SAT preparation courses. Both GU-AC-1 and GU-AC-2 confirmed this misperception, despite their continued efforts to dispel the need to be perfect. GU-AC-1 noted, "I always tell students we're not looking for perfection; we're looking for preparation." She elaborated on the detrimental effects that exceptionalism has on first-generation students, who do not have the parental role models to temper their academic setbacks or ambitions.

When asked how he thought Opportunity Northeast would impact local recruitment and enrollment of RHS students, SPS-D was both supportive and cautious. He noted that "other selective schools have summer programs, too, at varying levels" and wondered how Catalyst would

translate in the long run to students feeling wanted at GU. In comparison, he characterized his working relationship with EWU in which they have quarterly "real talk conversations."

On the other end of the spectrum, GU-AC-2 was very optimistic about the impact of Opportunity Northeast on local youth: "And then to know that there's a campus right here in your neighborhood who wants you to come be a part of it from early on. I think it's going to be very beneficial." How to get that message to local underrepresented students so that they feel wanted will be the ultimate challenge. As RHS-CCC summarized, "So I think whether Gonzaga University partners with the high school… or they partner with the community colleges and to keep those strong… Whatever that pipeline is to get our students to Gonzaga, that it can happen."

Discussion

Informed by the results, five recommendations promote a college-going identity and culture in Northeast Spokane that can help disrupt the generational poverty and signs of gentrification that threaten this geographical area. In turn, prioritizing local recruitment of historically underrepresented students will bring organizational change to GU as a predominantly white institution that invests in diversity, community outreach, and "solidarity with the poor and vulnerable."[106]

College Readiness and Geography of Opportunity

The analysis of GU first-year enrollment trends, coupled with RHS and SPS graduation and postsecondary plans, revealed major disparities. Although there has been steady improvement in the percentage of undergraduate students of color who enroll in GU from 16% in 2011 to 30% in 2021, the percentage of first-generation students and Pell grant recipients has steadily declined. In that same decade, less than half of GU's undergraduate students have been Washington residents, with the majority coming from the west side of the state, namely King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties.[107]

The numbers are even more bleak for RHS students who apply to GU. Although RHS

graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, and first year to sophomore persistence in college has dramatically improved in the past decade or so,[108] no more than ten to twenty RHS students out of approximately 325 graduating seniors have applied to GU each year since 2014.[109] This is only around five percent of the RHS graduating class who choose to even consider the Jesuit university that is less than three miles down the road. Furthermore, most college bound RHS students are not attending school far from home but rather enrolling at Eastern Washington University (EWU) or one of the two community colleges in Spokane.[110]

Beyond the college application, the rate of RHS and SPS students admitted to GU is comparatively low. Since 2011, the number of RHS admits has never reached double digits, whereas the number of confirmations has ranged from zero to six students at most.[111] In comparison, no more than 2.5% of all SPS graduating seniors have annually enrolled at GU since 2012, even though more than 50% has enrolled in a postsecondary program since 2016.[112] These postsecondary trends indicate that more and more RHS and SPS students are in fact going to college, but the vast majority are not attending GU, let alone applying.

College Immersion Programs Can Influence Postsecondary Aspirations

Schaefer's research on college immersion programs that begin as early as middle school demonstrates that these earlier educational interventions can "generate deeply positive understandings about college and college life."[113] Borrowing heavily from the two case studies that Schaefer examined, Catalyst did improve RHS students' perceptions of higher education overall. Even though all of the high school students already had postsecondary aspirations to attend a four-year university before starting the program, post-survey results revealed that Catalyst helped turn their worries and fears into curiosity and excitement. As Schaefer observed, "College is not frightening but familiar – no longer out of reach but a realistic goal for many."[114]

The biggest impacts of Catalyst came in the areas of sociocultural needs and college knowledge. After completing the program, students no longer

perceived sense of belonging and lack of diversity to be major college barriers, which is a significant finding in attracting students of color to a predominantly white institution. Catalyst participants also increased their understanding of the college admission process, financial aid, and academic preparation in terms of time management and group work with peers. They gained valuable insight on the key differences between high school and college, comparing and contrasting courses, professors, and level of student independence. Perhaps just as important, RHS students learned that college could be "fun," as this word appeared multiple times in the post-survey to describe GU. The initial success of this pilot suggests that an expanded college immersion program can have an even deeper impact on more students.

Place-Based Community Engagement

As effective as Catalyst may have been, much of its ongoing success lies in the PBCE framework's principles, which are a geographic focus, equal and collective emphasis on campus and community impact, long-term vision and commitment, and university-wide engagement that lives out the mission.[115] McNall et al. warn against "stand-alone projects that are disconnected from other related efforts," which may come across as transactional and short-lived instead of "realiz[ing] the synergies possible with more coordinated strategies."[116] As part of Opportunity Northeast, an educational workgroup comprised of campus and community stakeholders met regularly for a year to design and deliver a college immersion program that was just one piece of this place-based initiative.

Recommendations

1: Host Campus Tours with Local Elementary and Middle School Groups

Participants emphasized the importance of campus visits. Unfortunately, SPS-D attested that SPS schools have "the hardest time getting on Gonzaga's campus" in comparison to the other local postsecondary schools, as the SPS T-2-4 initiative begins with a college or university campus visit for fifth and sixth graders. SPS-D noted, "We have requested multiple times, and [GU's] campus visit office says, 'Here's a map.

Bring your kids anytime and do a self-directed tour.'" The comparative lack of hospitality is particularly detrimental for low-income and first-generation students who may suffer from imposter syndrome and need the additional encouragement to imagine themselves in a college setting according to SPS-D: "I want you to literally see yourself on this campus . . . Like students just need to see something to be familiar with it in the future . . . So that familiarity, I think, is missing for our kids." Therefore, make campus more open to elementary and middle school student groups through guided tours.

2: Bridge GU Cultural Clubs with SPS Diversity Clubs

Not only should GU increase its capacity to welcome younger students onto campus, but GU students can also go into the community to provide culturally relevant outreach to targeted demographics as a way to role model, build confidence, and connect cultural identity with a college-going identity. Given GU's reputation as a predominantly white institution, it is imperative for historically underrepresented students in the surrounding area to see students who look like them attending and thriving at GU.

Data indicated that more than half of the student participants became less concerned with sense of belonging /lack of diversity after just three days in the program. This may be attributed to the support of Summer Fellows, half of whom were current GU students of color. Nine out of the thirteen participants were "somewhat" to "extremely concerned" about sense of belonging and diversity. By the end of the program, however, ten out of the thirteen students were "not at all concerned" or only "slightly concerned," suggesting that the Summer Fellows may have played an important role in addressing students' worries.

Serendipitously, with the passage of the SPS racial equity resolution on June 10, 2020, it was resolved that the district "will invest in the development of a Person of Color-led Multi-Cultural Club in every single school."[117] As such, in fall of 2021 a local elementary and middle school reached out in the same week to the Unity Multicultural Education Center (UMEC) at GU to seek engagement opportunities between their diversity club and

college students of color. What transpired from one of these email inquiries is a pilot program between GU's Act Six Scholars, who are predominantly first-generation, low-income students of color, and Logan Elementary School's Diversity Club members. As service is a requirement of the Act Six Program, a small group of GU scholars now plan and facilitate a cultural activity on the Logan campus twice a month. Thus, build bridges between GU's cultural student organizations with the SPS multicultural clubs to offer culturally relevant, peer-led activities.

3: Improve and Expand Catalyst

Rich data, along with detailed feedback from the staff, faculty, and Summer Fellows involved, point to multiple suggestions on how to improve the pilot program. Some of these ideas range from big picture, such as structure and role clarification, to programmatic details involving icebreakers and a campus tour.

1. *Return to the original structure and capacity.* Catalyst was designed to accommodate forty ninth graders over the course of five days and four nights in the residence halls. Due to COVID-19, GU had to reduce the program to three days, eliminate the overnight portion, and not allow parents and families onto campus. In order to realize the full potential of this college immersion program, GU will need to return to its original design and capacity.
2. *Clarify and increase SPS representation and engagement.* Although there were a couple SPS representatives who served on the planning committee and a couple RHS chaperones who worked during the program itself, GU voices still far outnumbered the community involvement.
3. *Strengthen the role of Undergraduate Admission.* The Office of Admission has been very cooperative in supporting Catalyst. Their role is critical in influencing students' and their families' postsecondary plans and perceptions of GU, so much that Catalyst would benefit if they held co-ownership rather than merely being cooperative. After all, their acceptance or denial of students in the future literally determines college access, so their early

investment in local youth is key to building a P-16 educational pipeline.

4. *Further empower Summer Fellows.* Summer Fellows expressed that they wanted more responsibility to facilitate activities and help students with their writing. Following GU's BRIDGE model, CCE may also want to hire some Summer Fellows during the academic year to help plan Catalyst as part of the Educational Opportunity Workgroup. Having student representatives will add a fresh perspective that can relate more closely to the high school students GU is trying to serve.
5. *Assign a common reading in advance and a culminating legacy project.* GU has yet to determine if they will expand the number of courses offered during Catalyst from one to three. The latter allows for more depth whereas the former provides an opportunity for interdisciplinary approaches, such as reflecting on outdoor education through environmental justice and personal narrative. Regardless of the approach, GU would like to assign a common reading and a final project in advance, especially since a week is not a long time to complete coursework.
6. *Mandate faculty office hours.* In order to replicate some of the autonomy that comes with being a college student, especially around time management, the Catalyst working group intentionally built free time into the schedule and encouraged faculty office hours. Meeting a professor in their office can be intimidating for any student but may be beneficial to provide even more insight and structure on how and why faculty office hours operate.
7. *Incorporate icebreakers and community agreements at the start.* The students were very slow to warm up, and GU underestimated the effects of an isolating pandemic on the social skills of adolescents. Therefore, facilitating community agreements can clarify expectations around behavior and language.
8. *Foster teambuilding and promote nutritional education through group meal preparation.* Mealtimes were a favorite because they gave students the opportunity to make new friends and hang out with Summer Fellows. This teambuilding can be even stronger through group meal preparation. GU's Campus Kitchen has both the facility to cook together and the expertise to offer nutritional education in the process.

9. *Add a formal campus tour to the schedule.* A formal campus tour with an experienced Admission Ambassador that includes parents and families will increase the sense of hospitality and familiarity needed to welcome first-generation, low-income students of color at a PWI.
10. *Honor connection to place as well as historical and biological significance of the Spokane River during the rafting trip.* Since Opportunity Northeast is a place-based initiative, it is only sensible to point out GU's connection to place, the Indigenous land GU occupies, and the environmental importance of the Spokane River to past and present community. That way, river rafting can be both fun and educational.
11. *Involve more campus departments in Student Affairs and Mission Integration.* Having more GU departments involved to support the high school students' time on campus could enhance the program overall. For example, if river education and connection to the Spokane Tribe becomes a featured attraction, then partnerships with the Office of Sustainability and Tribal Relations would be prudent. Collaboration with Mission Integration and the Payne Center for Leadership Development, to name just a couple other campus departments, could also provide the distinction that a GU education affords.
12. *Build a robust and interactive Catalyst website.* A strong web presence is essential to publicizing this beneficial program to prospective students and their families, sharing best practices with other institutions interested in developing their own college immersion programs, and raising funds with potential donors. The website can also serve as a comprehensive resource portal for students and families who register, including an itinerary, packing list, liability forms and course syllabi.

4: Replace Act Six with a Scholarship Program that Prioritizes Local Recruitment

For the entire SPS District, only 1.7% to 3.2% of the graduating class has enrolled at GU since 2016.[118] For the 2022-2023 academic year, only three of the eight Act Six semi-finalists from the Spokane area are actually from an SPS high school, and none of them are from RHS. These low numbers beg the question of how many RHS and SPS students even applied for this full-need, full-tuition scholarship for which half of its recipients must contractually come from the Seattle-Tacoma area. Therefore, revamp or replace GU's Act Six scholarship with one that prioritizes local youth.

5: Market the Magis Commitment and Other Financial Aid Resources

Ironically, the biggest expense for GU may not have been the cost of tuition itself but missed opportunities with deserving students who choose not to apply, or possibly worse, get admitted but decide to go elsewhere, because the Magis Commitment is GU's best kept secret. Every single admission staff member interviewed had a story to share about an admitted student that they personally helped, because that student and their family was not aware of this financial resource. Therefore, formally market the Magis Commitment and the Act Six scholarship to all of the SPS schools — from elementary to high school and especially targeting the ones located in Northeast Spokane.

Further Research Recommendations

Longitudinal Study to Track Student Participation and College Success

Although the CCE collects a lot of data from the students who participate in their various youth programs and initiatives, CCE is just beginning to connect the data points from one program to the next. Anecdotally, CCE professionals may be aware of students who sign up for their programs as fourth graders in Campus Kids, continue as a middle schoolers in Connections, and then concludes with Sparks High School Mentoring. However, closely monitoring student participation and development over the years as well as tracking students through college acceptance, persistence, and graduation has not been feasible until perhaps now through Opportunity Northeast.

Focus Groups with Families of College Bound Children and Community College staff

The role of families in postsecondary decision-making should not be underestimated and in fact deserves more scholarly attention. Parents of first-generation students and low socioeconomic backgrounds may not know how to navigate the college admission and financial aid process, so conducting focus groups with parents and families in Northeast Spokane would help GU better understand their concerns and customize college access and support programs to their specific needs. Community college staff may offer insights into their support and marketing to their communities to further understand how they attract students and support them.

Best Practices from Other College Scholarship and Pathway Programs

Other college scholarship and pathway programs exist from which GU can learn best practices. For example, the Dean's Future Scholars (DFS) is an academic outreach program at the University of Nevada, Reno that has supported 1,357 first-generation, low-income students for over two decades.[119] DFS identifies students in the sixth grade from selected Title 1 schools and follows them through middle school, high school, and college.

Furthermore, Jesuit institutions, such as Loyola University Chicago and Boston College, are investing in their local youth through groundbreaking educational models, like Arrupe College and Messina College respectively. In 2013, when the Superior General of the Society of Jesus met with the Presidents and Board Chairs of AJCU, he told them that Jesuit higher education was "becoming less affordable and accessible and therefore leaving people behind."[120] This hard truth eventually led to the creation of Arrupe College, "a two-year program run through Loyola University Chicago that combines financial assistance and wraparound supports to help students who wouldn't otherwise have access to Jesuit education."[121] Similarly, Boston College recently merged with the financially struggling Pine Manor College to create a new two-year residential college as well as a new enrichment program for low-income and historically

underrepresented middle and high school students.[122] These are very encouraging developments for Jesuit institutions.

Conclusion

The overall impact of this investigation could have ripple effects on local youth and their families for many generations to come. Changing GU's reputation as a "destination college" through the recommendations could help build a two-way bridge that prioritizes the surrounding community over large, metropolitan cities that are hundreds, if not over a thousand miles away. Creating a college-going culture among local youth could create a return on investment that reduces generational poverty, curbs gentrification, and strengthens campus-community partnerships. Lofty as these impacts may seem, it only takes a few influential SPS students to make it to GU and initiate a word-of-mouth, grassroots movement that increases application numbers.

Although the recommendations, including the improvement and expansion of Catalyst, are specific to the relationship between GU and RHS (or GU and Spokane), the lessons learned, and challenges overcome nevertheless could benefit similar schools seeking to start their own college immersion programs. Hopefully, the fruits of the labor could also be enjoyed by colleagues elsewhere. Most of this information will be available on a publicly accessible website, designed primarily for prospective students and their families. Nonetheless, peer institutions will also likely find the online resources beneficial as they chart their own course for enrollment.

Beyond college readiness, an overarching hope is that institutions of higher learning will discern on who they are really trying to serve. Whether it is a land-grant college or university or a liberal arts institution, schools should periodically examine their identity and purpose as it connects to place. For example, in 1865 Father Joseph Cataldo, a Jesuit missionary, traveled to the Pacific Northwest to educate children of the Upper Spokane Indians. Ironically, the university he founded two years later would only accept white students due to city funding.[123]

Over a century-and-a-quarter later, GU has the opportunity to course correct, at least to some degree. GU's mission provides the why. Place-based community engagement offers the how. Where and when is here and now, and the who matters just as much as the what. As a result of this study, educational leaders can discern for themselves who they are currently serving, who they have yet to reach, and what they are willing to attempt in order to fill the gap.

Appendix A: College Immersion Program Pre- and Post-Survey (students)

Section I: Plans After High School

1. I am considering all of the following after high school:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
A. Apprenticeship	☐	☐	☐
B. Technical School (Certificate)	☐	☐	☐
C. Two-Year Community College (associate degree)	☐	☐	☐
D. Four-Year College or University (bachelor's degree)	☐	☐	☐
E. Military	☐	☐	☐
F. Other – Please explain:			

Section II: Your Thoughts and Feelings about College

2. What word best describes your feelings about college?
- Curious
- Excited
- Uninterested
- Worried
- Unsure
- Other: _____

3. The following are common reasons for going to college. How important are each of these reasons to you?

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Extremely important
A. To learn new things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. To make more money	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. To have more career options	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. To leave home and start fresh	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. To make new friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. If you have other reasons for going to college, please explain.

5. The following are common barriers to going to college. How concerned are you about each barrier?

	Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Somewhat concerned	Moderately concerned	Extremely concerned
A. Academic difficulty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Too expensive	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Leaving home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Need to help support family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. Sense of belonging / lack of diversity (not seeing people like me in college)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. If you have other barriers or reasons for <u>not</u> going to college, please explain.

Section III: College Selection

Even if you do not plan on going to college, we are interested in learning more about your understanding of and interest in the variety of postsecondary schools.

7. After you graduate, what type of postsecondary school do you plan to attend?
- A two-year community college
- A four-year college or university
- No preference
- Not sure

8. What type of college or university would you prefer to attend?
- Public (state school)
- Private
- No preference
- Not sure

9. How big a college or university would you prefer to attend?
- Small (less than 5,000 students)
- Mid-size (between 5,000 to 15,0000 students)
- Large (more than 15,000 students)
- No preference
- Not sure

10. What type of college or university would you prefer to attend?
- Faith-based
- Secular (no religious affiliation)
- No preference
- Not sure

11. How far away would you like to go for college?
- I would like to stay close to home (e.g., schools in Spokane within 5 miles).
- I would like to not go that far (e.g., schools in Cheney and Coeur d'Alene within 35 miles).
- I would like to leave home for college (e.g., schools more than 35 miles away).
- No preference
- Not sure

12. Where would you like to live during your first year of college?
- I would like to commute from home.
- I would like to live on campus.
- I would like to live near my college off-campus but not at home.
- No preference
- Not sure

Section IV: College Knowledge

	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
13. I know what type of classes I need to take to get into college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Besides GPA and test scores, I know what types of co- curricular activities make a college applicant well-rounded.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I know what the SAT or ACT are.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. I understand how financial aid can help me pay for college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. I am familiar with College Bound scholarships.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. I am familiar with the college admissions process.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section V: Academic Preparation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
19. I am comfortable asking the teacher for help when I need it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. I am comfortable working with my peers on writing assignments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. I am confident with my reading ability.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. I am confident in my writing skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. I use my time effectively between academics and the other parts of my life (e.g., family, friends, work, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section VI: College Support

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
24. My family is supportive of me going to college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Many of my friends plan to go to college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. I know people I can talk to if I have questions about college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. I have teachers who believe I can succeed in college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. A counselor has talked with me about my future after high school with college as a potential goal.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part VII: Open-Ended Questions

29.   Pre – What do you hope to gain or learn from this College Immersion Program?
          Post – What did you gain or learn from this College Immersion Program?

30.   How do you think college classes compare to your middle school or high school classes?

31.   How do you think college professors compare to your middle school or high school teachers?

32.   What three words would you use to describe Gonzaga University?

Demographic Questions

(Note: This optional section will <u>not</u> be part of the survey but rather the College Immersion application.)

33. Gender
- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Prefer not to answer

34. Race and Ethnicity
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic of any race
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Two or more races
- White
- Prefer not to answer

35. Parents' or Guardians' Highest Level of Education

	Parent #1		Parent #2
	• No formal education		• No formal education
	• Less than a high school diploma		• Less than a high school diploma
	• High school diploma		• High school diploma
	• Vocational training		• Vocational training
	• Associate degree		• Associate degree
	• Bachelor's degree		• Bachelor's degree
	• Master's degree		• Master's degree
	• Professional degree		• Professional degree
	• Doctorate degree		• Doctorate degree
	• Unknown		• Unknown
	• Not applicable		• Not applicable

36. Annual Household Income
- Under $20,000
- $20,001 - $40,000
- $40,001 - $60,000
- $60,001 - $80,000
- $80,001 - $100,000
- $100,001 or over
- Prefer not to answer

Appendix B: Interview questions for Gonzaga University Undergraduate Admissions Staff

Here are the questions we will explore during our discussion:

1. What are Undergraduate Admission's goals and strategies for recruiting historically underrepresented students, specifically those who identify as students of color, first-generation, and Pell-eligible?

2. What are Undergraduate Admission's goals and strategies for recruiting students from different geographical areas? How does this support or challenge your goals and strategies for recruiting historically underrepresented students?

3. What are GU's local feeder high schools? How have these relationships been established, cultivated, and sustained?

4. What is the relationship, if any, between GU and Rogers High School (RHS)?

a. How many new students from RHS apply, get accepted, and attend GU each year since 2011?

b. What do you think are the common barriers to RHS students attending GU?

c. How does this relationship with RHS compare to GU's relationship with other local high schools?

5. Including the College Immersion Program, how do you think Opportunity Northeast will impact local recruitment and enrollment of students from Northeast Spokane?

6. Are there any questions or comments you have for me?

Appendix C: Interview questions for Rogers High School Counselors

1. In your role as a counselor at Rogers High School (RHS), how have you helped students view college as a viable option, especially for those who identify as first-generation, low-income, and/or students of color?

2. How do you advise students on where to apply for college? What are the primary factors that determine how far or how close students are willing to go?

3. What are RHS's local feeder colleges and universities? How have these relationships been established, cultivated, and sustained?

4. What is the relationship, if any, between RHS and GU?

a. How many RHS students apply, get accepted, and attend GU each year since 2011?

b. What do you think are the common barriers to RHS students attending GU?

c. How does this relationship with GU compare to RHS's relationship with other local colleges and universities?

5. Including the College Immersion Program, how do you think GU's Opportunity Northeast place-based initiative will impact local recruitment and enrollment of RHS students?

6. Are there any questions or comments you have for me?

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