LA PROMISE FUND

BLACK COLLEGE SUCCESS INITIATIVE

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A. Significance

The LA Promise Fund (LAPF) is applying for *Education Innovation and Research Program -- Early Phase* funding Under Absolute Priority 1 (Demonstrate a Rationale) and Absolute Priority 2 (Field-Initiated Innovations -- General) to support the launch and early implementation of the organization's Black College Success Initiative (BCSI). BCSI will partner with Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) high schools and charter high schools to create a college success pathway that empowers more Black students from SLATE-Z high schools to complete a Bachelor's degree. Responses to Competitive Preference Priorities 2 and 3 follow the project narrative.

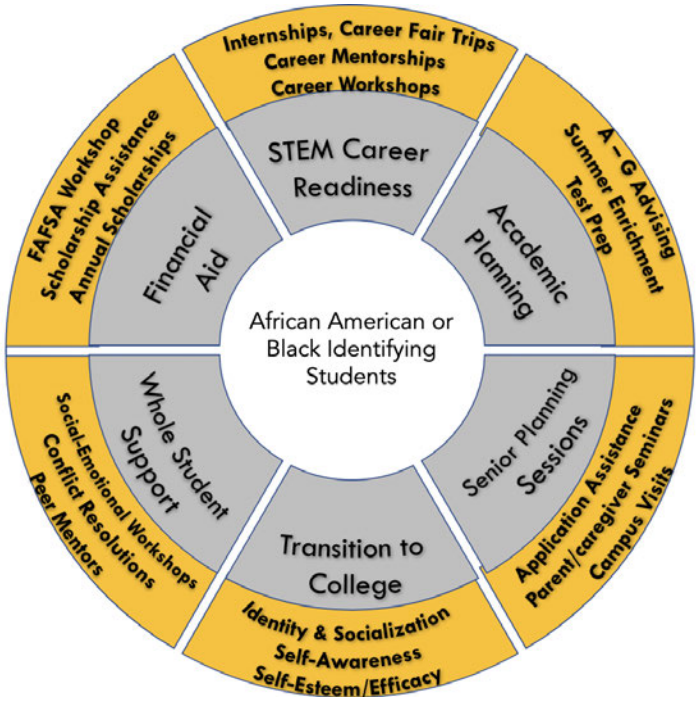
BCSI will target schools in the South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z), a federally designated Promise Zone**.** SLATE-Z is a place-based initiative and collective impact partnership whose mission is to *revitalize South Los Angeles by moving residents to economic opportunity.* LAPF has served as a key leader in the SLATE-Z Promise Zone efforts from the beginning; the agency is on the Executive Leadership team and is one of four entities that leads the SLATE-Z Education Work Group, providing leadership to the transformative educational initiatives in the neighborhood. The relationships nurtured through LAPF's SLATE-Z participation and long-standing commitment to South Los Angeles (South LA) will facilitate BCSI implementation and promote integration with other efforts underway.

Development or Demonstration of Promising New Strategies. Education has been a solid determinant in the United States of socio-economic advancement (Teasley, et al., 2017). The latest statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020) depicting median weekly earnings by level of education shows full-time workers without a high school diploma earned $630 versus $1,414 for those with a Bachelor's degree and $3,089 for those with education

beyond a Bachelor's. According to the 2019 "State of Higher Education for Black Californians" report by Campaign for College Opportunity, although the high school graduation rate for Black students has increased, there are still significant gaps in post-secondary enrollment, attendance and persistence compared with other groups, particularly white. Although 65% meet California State University (CSU)/University of California (UC) admission requirements, only 26% and 6%, respectively, enroll. Sixty-three percent of Black students who enroll in community college leave without attaining a degree, and only 9% and 43%, respectively, graduate from CSU/UC within four years; 43% and 75% graduate within six years.

Outcomes for Black students in SLATE-Z closely mirror those in California overall. Given their historic marginalization, primarily low socioeconomic status, and low rates of college readiness, enrollment and persistence, EdSource has defined these students as high-needs (2020). In order to address this historical, contemporary and seemingly intractable problem of educational outcome disparity, BCSI will build upon existing strategies and integrate and infuse new promising and evidence-based programmatic elements and approaches to the work.

Figure 1: BCSI Framework



As a holistic, multi-year support system, the BCSI model integrates a set of evidence-based practices that have proven effective with Black students into a cohesive whole. It is the comprehensive approach that sets the BCSI model apart. There are a plethora of college access service providers in South LA delivering one or two components of our model, but none that have implemented this type of integrated framework. Research on college readiness by Conley (2011) shows that high school seniors need a whole student support system to demystify the process of applying, attending, and completing college and BCSI offers exactly that. Success will be enhanced through the intentional implementation of effective strategies that are evidence-based and evidence informed, thus not necessarily considered "new." However, the use of these strategies collectively and deliberately as part of a broad approach to college access and persistence is an innovative approach to Black student success.

A second aspect that differentiates BCSI is our dual focus on direct service and systems change. In addition to BCSI's core direct service components, we will design and implement the College Access Network (CAN), a collaborative of college counselors from our partner schools and college access service providers who will set a collective agenda for improving college access service delivery for Black students, embracing and employing culturally affirming strategies for working with Black students, and coordinating services so that students can be cross-referred to programs and gaps can be identified and filled. Research has shown that college expectations and college-related interactions with school counselors, teachers, and coaches have an impact on students' odds of enrolling in college (Bryan, Farmer-Hinton, Rawls & Woods, 2017).

CAN will be informed by lessons learned from LAPF's Network for School Improvement (NSI), funded in 2018 by the Gates Foundation that has partnered with 12 SLATE-Z schools to improve outcomes for students, with a focus on 9th grade college-ready on-track outcomes for Black students. Effective practices employed by NSI that will be incorporated into CAN include:

- Establish Network to Problem Solve Collectively for Greater Impact
- Landscape and Gap Analysis of Direct Services
- Data Analysis of Student Trends in Grades and A-G Courses[1]
- Building Network Participants' Capacity to Improve Practices
- Targeted Supports Based on Student Needs

Disseminating Results. BCSI has been designed with an eye toward replication. We currently are in the planning stages for our formal launch later in the 2021-22 school year and have created a BCSI handbook that is a repository for all materials developed by the project. To-date, these include descriptions of project strategies, marketing materials, position descriptions, program forms (e.g., intake forms, data release forms), and descriptions of potential higher education partners. As the initiative rolls out, we will expand the breadth of materials within each of these categories, include materials related to our systems change network efforts, and add in evaluation results, best practices and lessons learned, and recommendations for replication. The handbook will be shared with interested parties at no cost. In addition to the handbook, in Years 4 and 5 we will develop a webinar series that will be accessible on the BCSI website that will facilitate replication of the model.

While the BCSI team will target dissemination efforts to practitioners, the project also will contribute to the research base on college access and persistence for Black students through

[1] In California, students must complete, with a C or better, a series of classes known as the "A-G" courses to be eligible for admission to a public four-year university in the state.

the mixed methods, quasi-experimental evaluation designed by our research/evaluation team from the University of Southern California (USC) Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice. The project evaluators have published extensively in peer reviewed journals such as *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *Journal of College and Character*, *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Journal for Multicultural Education*, and *Western Journal of Black Studies*. They also present regularly at prestigious conferences, including the American Educational Research Association annual conference, the *International Colloquium on Black Males in Education* conference, and the *Association for the Study of Higher Education* annual conference. (Please see curriculum vitae for Dr. Cole and Dr. Newman in Appendix B for additional information.)

B. Quality of the Project Design

Conceptual Framework. The components that comprise the BCSI direct service model are detailed in Table 1 below. BCSI's conceptual framework is closely aligned with the research base around college access and persistence, thus having a rationale as required under Absolute Priority 1. During this early phase, BCSI will establish a cohort of 150 12th graders each year from six partner schools in SLATE-Z, support those students through the college application, admissions and enrollment process, provide $2,500 per year in scholarships to promote persistence (Institute for Higher Education, 2021; Washington State Achievers, 2010), and connect each cohort to ongoing supports at their respective colleges/universities. In addition, we will provide lighter touch supports to approximately 1,000 9th-11th grade students over the grant period by connecting them to an Academic Advisor who will connect them to college and career early awareness programming, summer enrichment opportunities at highly selective institutions, and advise them on class selection to meet college admissions requirement based on the

University of California/California State University A-G approved high school course list (2018). Ultimately, we will create a pipeline of Black students ready for the more intensive support that we will provide in 12th grade, increasing their preparation for college admissions.

We are in the process of outreaching to partner K-12 schools and 4-year colleges and universities across the country with whom we will collaborate to provide a warm hand off from high school to college. We have targeted higher education partners that have a range of support available for Black students, as research by Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso (2000) shows that students from historically marginalized populations need essential support such as housing, mental health and financial aid to sustain enrollment and actively participate in college activities.

The cohort design is based on research by Kosinski-Collins, Godsoe & Epstein (2017), Mcgee (2020) and Washington State Achievers (2010) showing that the cohort model provides an extended family and creates a sense of belonging. Aligned with Knight-Manuel et al's 2019 study on creating a culturally responsive college going culture for Black males, the BCSI framework integrates culturally relevant strategies across all facets of programming. For example, connecting students to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is an option typically overlooked by California school counselors, who focus on admission to the California public universities and push students who are not on track for UC/CSU admission toward community college. Similarly, pairing college freshmen with peer mentors, as BCSI will do, has been shown to support matriculation and persistence in all academic disciplines, career opportunities, and access to critical resources (Kosinski-Collins, Godsoe, and Epstein, 2017; Pon-Berry, et al, 2017; Washington State Achievers, 2010).

Table 1: Framework Components

Framework Component	Key Elements
Academic Planning (9th – 11th Grade)	Academic advising sessions serve as an entry point for understanding students' needs and interests so they can be connected to services and supports aligned with their goals, including STEM career readiness supports detailed below. Emphasis on STEM due to Black underrepresentation in STEM majors/fields and CA's high-growth STEM career sectors. ● Recommendations for SAT/ACT, conversations on how to access AP/IB courses, tutoring referrals, summer enrichment programs emphasizing STEM on highly selective college/university campuses, and community service opportunities.
Career Readiness (9th – 12th Grade)	Early exposure to high-demand careers emphasizing STEM but encompassing other fields of interest to BCSI participants through career readiness workshops, career fair trips, career mentorship and referrals to supports such as ● Career awareness and exposure through LAPF's SLATE-Z Career Pathways Program ● Summer Enrichment Programs - BCSI will subsidize participation in university programs that provide STEM early exposure, such as North Carolina and Xavier (New Orleans, LA), who lead the nation in engineering and pre-med programs, respectively. ● Support in applying for paid internships through LAPF's The Intern Project, which offers internships in STEM, the arts and other fields of interest to students. 10 slots will be reserved for BCSI students each year.
Financial Aid (11th and 12th Grade, Scholarships through College Completion)	● Financial literacy seminars for parents/caregivers and annual FAFSA workshops for parents and students conducted by a partner HBCU ● Cal Grant supports ● Annual $2,500 scholarships through college completion
Senior Planning Sessions (12th Grade)	● Customized workshops based on information retrieved during intake, including GPA, SAT/ACT scores, extra-curricular activities, potential college major (and minor). ● College visits, parent/family workshops on trends in higher education, academic supports, SAT/ACT preparation services, college ambassadors/peer mentors, summer bridge, and connection to TRIO educational opportunity outreach programs (and similar programs). ● Support STEM career pathways by identifying colleges/universities partners with wrap-around support systems (e.g., peer mentors, tutoring centers, research opportunities) and a graduation record higher than the national average for Black students in select STEM majors, e.g., Biology, Electrical Engineering, Computer Science.

Transition to College (12th Grade - College Completion)	• Seminars led by college/university professors, education, and civic leaders, to enhance high school students' self-esteem, self-efficacy, identity, study-skills, and self-awareness before they leave home to attend college, supporting the ongoing development of their identity as college-bound students.
Whole Student Supports (12 Grade - College Completion) .	Supports to help students navigate the often daunting college admissions process and transition to college, as well as to promote college persistence. • 12th graders: Referrals to counselors/school-based psychologists and certified community-based service providers specializing in social-emotional support. • College Students: Peer mentors to support adjustment to college, connect students to peer networks that create a sense of belonging, and ensure students are aware of mental health and wellness support available to them on campus.

Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes. LAPF staff held a series of meetings with our evaluation team from the University of Southern California to develop and refine project goals, objectives and outcomes, delineated in Table 2, below.

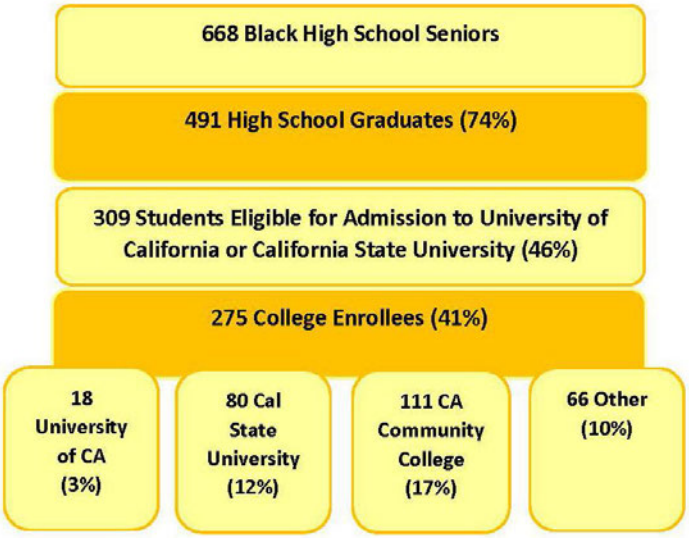
Table 2: Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

Objective	Outcome
Goal 1: Students have a strong sense of academic self-efficacy	
Students feel confident about navigating the college admissions process	• Statistically significant increase from pre to post-survey in percentage of students who feel confident about navigating the college admissions process
Students believe that they are prepared for college success	• Statistically significant increase from pre to post-survey in percentage of students who believe that they are prepared for college success
Students see STEM majors and careers as viable options	• Statistically significant increase from pre to post-survey in percentage of students who see STEM majors and careers as viable options
Students who believe that they will have the financial support needed to attend a 4-year college/university and obtain their degree	• Statistically significant increase from pre to post-survey in percentage of students who believe that they will have the financial support needed to attend a 4-year college/university and obtain their degree
Goal 2: Increase rates of 4-year college enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment	

Students apply to 4-year colleges/universities	● Participating students will apply for admission to 4-year colleges/universities at statistically significant higher rates than the control group
Students admitted to 4-year colleges/universities	● Participating students will be admitted to 4-year colleges/universities at statistically significant higher rates than the control group
Students enroll at 4-year colleges/universities	● Participating students will enroll at 4-year colleges/universities at statistically significant higher rates than the control group
Students persist in college from first to second year persistence rate for 1st-year students	● Participating students have statistically significant higher first to second year college persistence rates than the control group
Students graduate from a 4-year college/university in 4 to 6 years	● Participating students will obtain Bachelor's degrees in 4-6 years at a statistically significant higher rate than the control group
Goal 3: Create a stronger college going culture beginning in 9th grade for Black students at SLATE-Z partner schools	
Create a network of college counselors and college access partners to establish and maintain coordinated, culturally relevant college access services for Black students	● CAN has a minimum of 12 participants ● Maintain an average of 75% or greater meeting attendance
Deepen understanding and use of relationship-building strategies that effectively engage Black students	● Statistically significant increase from pre to post-survey in percentage of participants who feel they are building strong relationships with Black students
Increase use of common, culturally relevant college access practices across the network	● Adopt at least one common, culturally relevant practice each year ● Each year, increase the percentage of CAN participants who have high expectations for Black students

Project Design Aligned with Needs of Target Population. BCSI is designed to meet the critical need to address gaps in college readiness, persistence and completion among Black Students resulting from decades of disinvestment and educational inequity. In our target SLATE-Z community, there are over 3,000 Black students enrolled in public schools. Outcomes for SLATE-Z Black students closely mirror California overall, as reflected in the graphic below

reflecting 2017-18 school year data for SLATE-Z public schools (CDE Dataquest & Education Data Partnership).



In California, a key indicator of college readiness is being on track to complete, with a grade of C or better, the "A-G" courses required for admission to a public four-year university in the state. A 2019-20 analysis of A-G on-track data (California Department of Education, 2021) revealed that in SLATE-Z, less than half of all students were on-track to complete these courses. While that overall rate is very low, even more telling is the disparity in A-G on-track rates between Black and Latinx students. Only 36% of Black students were on-track, compared with 56% of Latinx students.

LAUSD has an average student to college counselor ratio of 488:1, almost double the 250:1 rate recommended by the American School Counselors Association (National Association of College Admission Counseling, n.d.) However, the landscape analysis that we have conducted in preparation to launch BCSI revealed that community-based college access providers are abundant in SLATE-Z. For example, one of our target schools currently has seven partners providing some type of college access support. It is not a lack of college access

resources that explains the lower college attendance and persistence rates of SLATE-Z Black students. There is something deeper at play around how these services are being delivered. BCSI takes a holistic approach, interweaving a set of research-based practices into a comprehensive direct service model, while also aiming to change the way the college access supports are being delivered by school college counselors and external providers by creating an integrated, culturally relevant approach to improving college readiness, enrollment and persistence.

In conceptualizing BCSI, our objective is not simply to add another college access program to the plethora that exist, but to fill gaps in programming at the secondary school level, add deeper supports once students reach college, and bring together a collective of college access service providers and college counselors focused exclusively on Black students to analyze the root causes of disparities in college outcomes, develop and adopt universal standards of excellence for service delivery, increase utilization of research-based, culturally affirming practices and coordinate services.

C. Adequacy of Resources and Quality of the Management Plan

Management Plan. LAPF is an education non-profit organization whose mission is to improve academic achievement as well as college and career access and success for students in the Russell Westbrook Why Not? Academy, SLATE-Z and beyond. We serve as the charter operator for Russell Westbrook Why Not? Middle School and Russell Westbrook Why Not? High School while also implementing high profile programs and engagement opportunities available to students and teachers across Los Angeles County, creating vibrant community hubs and partnerships that foster motivated, engaged, and directed students poised for academic, professional, and personal success.

Since 2007, LA Promise Fund has been at the forefront of public school reform and continues to demonstrate significant gains in student achievement. The impact of our work is reflected in a variety of indicators. In the decade that we partnered with LAUSD to operate West Adams Preparatory High School and Manual Arts High School, the number of seniors accepted to a four-year college rose dramatically from baselines of 9% and 18%, respectively, to 44% and 45%. There was also tremendous growth in graduation rates, overall college acceptance rates, and FAFSA/Dream Act completion rates.

LAPF has the infrastructure needed to manage all aspects of grant implementation. We have extensive experience managing large government and private foundation grants and we have comprehensive financial management and accounting procedures in place to ensure proper fiscal controls and funds management. Procedures are reviewed and updated regularly by the Director of Finance and the LAPF governing board reviews and approves changes. The Director of Finance has oversight for school and grant budgets that include federal, state, and local funds. The fiscal policies and procedures cover all aspects of fiduciary management including accounting procedures (bank reconciliations and basis of accounting), internal controls (including segregation of duties), financial planning, budgeting and reporting, revenue and accounts receivable, expenses and accounts payable, and asset management.

We have effectively managed multiple state and federal projects and submitted all reports on time, including U.S. Department of Education Assistance for Arts Education Development and Dissemination, California Department of Education (CDE) After School Enrichment and Safety, CDE Middle School Foundation Academy, and CA Community College Chancellor's Office Strong Workforce program.

As detailed in the *Qualifications of Key Personnel* subsection, we will have a highly seasoned project team in place to effectively plan, implement and evaluate all facets of BCSI, including a full-time Project Director, full-time Data and Analytics Director, and beginning in Year 2, a full-time Associate Director, as well as two Academic Advisors in Year 1 with an additional two Academic Advisors hired each year. The timeline below delineates key dates, milestones, and responsibilities.

Milestones	Resp. Party[2]	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
		Q 1	*Q 2*	*Q 3*	*Q 4*	*Q 1*	*Q 2*	*Q 3*	*Q 4*	*Q 1*	*Q 2*	*Q 3*	*Q 4*	*Q 1*	*Q 2*	*Q 3*	*Q 4*	*Q 1*	*Q 2*	*Q 3*	*Q 4*
Project Infrastructure & Grant Reporting																					
Recruit, hire and onboard all staff, add 2 Academic Advisors each year	PD, CSO																				
Professional development for new Academic Advisors	PD, CSO																				
Hold Quarterly Advisory Committee meetings	PD, CSO																				
Hold regular staff meetings, team meetings and individual supervisory meetings	PD, CSO																				
Establish budget tracking protocols	FD																				
Work with consultant to develop and update CRM	DD																				
Prepare and submit annual and final performance reports with financial and performance measure data	PD, DD, FD																				
Direct Service Component																					
Outreach to partner high schools and colleges,	PD																				

[2] PD-Project Director; CSO=Chief Strategic Officer; DD=Data and Analytics Director; AD=Associate Director; AA=Academic Advisors; FD=Finance Director; PI + ET=Principal Investigator and Evaluation Team; EP=External Provider; CP=LAPF Career Program Staff; CAN=College Access Network

establish and renew Memoranda of Understanding																				
BCSI orientation (parents/caregivers, students, HS, colleges/universities)	PD, AD, AA																			
Senior planning sessions (Intake for BCSI Students	AA																			
College application workshops	AA																			
SAT prep workshops	EP																			
FAFSA workshop	AA																			
Self-awareness seminars	EP																			
Black College Expo	PD, AD																			
Academic advising	AA																			
Peer mentor training	PD																			
College visits	PD AD																			
College-based summer enrichment activities	EP																			
Career awareness activities & internships	CP																			
Fundraising brunch																				
Systems Change Component																				
Conduct landscape analysis of college access partners at BCSI schools	PD, AD																			
Recruit college access partners and school counselors for CAN	PD, AD																			
Establish Network, hold monthly Network meetings	AD, CSO																			
Network conducts deeper landscape and gap analysis	AD, CSO,																			

and develops collective impact strategies, protocols for collaboration	CAN																			
Evaluation																				
Program development & logistical planning (Institutional Review Board)	PI + ET																			
Establish data sharing agreements between LAPF, USC and partner schools	PI + ET, DD																			
Data collection Year 1 - 5 interviews; web-based surveys observations, student academic data	PI + ET, DD																			
Data analysis & program assessment Year 1-5 (December, June-July)	PI + ET																			
Final data analysis & dissemination	PI + ET																			
Develop data dashboard and annual report for community/layperson audience	DD																			

Qualifications of Key Personnel. LAPF has assembled an exceptional team to lead and implement BCSI. Resumes of key LAPF personnel and the evaluation team are included in Appendix B, along with a job description for the Academic Advisor and Data and Analytics Director positions, as those are to be hired. Biographies for key team members are found below:

[redacted], Ed.D., Senior Director of College Success (100% FTE). [redacted] joined LAPF in July 2021 to lead BCSI. He previously served as the Regional Director of CalStateTEACH, recruiting and enrolling the largest cohort of Black Male teaching credential candidates in the state. Prior to CalStateTEACH, Kirk served as the Vice President of Educational Services for College Bound. He earned a Doctorate in P-12 Educational Leadership from California State University, Fullerton with a dissertation entitled *Algebra matters: An*

ethnographic study of successful African American male Algebra 1 students in a suburban middle school.

[redacted] **LAPF Chief Strategic Officer.** [redacted] is working with [redacted] to design, launch and implement BCSI and will bring her extensive experience in education reform to the continuous improvement component of this initiative. [redacted] brings 20+ years of experience designing and supporting strategic education reform initiatives focused on social justice and equity of outcomes for students from underserved populations, including almost a decade in education philanthropy. At the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, her investments (including the Washington State Achievers program) focused on increasing the national high school completion rate and the college acceptance rate for students of color. [redacted] earned an M.A. in Not-for-Profit Leadership from Seattle University.

[redacted]**, Ph.D., Evaluator.** [redacted] will be leading the research and evaluation effort for BCSI. He is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education and co-founded and co-directs USC's Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice. His areas of research include race/ ethnicity, diversity, college student experiences, and learning. Previously he served as an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Hawaii, Manoa (Honolulu). He was also a faculty member at Marquette University. [redacted] has published over 25 articles and book chapters and is featured in the major journals for higher education and other related fields. He received his Ph.D. degree at Indiana University, Bloomington.

[redacted]**, Ph.D., Evaluator.** [redacted] will be working with [redacted] to design and implement the BCSI evaluation. He is an Associate Professor in the School of Behavioral and Applied Sciences, Department of Higher Education, at Azusa Pacific University.

[redacted] focuses his research primarily on outcomes, inequities, and undergraduate student experiences in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). He has served as a consultant to the National Science Foundation's Colloquy on Minority Males and is co-editor of the volume Students of Color in STEM (part of the New Directions for Institutional Research series; Wiley Periodicals, Inc., 2010). He holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education and Organizational Change from UCLA.

In addition to the LAPF team and our evaluation partners, BCSI has an Advisory Committee of high profile and experienced civic, educational and entertainment leaders lending their expertise to the development of sustainable high-impact practices. Advisory Committee members include [redacted] (LA City Council Member), [redacted], Ph.D. ([redacted] and [redacted] Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education), [redacted] and [redacted] (Service Station Foundation), and [redacted] (Associate Vice Chancellor of Enrollment/Dean of Undergraduate Admission at University of California, Berkeley). Their commitment is evidenced, in part, by the attached Letter of Support from [redacted] and the $500,000 contribution from Service Station Foundation that enables us to significantly exceed our Year 1 match requirement.

Reasonable Costs. Project costs are reasonable given the depth of support provided to students, coupled with the broader systems change effort. Seven hundred and fifty (750) students will participate in successive 12th grade cohorts over the grant period, with support extending through college completion. Over the five-year grant cycle, 1,000 students in 9th-11th grades will receive lighter touch supports, but a significant number of those will become cohort members, so they don't represent an unduplicated count. If we assume that half of the 9th-11th graders become cohort members, that is an unduplicated count of 1,250. With a federal request

of $4,000,000, that is an average cost of $3,200 per student. Importantly, that investment includes significant funds allocated for evaluation, so the value of the investment will extend beyond the number of students directly served by adding to the research base around effective practices for increasing college access and persistence for Black students.

Ensuring Feedback and Continuous Improvement. LAPF has built in multiple mechanisms that facilitate ongoing feedback and continuous improvement. The Senior Director of College Success and Chief Strategic Officer will meet with the Advisory Committee on a quarterly basis to check in on progress, discuss lessons learned, and elicit the Committee's feedback regarding challenges that arise. The evaluation team will present findings to the Advisory Committee semi-annually and facilitate discussions around recommendations for improvements based on results. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee will be factored in as project leaders and staff determine programmatic adjustments to be made based on evaluation findings.

The full BCSI team will meet on a monthly basis to discuss bigger picture issues, engage in planning and review interim project results. The team will strategize about follow up plans for addressing any issues that arise and assign responsibilities, and updates on follow-up plans will be a regular agenda item at monthly full team meetings to close the feedback loop. In addition, the Senior Director of College Success will hold weekly staff meetings during the initial year of the project, moving to twice monthly and then monthly over time as the team gains experience with implementation. The Senior Director of College Success and/or Chief Strategic Officer will hold consultancies with team members for problems of practice in keeping with our commitment to continuous improvement.

D. Quality of the Project Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation. Through a five-year quasi-experimental research design that meets What Works Clearinghouse standards with reservations, with a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, the research team from the University of Southern California Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice will utilize survey and interview data to examine the BCSI intervention (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). The research plan is aimed at examining the impact of BCSI on Black students' college awareness/readiness, self-awareness, self-esteem, self-efficacy, enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment and at addressing the following hypotheses (quantitatively; **Related to Research Question 1 (RQ1) & Research Question 2 (RQ2**). The research plan is also aimed at understanding implementation of culturally responsive and research-based practices that build deeper relationships with Black high school students by principals/ counselors/ college access partner staff affiliated with the BCSI initiative (qualitatively; **Related to Research Question 3 (RQ3**):

a. We *hypothesize* that BCSI will significantly increase participating Black high school seniors' college-going culture, enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment. **(Related to RQ1)**
b. We *hypothesize* that BCSI will significantly enhance Black high school senior's academic self-efficacy. **(Related to RQ2)**

Study Participants. While our research focuses on Black high school students participating in BCSI, we will also obtain a similar sample of Black high school students not participating in BCSI. Each group, those participating and not participating, will be invited to complete a pre-post BCSI survey (see Instrument Section Below). Consent and assent are required by the USC Institutional Review Board (IRB), as permission for high school participants must be obtained from a legally authorized representative such as a parent, a

court-appointed guardian, or the court.. The criterion for BCSI high school students includes: (1) African American or Black identifying student, (2) enrolled in 9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th grade at a BCSI partner high school, (3) good academic standing with a BCSI partner high school (preferably a 2.6 or better), (4) apply for participation and complete intake process, and (5) commitment to attending one of the partner colleges/universities (non-binding).

The *a priori* analysis (using G*power 3.1.9.7) suggests that the potential of detecting medium effect size *f* would require a sample of 210 for pre-post intervention ANOVA and 194 for fixed effects OLS Regression (14 predictors). The target is 300 students across both intervention (n=150) and control (n=150) groups in year 1 and scaling up by 300 students each additional year (n= 1500, over 5 years). We anticipate a relatively high annual response rate (70%) from participating students given the direct services and scholarship support provided to students over the 5-year BCSI project (Saleh and Bista, 2017). For non-participating students (control group), we anticipate a typical response of 25%-30% and have built in additional incentives during years 2-5 of the project when control group students have graduated high school (Saleh and Bista, 2017). Together the sample size needed to detect medium effect size *f* based on the *a priori* estimates are sufficient by year 2 of the project. Scheffé Tests, as well as other tests for unequal sample sizes will be utilized when conducting comparative analyses.

Data Collection and Instruments. The data sources for the qualitative data collection will include individual interviews with approximately 12 principals, counselors, and college access service providers, plus focus group interviews with approximately 36 students. Researchers will conduct one focus group per high school with 6 participants in each interview. All interviews and focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed (see Table 3). The

research team will develop semi-structured interview protocols and obtain final IRB approval to better understand the experiences of teachers and high school students.

Table 3. Data Source, Collection, and Analysis by Guiding Research Question (RQ)

Guiding RQ1: What is the impact of BCSI on participating Black high school seniors' *college going culture, enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment*?		
Quantitative Data Source: ● BCSI Web-based survey instrument administered to high school students and when they become college students. ● Secondary Data; National Clearinghouse (enrollment, persistence, completion) and K-12 student-level data (A-G course completion FAFSA applications). LAPF will synthesize these data and provide a data file of targeted students. ***Qualitative Data Source:*** ● **Target Criteria**: Black high school students participating in BCSI. ● Focus group interviews with high school students (60 mins)	***Data Collection Timeline:*** ● Pre-post survey data collection from high school students; once prior to program start (January in Year 1 and August in Years 2-5) and once at the end of the academic year (June in Years 1-5). ● Develop interview protocol; submit for final IRB approval (Grant approval) ● First interviews during the spring semester (Jan in Y1, August in Y2-5).	***Data Analysis:*** ● Descriptive Analysis per item. ● Factor Analysis (each construct), Cronbach's α, One-way ANOVAs by sex, race, parental ed., free & reduced lunch, & by intervention, η^2, and OLS Regressions (Entered steps as 5-Inputs: race/ ethnicity, sex, free & reduced lunch, GPA, intervention; 10-BCSI constructs/ items on each outcome). ● Multi-time point (longitudinal) SEM.
Guiding RQ2: What is the impact of BCSI on Black high school seniors' academic *self-efficacy*?		
Quantitative Data Source: ● BCSI Web-based survey instrument administered to high school students and when they become college students. ***Qualitative Data Source:*** ● **Target Criteria**: Black high school students participating in BCSI. ● Focus group interviews with high school students (60 mins)	***Data Collection Timeline:*** ● Pre-post survey data collection from high school students; once prior to program start (January in Year 1 and August in Years 2-5) and once at the end of the academic year (June in Years 1-5). ● Develop interview protocol; submit for final IRB approval (Grant approval)	***Data Analysis:*** ● Descriptive Analysis per item. ● Factor Analysis (each construct), Cronbach's α, One-way ANOVAs by sex, race, parental ed., free & reduced lunch, & by intervention, η^2, and OLS Regressions (Entered steps as 5-Inputs: race/ ethnicity, sex, free & reduced lunch, GPA, intervention; 10-BCSI

	● First interviews during the spring semester (Jan in Y1, August in Y2-5).	constructs/ items on each outcome). ● Multi-time point (longitudinal) SEM. ● Boyatzis' approach to coding, thematic development, & sense-making. ● Merging and Interpreting Quant-Qual (Morse, 2010).
Guiding RQ3: How do high school principals, counselors and college access partners affiliated with the BCSI initiative implement culturally responsive practices that support Black high school students?		
Qualitative Data Source: ● Interviews with principals/ counselor/ college access partner staff (30 mins)	***Data Collection Timeline:*** ● Develop interview protocol; submit for final IRB approval (Grant approval) ● First interviews during the spring semester (Jan in Y1, August in Y2-5).	***Data Analysis:*** ● Boyatzis' approach to coding, thematic development, & sense-making

Data used for quantitative analysis includes transcript data and a self-reported pre/post survey administered to participating and non-participating (control group) high school students at the beginning and end of the spring semester for year 1 and then at the beginning and end of each academic school year for four years (see Table 4). In addition to participating in BCSI intervention, high school GPA and percent of free & reduced lunch obtained from student transcript and institutional data, student characteristics like sex and level of parental education are collected on the survey instrument.

The survey also measures the perceived effectiveness of senior planning sessions, college application workshops, post-secondary institution type/ location, participation in other college access programs, time spent on various academic and social activities, college-going culture, college enrollment, college persistence, and degree attainment, as well as the following five

constructs (Cronbach's α =.7 to .9): a) STEM Activities and exposure; b) Financial stress (6-items; Melguizo, Martorell, Swanson, Chi, Park, & Kezar, 2019); c) Career decision-making self-efficacy (13-items; Kezar, Hypolite, & Kitchen, 2020); d) Student-staff interactions (6-items, Cole, Newman, & Hypolite, 2020); and e) Academic self-efficacy (11-items, Conley, 2007; Kitchen, Cole, Rivera, & Hallett, 2021). The web-based survey will take about 13-15 minutes for students to complete.

Qualitative Data Analysis. We employ Creswell's (2003) six-step research model, which includes: 1) problem identification; 2) reviewing relevant literature; 3) specifying a purpose; 4) collecting the data; 5) analyzing and interpreting the data, and 6) converging findings based on the research questions. When unexpected, engaging, and surprising results emerge, we will focus more on understanding these findings and prioritize them for mixed-methods data convergence. We will review relevant literature to determine if other studies have found similar results or offer useful explanations.

We will also apply Boyatzis' approach to coding transcribed interviews, observations, and field notes (see Table 1). Boyatzis' approach to coding involves "recognizing (seeing) an important moment and encoding it (seeing it as something) before a process of interpretation" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 1). A "good code" captures the qualitative richness, while encoding organizes the development of data-rich themes. According to Boyatzis, a theme is "a pattern in the information that at a minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. 161). Once preliminary themes are formed (**RQ1** & **RQ2**), themes will also be converged with the quantitative finding (**RQ1** & **RQ2**) in the pursuit of sense-making. Data from the qualitative analysis will be organized and analyzed using

NVivo 12. At this point in the analysis, the intent is to determine both exploratory and explanatory value toward interesting and surprising mixed methods findings.

Quantitative Data Analysis. Researchers will use quasi-experimental techniques, including difference-in-difference methods, to estimate changes in high school students' college awareness/readiness, self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment. Students participating in the intervention are compared with any changes displayed by similar, untreated students while controlling for pre-intervention differences between high school students and after high school for the duration of the project. Using this approach enables the researchers to estimate how the program is statistically significant to student changes in our key outcomes. The research team will also consider if either group of students participate in other college access programs, beyond the intervention.

Using SPSS 27, researchers will conduct descriptive analysis, factor analysis, Cronbach's α, analysis of variance (ANOVAs), η^2, and regression analysis. The team will use Mplus 8.1 to conduct structural equation modeling (SEM). Descriptive analysis will be computed for all items each year. Researchers will then use exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to examine each of the outcome variables. For EFA, the team will use the number of eigenvalues greater than 1.0 as the indicator of the number of latent factors (Kaiser, 1958) and keep the items with a factor loading greater than .40 to conduct CFA (Kahn, 2006). For CFA (using Mplus 8.1), we will use Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (RMSEA), and normed chi-square ($\chi 2$ divided by degree of freedom). The research team considers a value close to 0.95 or higher for CFI and a value close to 0.06 or less for RMSEA to support a good fit of the factor model with our data. Cronbach's α will also be calculated for each construct before computing the construct for use in any subsequent analysis. One-way ANOVAs and η^2 will be

conducted by sex, free & reduced lunch, parental education, and program intervention status to determine significant group differences and the related effect sizes (**RQ1** & **RQ2)**.

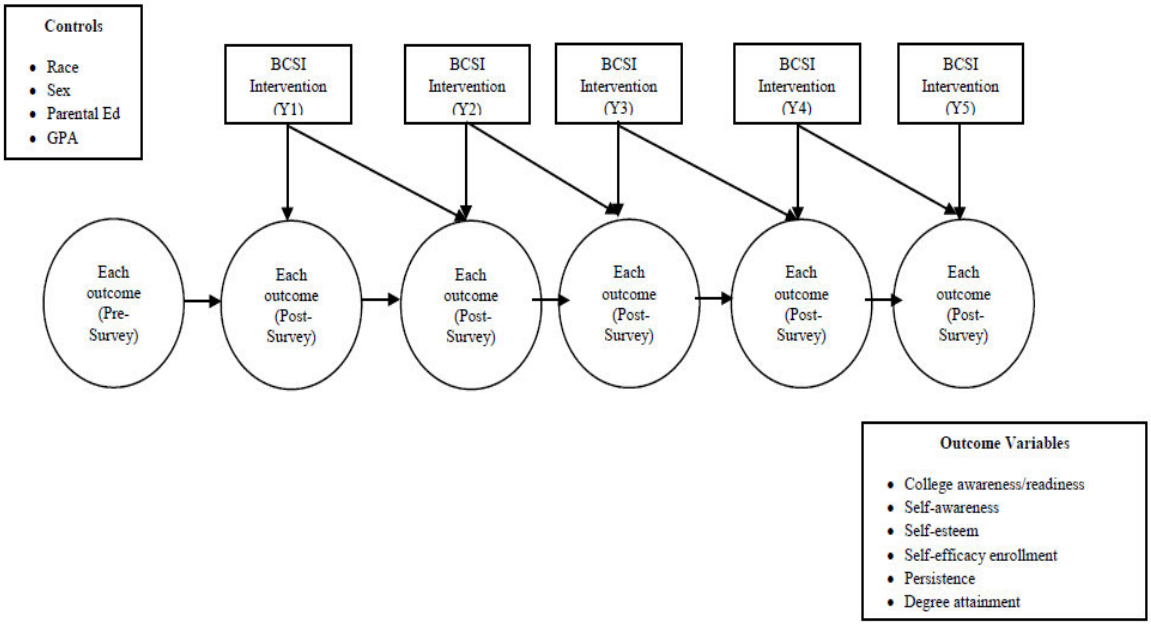
The research team will also perform an Ordinary-Least-Squares (OLS) regression analysis to examine **RQ1** & **RQ2**. Researchers will enter independent variables in blocks. Four student backgrounds and an intervention variable will be entered first. The 10 BCSI items and constructs will be entered and regressed onto each outcome. For continuous variables with no more than 15% missing values, the team will utilize the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm to compute missing values (Truxillo, 2005).

Given the accumulation of data points for high school students moving through four years of college, we will consider conducting multi-time point SEM analysis (**RQ1 & RQ2**). SEM leverages the covariances among variables to estimate the relationships between observed variables and underlying latent constructs. Figure 2 illustrates the structural parts of the research team's SEM. While the team can intuit SEM as having two parts (the measurement and structural models), they will use maximum likelihood to estimate all coefficients simultaneously. Estimating the model simultaneously allows for a more accurate estimation of error terms, facilitating statistical inference.

Researchers aim to leverage self-reported college awareness/readiness, self-awareness, self-esteem, self-efficacy enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment, and participating in the BCSI intervention over time. Using this approach, they will assess whether participating in the intervention predicts higher or lower levels of each outcome over time. For the measurement model, as noted above, the team will use Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (RMSEA), and normed chi-square ($\chi 2$ divided by degree of freedom) for each latent construct (College awareness/readiness, Self-awareness, Self-esteem, Self-efficacy

enrollment, Persistence, Degree attainment). Importantly, the analyses will be robust, descriptive, associational, but not causal given the quasi-experimental design. There are multiple types of selection issues in our sample that limit our ability to draw causal inferences (Klasik, 2012).

Figure 2. Structural Model Relating BCSI program intervention and Key Outcomes



Performance Feedback and Periodic Assessment of Progress. The research team has built in cycles of data analysis at the end of school semester. These results will be shared with the BCSI team and Advisory Committee so that any issues emerging from the data can be addressed immediately. Any trends observed in the data, either positive or negative, will be dissected by the program team to gain a fuller picture of strategies that are successful and any that may need to be refined.

Potential Contribution to Increased Knowledge or Understanding. Disparities in college access, enrollment and persistence based on race are an abiding educational equity issue that have plagued the field for generations. The quasi-experimental design meets What Works

Clearinghouse Standards with Reservations and will contribute to the research base around college outcomes for Black students. The mixed methods approach will not only provide statistical outcomes, but will include qualitative findings that will add contextual layers that will deepen understanding of the results achieved. As detailed in the dissemination section, LAPF is committed to sharing results, best practices and lessons learned with practitioners and researchers alike, striving to extend our impact beyond the students that we touch directly.

Competitive Preference Priority 2:
Innovative Approaches to Addressing the Impact of COVID–19 on Underserved Students and Educators

BCSI serves predominantly low-income Black students in South LA, a community disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of both health and economic impacts. As students return to in-person learning after being away from their schools for over a year and experiencing the combined trauma of COVID and racial injustice, the Black College Success Initiative (BCSI) is needed more than ever, as COVID exacerbated the disengagement from school that was already prevalent among Black students. A July 2021 report by Horsford et al. found that Black parents' top school-related concerns emanating from COVID were their children's academic progress and their social connectedness to their school community and that distrust of public institutions, including schools, had deepened in the wake of the government's response to COVID-19 along with systemic racism issues.

By launching BCSI with our first cohort of 12th graders, our hope is that we will not only be able to build relationships with such students and give them the additional support they need to navigate the college admissions process, but that underclassmen will see the successes of their peers, showcasing possibilities and building exemplars at a time when both are needed. Eleventh (11th) grade is a pivotal year on the path to college and these 12th graders missed many college readiness opportunities that typically would have been available to them. There were no college fairs, college field trips, test prep courses, in-person financial aid workshops, etc. As such, having an Academic Advisor available to guide Black students provides an extra level of support that is critically needed in response to COVID.

Competitive Preference Priority 3:
Promoting Equity and Adequacy in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities

As detailed on page 10, Black students in our target SLATE-Z community have had low rates of college readiness, enrollment and persistence for decades. Currently, there are a plethora of college access support services available, but the existence of these services is not translating to improved college outcomes for Black students. In an effort to address this long-standing inequity, the BCSI model incorporates a systems change element in addition to the multi-faceted direct service framework. As discussed in more detail in the project narrative, the BCSI team will form and facilitate a College Access Network (CAN) composed of school counselors and college access service providers, with a goal of having 12 network members who will meet regularly to improve their delivery of culturally relevant college access support by adopting a set of common, research-based practices and coordinating services. LA Promise Fund currently facilitates the Gates Foundation-funded South LA Network for School Improvement and will bring the lessons learned and promising practices from that effort to CAN.

Facilitating CAN will enable LAPF to have a greater impact on an intransigent disparity than we can achieve solely through a direct service framework. It will take a collective effort and willingness to engage in deep self-reflection and potentially challenging conversations to create a more culturally responsive college access support system in South LA, but it is a critical step toward improved college outcomes for Black youth.