

ASHE-NITE Paper Series

CREATING INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENTS FOR RACIALLY MINORITIZED ADULT LEARNERS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

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ABOUT THE SERIES

With support from Lumina Foundation, the Association for the Study of Higher Education and the National Institute for Transformation and Equity are excited to launch a collection of national papers on critical underserved populations in postsecondary education. The series is one of four initiatives under the leadership of the 2017-2018 ASHE President, Dr. Lori Patton Davis.

The overarching aim of the papers is to synthesize existing knowledge about how to create inclusive and equitable campus environments for underserved populations, and provide recommendations for higher education research, policy, and practice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
Introduction	8
Brief Explanation of Terms	9
Setting the Context	9
Factors Influencing Access and Success	12
Implications for Research	15
Implications for Policy and Practice	18
References	24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Non-traditional age learners are defined as students who are 25 years or older (Lumina Foundation, 2017). Often these students begin college later in life or later return after not completing a degree, and have been largely neglected by policymakers, scholars, and institutional leaders. The failure of institutions to connect with and serve adult students has disproportionately impacted racially minoritized students, resulting in persistent inequities in college enrollment and completion between White students and groups that have been historically minoritized and underserved in higher education. Colleges and universities must adapt to a changing landscape of higher education that is increasingly enrolling and serving students who are of non-traditional age and students who identify as African American/Black, Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and/or with another racially minoritized group. National completion goals and state initiatives targeted toward adult students cannot be met if institutions do not find more effective ways to reduce inequities in both access and success for racially minoritized adult students.

This report synthesizes existing knowledge and provides guidance to faculty, staff, institutional leaders, and policy makers regarding how to create inclusive and equitable campus environments specifically for racially minoritized adult learners. We synthesize what is known regarding the cultural, structural, and financial barriers that adult and/or racially minoritized students encounter when attempting to access and persist towards a certificate or undergraduate degree in higher education. We then identify key areas for future research and detailed implications for policy and practice.

Profile of racially minoritized adult students

Very little has been documented, even at a descriptive level, specific information focused on racially minoritized adult students. On the whole, Asian Americans and White students are much more likely to complete a credential when compared to other racially minoritized students (Shapiro, Huie, Wakhungu, Yuan, Nathan, & Bhimdiwali, 2017). Data also show that adult undergraduate students are disproportionately female, African American, and are more likely to attend part-time and receive Pell Grants (Blumenstyk, 2018). Overall, adult college students bring individual and diverse backgrounds, strengths and assets, understandings and responsibilities to the college campus that traditional-age students have yet to have experienced. Although not yet well-understood, it should be noted that racially minoritized adult students may face external demands and time pressures above and beyond other groups of adult students (Garza, 2011). The majority of adult students enroll at community colleges, for-profit institutions, and/or the small number of colleges and universities that have focused their mission to educating adult students.

Motivations to enroll and persist in college

Adult students enroll in college for a variety of reasons including: improving economic security, gaining personal enrichment, setting an example for their family, and/or fulfilling a promise they may have made to themselves earlier in life. Additionally, research specific to racially minoritized students suggests that students may be highly motivated to “give back” and improve the lives of their family and community and may also be motivated by their faith.

Factors influencing college access and success.

Although there is some overlap between the experiences of adult students and racially minoritized students, there are also some meaningfully unique differences. There is a good amount of evidence to show that the factors that influence access and completion for White students are not necessarily the same factors that are most salient for racially minoritized students. Our review identified relatively few studies that considered the role of race in shaping the college decisions and experiences of adult students. Our findings identify five factors that have been empirically shown to negatively and positively influence racially minoritized adult students' college access and success including:

Negative factors influencing racially minoritized adult students' college access and success:

- **Structural, cultural and economic conditions** – African Americans, Latinx, and American Indian and Alaska Native students have and will continue to face obstacles before and during college that other adult students are less likely to face. These challenges include, but are not limited to, living in poverty, attending poorly resourced K-12 schools, enrolling in college behind White peers, and being tracked into vocational programs and less rigorous coursework.
- **Campus climate and belongingness** – Research suggests that racially minoritized students perceive experiencing both active and passive racism on campus. Racially minoritized students' perceptions of the campus racial climate are influenced by many factors including the representation of minoritized students on campus and the historical legacy of exclusion and behaviors in and outside of the classroom. Not surprisingly, findings specific to racially minoritized adult students point to the harmful impact of negative stereotyping on minoritized adult learners' success.

Factors influencing success for racially minoritized adult college students:

- **Culturally relevant teaching and curriculum** – The literature that considers race largely makes a plea for and provides evidence to suggest that culturally relevant and responsive teaching and curriculum are important factors influencing racially minoritized adult students' success in college.
- **Support from institutional agents** – Evidence suggests that positive interactions with institutional agents, including faculty and staff can serve to promote the retention of racially minoritized adult students. Findings show that students feel valued when their faculty get to know them, relate to them as individuals, and do not make assumptions about them based on their race/ethnicity, age or other social identities.
- **Context and institutional type** – Our review identified some evidence to suggest that racially minoritized adult students' experiences may vary across institutional type. Although more research is needed, it appears that students' experiences may be less positive at community colleges and Predominately White Institutions when compared to Minority Serving Institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Implications for Research

Our review identifies sizable gaps in our understanding about how to make colleges and universities more inclusive and equitable for racially minoritized adult students. We offer seven promising areas for future research:

1. **Capture more complete descriptions of racially minoritized adult students** – These data include salient student characteristics (e.g., gender, receipt of financial aid, location, participation in online programs/courses) of racially minoritized adult students attending colleges and universities across the country.

2. **Racially minoritized adult students' experiences with race and racism** – Additional empirical work is needed that specifically addresses students' issues and experiences of race and racism in terms of access, curriculum, and/or persistence.
3. **Racially minoritized adult students' voices and needs** – Our review highlights the need for comprehensive data and research documenting racially minoritized adult students' voices and unique needs.
4. **Role of context in shaping racially minoritized students' experiences** – We recommend research more fully consider the role of social and cultural contexts in learning including the role of institutional context in shaping racially minoritized adult students' experiences.
5. **Culturally relevant theory development and testing** – Theory focused on adult students has been developed and continues to rely on persistence models focused on traditional age, middle class, White college students. We recommend that research focused on racially minoritized adult students consider cultural values and experiences in developing and shaping theory and frameworks.
6. **Inclusive programs and classroom practices** – We suggest additional research to explore what culturally responsive teaching and curriculum looks like for adult students and how it may directly or indirectly promote success for racially minoritized adult students. We also suggest that researchers give more focus to studying racially minoritized adult students' motivations and experiences engaging with institutional agents and peers outside the classroom, including but not limited to participating in support services and programs.
7. **Impacts of institutional, state, and national policies and initiatives** – More research is needed that is specifically focused on how racially minoritized adult learners experience prior learning assessment (PLA) and competency-based education (CBE), the two largest curricular initiatives that are being pushed by local government and foundations. We also recommend research that explores the impacts of transfer, financial aid, and federal work study programs on racially minoritized adult students' enrollment and success.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Although research specific to racially minoritized adult students remains underdeveloped, we believe that the broader scholarship offers several important implications for policy and practice. As such, we conclude with promising policies, practices and strategies that have the potential to create more inclusive and equitable environments for racially minoritized adult learners. Our recommendations are organized by audience, beginning with implications for faculty.

Recommendations for faculty

- Get to know and support students as individuals
- Develop inclusive teaching practices
- Incorporate diversity/equity in the curriculum
- Make programs and courses accessible

Recommendations for student affairs

- Create welcoming inclusive spaces for racially minoritized adult students
- Create opportunities for students to learn and interact with students with different identities
- Tailor services to racially minoritized adult students
- Develop meaningful partnerships with students' family and communities

Recommendations for institutional leaders

- Take responsibility for leading deep, transformational institutional change

- Demonstrate a commitment to diversity and to racially minoritized students
- Routinely collect and use data specific to racially minoritized adult students and climate
- Don't assume to understand what racially minoritized adult students need
- Be mindful about how students are identified/labeled
- Implement policies that consider adult students' schedules and commitments
- Implement institutional practices to ease financial stress and burden
- Share responsibility for creating an inclusive environment across the campus
- Develop and maintain partnerships with workforce and local businesses

Recommendations for policymakers

- Support policies that reduce financial burden for racially minoritized adult students
- Construct accountability measures including but not limited to performance-based funding to encourage institutions to serve racially minoritized adult students
- Support the development of national and state data systems that track adult students

INTRODUCTION

Non-traditional age learners are defined as students who are 25 years or older (Lumina Foundation, 2017). Often these students begin college later in life, or later return after not completing a degree, and have been largely neglected by policy makers, scholars, and institutional leaders. Rather, the message and promise of American higher education has historically been directed towards recruiting and retaining students between the ages of 18-24 for the baccalaureate degree (Harper & Jackson, 2011). This is highly problematic as adult students currently represent nearly a third of the undergraduate population (Blumenstyk, 2018) and at the same time are less likely than traditional-age students to earn a college degree (Shapiro et al., 2017). The failure of institutions to connect with and serve adult students has had a disproportionately negative impact on racially minoritized students (Blumenstyk, 2018) resulting in persistent inequities in enrollment and completion between White students and groups that have been historically minoritized and underserved in higher education (Carter, 2006). For instance, when comparing White and racially minoritized

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groups, recent US Census data (2017) show that 46 percent of Whites currently hold a bachelor's degree compared to only 15 percent of African American and 12 percent of Latinx students.

Colleges and universities must adapt to a changing landscape of higher education that is increasingly enrolling and serving students who are non-traditional age and students who identify as African American, Latinx, Native American and/or with another racially minoritized group (Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017). Recent national completion (Brandon, 2009) and state initiatives targeted toward adult students in Indiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee (Anderson, 2017) will be difficult, if not impossible, to be met if institutions do not find more effective ways to reduce inequities in both access and success for racially minoritized adult students. Institutional focus on traditional age students has made it difficult for colleges and universities to close gaps between traditional students and older, more racially diverse students (Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017). This includes students who have stopped out before earning a degree or certificate, those who have been displaced and need a different credential, and those with no recognized postsecondary education (Lumina Foundation, 2017). The majority of colleges and universities are not yet well equipped to receive racially minoritized adult learners and may not actively be seeking them out to be a part of their campus community. Unfortunately, much of this problem can be contributed to deficit thinking held by university leadership and faculty, a lack of financial incentives by local, state, and/or federal government, and common misunderstandings about what adult students want or need out of post-secondary educational training.

The goal of this report is to provide a synthesis of existing scholarship and provide guidance to faculty, staff, institutional leaders, and policy makers regarding how to create inclusive and equitable campus environments specifically for racially minoritized adult learners. After a brief explanation of terms, we synthesize what is known regard-

ing the cultural, structural, and financial barriers that adult and/or racially minoritized students encounter when attempting to access and persist towards a certificate or undergraduate degree higher education. Key areas for future research are then identified and detailed implications for policy and practice are offered.

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF TERMS

An overview of terminology is necessary before we begin our review of racially minoritized adult learners. The term minoritized is often used by social science researchers when discussing the experience of minority groups within dominant settings. Prominent higher education scholar Shaun Harper (2012) provides the following explanation for the term minoritized:

I use “minoritized” instead of “minority”

... to signify the social construction of underrepresentation and subordination in U.S. social institutions, including colleges and universities. Persons are not born into a minority status nor are they minoritized in every social context (e.g., their families, racially homogeneous friendship groups, or places of worship). Instead, they are rendered minorities in particular situations and institutional environments that sustain an overrepresentation of Whiteness. (p. 9)

In accordance with Harper’s (2012) definition, higher education is an institutional setting that can deem students as racially minoritized. In terms of race, even though students of color may be the majority in a higher education institution, and technically not be considered a minority in quantitative terms, they can still experience the notion of racial minoritization if the construction of Whiteness dominates the organizational culture, history, and practice of the institution. Vacarro and Newman (2016) further explained the term minoritized to describe students who have self-identified as a racial minority and/or have experienced marginalization as a result of membership in at least one historically oppressed social group such as those who have a disability, those who have low socioeconomic status, those who belong to the LGBTQ community, or those

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whose religious background is not Christian. As such, we use the term “racially minoritized” throughout this report and include prior research focused on racial/ethnic groups that continue to be minoritized by institutions including but not limited to American Indian/Alaska Native, African American/Black, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and Latinx, students.

We use the Lumina Foundation’s (2017) definition and identification of adult students (i.e., 25 years or older) throughout this report. However, policy makers, college leaders and some researchers have used a variety of terms to describe adult students including “non-traditional,” “post-traditional,” or “new-traditional”. Additionally, operational definitions of adult students have been shown to vary across policy reports and empirical work with definitions being more or less inclusive (e.g., working full-time, having children, enrollment in the military Blumenstyk, 2018). As such, our review includes research that uses multiple terms and definitions of adult students and is not specifically limited to work that defines adult students as 25 years or older.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

The following section provides a concise review of empirical work relevant to creating an inclusive environment for racially minoritized adult students. We begin with a summary of the limited evidence that describes racially minoritized adult students and their motivations to attend and persist in college. Next, we acknowledge the persistent, systematic barriers to college access and success for racially minoritized adult students. We conclude with a discussion of factors that have been empirically shown to be related to access and/or academic success.

BACHELOR DEGREE ATTAINMENT (U.S. CENSUS, 2017)

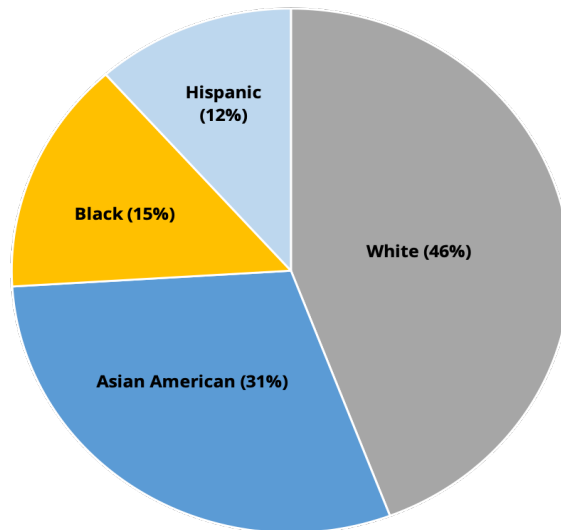


Figure 1.1. U.S. Bachelor Degree attainment (Figures may total to more than 100 due to rounding).

Profile of racially minoritized adult learners

Unfortunately, very little is known, even at a descriptive level about racially minoritized adult students. According to Kelly (2015), 60 percent of adults between the ages of 25 and 64 in America do not have a postsecondary credential. At the same time, there are currently sizable inequities in educational attainment when comparing White and racially minoritized groups. For instance, recent US Census data (2017) show that 46 percent of Whites currently hold a bachelor's degree compared to only 31 percent of Asian Americans, 15 percent of Blacks and 12 percent of Hispanics. (See Figure 1.1).

Nearly half (44%) of post-traditional learners, defined as students who are over 25 years old, work full time, are financially independent or connected to the military, and identify as students of color.

Hispanic and African Americans hold bachelor's degrees at lower levels than Whites (US Census, 2017) and are also less likely to be satisfied with their current level of education. Failure of institutions to connect with and serve adult students has disproportionately impacted racially minoritized adult students (Blumenstyk, 2018) resulting in persistent inequities in college completion between White students and groups that have been historically minoritized and underserved in higher education (Carter, 2006). Recent findings from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center that tracked a cohort

of students who began college in 2011 (i.e., Shapiro et al., 2017) show that on the whole, Asian American and White students are much more likely to complete a credential when compared to racially minoritized students (i.e., over 65% compared to less than 50% for racially minoritized groups).

African Americans are the only ethnic/racial group that has more older adult students than younger adult students enrolled in undergraduate education.

Nearly half (44%) of post-traditional learners, defined as students who are over 25 years old, work full time, are financially independent or connected to the military, and identify as students of color (Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017). According to Blumenstyk (2018), adult undergraduate students are disproportionately female, African American, and are more likely to attend part time and receive Pell Grants. In terms of racially minoritized adult learners the biggest difference between younger and older students lies within the African American student community. It is notable that African Americans are the only ethnic/racial group that has more older adult students than younger adult students enrolled in undergraduate education as they are more likely to delay enrollment and attend college at an older age when compared to White students (Kasworm, 2002). When looking at the intersection of race and gender for Black students, Palmer, Wood, Dancy, and Strayhorn (2014)

noted that the average Black male enrolled in an undergraduate program in higher education is 27 years old. Although often left out of national reporting, it is important to note that American Indian/Alaska Native students currently have the lowest college enrollment of any group (Guillory 2009) and similar to Black and Latinx students are disproportionately affected by poverty and limited access to educational opportunities (Buckmiller, 2010; Palmer, Wood, Dancy & Strayhorn, 2014).

...the average Black male enrolled in an undergraduate program in higher education is 27 years old.

Adult college students bring diverse backgrounds, strengths and assets, and work and family responsibilities to the college campus that may be different from traditional-age students (Garza, 2011; Ross-Gordon, 2011). Adult students have been shown to have seven characteristics not typically associated with college participation including: (1) delaying entry, (2) being a single parent, (3) having dependents, (4) being employed full-time, (5) being financially independent, (6) not having a high school diploma and/or (7) attending part-time (Ross-Gordon, 2011). In fact, nearly three-fourths of adult

students work full-time while enrolled, half have children, and a quarter are single parents (Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017) as illustrated in figure 1.2. Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest that racially minoritized adult students may face external demands and pressures above and beyond other groups of adult students. For example, qualitative findings by Garza (2011) revealed that adult Latinx students had the perceived burden of having to perform to exceptionally high standards with school, work and home responsibilities in order to earn/maintain the respect of their families, employers, and instructors.

The majority of adult students are enrolled at community colleges, for-profit institutions, and a small number of non-profit four-year institutions that have focused their mission on educating adult students (Blumenstyk, 2018). Forty-three percent of adult students between the ages of 25-34 attend public community colleges. Similarly, 45 percent of students between the ages of 35-49 and half of students between the ages of 50-64 are enrolled at two-year public colleges. Likewise, private for-profit institutions disproportionately enroll adult students (Blumenstyk, 2018). Although there are fewer adult students currently enrolling at non-

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT STUDENTS

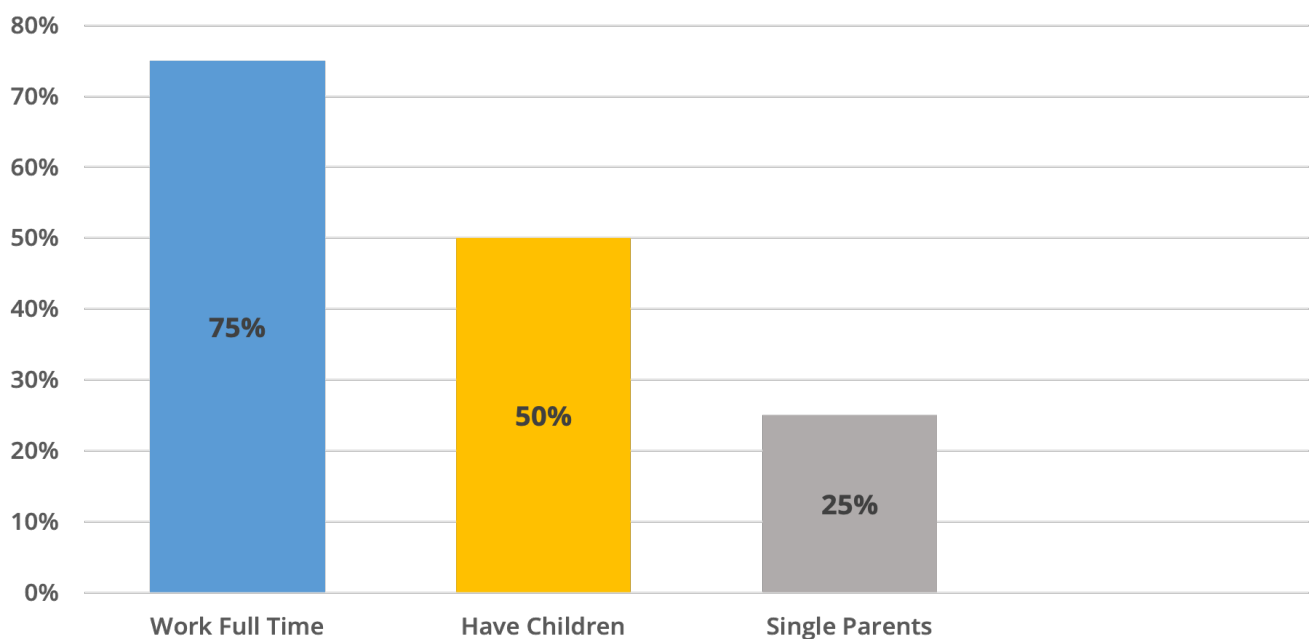


Figure 1.2. Characteristics of adult students.

Source: National Postsecondary Student Aid Study 2011-12 (NPSAS:12)(N = 13,294,258) estimated by the American Council for Education (i.e., Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017).

profit four-year public and private colleges and universities, their numbers are expected to rise as four-year institutions increasingly give attention to recruiting adult students.

Motivations to enroll and persist in college

Historically, adult students have been shown to return to college or begin college for the first time when there is a downturn in the economy and a degree or certificate is needed to better their chances of employment. Adult students may enroll in college with a desire to earn a credential, certificate, certification, or degree (ACTE, n.d.). The overall trend has been that students come to campus during a recession and return to their job when the economy has recovered (Blumenstyk, 2018). However, this is not the only reason adult students attend college. Adult students have been found to attend college for personal enrichment, to set an example for their family, and/or to fulfill a promise they may have made to themselves earlier in life (Coker, 2003).

Research specific to racially minoritized students suggests that students may be highly motivated to “give back” and improve the lives of their family and community (Garza, 2011; Lopez, 2018; Pérez, Zamora, & Pontious, 2018; Salis Reyes, in press). Guillory and Wolverton (2008) and Guillory (2009) provided a qualitative examination of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students’ motivations to attend and persist in college. The major persistence factors cited by participants were giving back to the tribal community, family, and on-campus social support. Students also noted that it was critical for them to maintain connections to their home community. Amongst

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the students there was a culture and philosophy of putting the collective above the individual. Similarly, Coker (2003) explored the experiences of African American female adult learners regarding their motivation to attend college, their sources of strength and support, and the challenges they encounter. Utilizing a womanist and Black feminist perspective, Coker conducted a series of focus groups with 10 African American undergraduate and graduate women at a four-year university in the Midwest. Coker found that one of the major reasons these women pursued higher education was not just to benefit themselves, but also their families, especially if they had children. Moreover, qualitative findings by Kasworm (2002) suggested that African American students may find motivation from their faith.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Although there is some overlap between the experiences of adult students and racially minoritized students, there are also some meaningfully unique differences (Garza, 2011). Similarly, there is a good amount of evidence collected over the past twenty years to demonstrate that the factors that influence access and completion for White students are not necessarily the same factors that are most salient for racially minoritized students. For instance, research by Crisp and Nucez (2014) found that student and institutional variables influencing transfer and success are more different than they are similar when comparing a national sample of White students and racially minoritized (specifically Black and Latinx) students. In fact, only two variables (i.e., hours worked off-campus and degree expectations) were shown to predict vertical transfer for both White and racially minoritized students. It is therefore highly problematic that our review identified relatively few studies that considered the role of race in shaping the college decisions and experiences of adult students. As such, our review includes relevant empirical findings from the broader higher education, adult and sociological literature, emphasizing the

Existing literature specific to racially minoritized adult learners largely overlooks persistent barriers that may be assumed to be uniquely influencing racially minoritized students' college access and success.

limited number of studies that have given focus to racially minoritized adult students. Findings are organized by the following areas: Negative factors: 1) structural, cultural, and economic conditions; 2) campus climate and belongingness; and positive factors: 3) culturally relevant teaching and curriculum; 4) support from institutional agents; and 5) differences across institutional type.

Negative factors influencing racially minoritized adult students' college access and success

Structural, cultural and economic conditions

It is important to acknowledge the larger, structural, cultural and economic conditions impacting racially minoritized students. Regrettably, the existing literature specific to racially minoritized adult learners largely overlooks persistent barriers that may be assumed to be uniquely influencing racially minoritized students' college access and success. This is unfortunate as African Americans, Latinx and American Indian and Alaska Native students have and will continue to face obstacles before and during college that other adult students are less likely to face. For instance, through no fault of their own, racially minoritized students disproportionately live in low-income areas and attend poorly resourced K-12 schools (Contreras, 2005). In turn, racially minoritized students can enroll in college behind their peers in terms of college-level knowledge and academic skill (Berkner & Chavez, 1997). Further, there is evidence to suggest

that racially minoritized students may be tracked into vocational programs or less rigorous coursework prior to and during college, exacerbating inequities in preparation and opportunities to secure high-paying careers (Crisp, Taggart & Nora, 2014). Moreover, our review suggests that racially minoritized adult students are less likely to be provided with complete and accurate information about financial resources including financial aid (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Rosser-Mims, Palmer, & Haroff, 2014). Not providing racially minoritized adult students with this information can result in a cycle of enrolling and stopping out of college to work for funds to reenroll (Kasworm, 2002). Collectively, these conditions serve to unfairly disadvantage minoritized students and increase inequities in both college access and success.

Campus climate and belongingness

Issues of race and racism are largely absent within adult education scholarship although there is a recognition that degrees and certificates will largely help racially minoritized adult learners the most in terms of greater economic stability and overall quality of life (Lumina Foundation, 2017). However, studies by higher education scholars have consistently shown that racially minoritized students are more likely to be successful if they perceive the campus environment to be comfortable and inclusive (e.g., Carter & Hurtado, 1997; Museus, Nichols & Lambert, 2008; Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solrzano, 2009). At the same time, there is a substantial amount of evidence to suggest that racially minoritized students perceive experiencing both active and passive racism on campus (e.g., Crisp et al, 2014; Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003). Studies show that Black males experience stress from racial microaggressions that may cause them to limit campus engagement and/or transfer to another institution (Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014). Racially minoritized students' perceptions of the campus climate are influenced by many things including the representation of minoritized students on campus, the organizational and structural dimension of the institution, and the historical legacy of ex-

clusion and behaviors in and outside of the classroom (Hurtado, 2012; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

Our review identified only a few studies that have explored adult students' racialized experiences on campus. Not surprisingly, findings point to the harmful impact of negative stereotyping on minoritized adult learners (e.g., Drayton et al, 2014). Garza's (2011) dissertation work provides a rich description of the college experiences of adult (30 or older) Latinx college students. Each of the students experienced challenges that influenced their educational path. Nearly all of the participants indicated that they felt isolated; felt that they did not belong on campus; felt oppressed and inferior to other students; and had experienced racism, discrimination and racial stereotyping on campus. Students felt more comfortable around other students who were the same or a similar age and had difficulty interacting with younger students. Participants were aware of gendered and racial stereotypes and countered them using their own capital (Yosso, 2005).

Factors influencing access and success for racially minoritized adult learners

Culturally relevant teaching and curriculum

The small amount of adult education literature that considers race largely makes a plea for culturally relevant and responsive teaching and curriculum (Drayton, Rosser-Mims, Schwartz, & Guy, 2014; Guy, 1999; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007). Sealey-Ruiz (2010) discussed her experiences as an African American adult English educator and how she assists her students with developing a racial literacy through explicit class discussions and examination of text. She called for other adult educators to give students the opportunity to discuss race within a safe classroom environment, particularly if the students are White, to help them critique their role in perpetuating racism. There is severely limited research that examines the racially minoritized experiences of adult students of color, in particular as it relates to the access of adult education by Asian American and Latinx students (Sheared, Johnson-Bailey, Peterson, Brookfield, & Associates, 2010).

The scant literature that does exist largely discusses their experiences within English as a Second Language (ESL) courses (Buttaro, 2004; Lincoln & Rademacher, 2006; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). When specifically addressed, Native American adult education falls within the context of Tribal Colleges and also calls for culturally responsive curriculum (Conti & Fellenz, 1991). Our review also uncovered evidence that African American and Latinx students desired connections to their culture and histories in the curriculum (i.e., Kasworm, 2002; Ross-Gordon, 1998).

Support from institutional agents

Our review also uncovered a good amount of evidence to show that positive interactions with institutional agents, including faculty and staff can serve to promote persistence for racially minoritized students (see reviews by Crisp, Taggart & Nora, 2014 and Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014). Similarly, a recent literature review by Lopez (2018) found that institutional support including support services, mentoring programs and faculty support was a positive factor in guiding American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students to persist in college. Jackson, Smith and Hill (2003) conducted interviews with 15 Native American students who had been successful in college. Several themes were identified as contributing to students' persistence including structured social support in the form of clubs and groups and warmth and care from faculty and staff. Further, empirical findings by Guillory and Wolverton (2008) and Guillory (2009) found that support from the AI/AN community on campus was critical to students' success as it

Racially minoritized students are more likely to be successful if they perceive the campus environment to be comfortable and inclusive.

helped to counter negative feelings of leaving home and feeling isolated. Similarly, research by Kasworm (2002) and Ross-Gordon and Brown-Haywood (2000) revealed that African American adult students reported having meaningful connections with faculty and valued individuals who engaged them in learning and supported and encouraged them. Students also valued when faculty got to know them and related to them as individuals and did not make assumptions about them based on their race/ethnicity or age. Further, dissertation work by Ray (2012) found that racially minoritized adult students benefited from having faculty and counselors who were focused on student success and who cared about their personal achievements.

Context and institutional type

The majority of racially minoritized adult students currently attend community colleges or for-profit institutions that enroll higher percentages of racially minoritized students (Deming, Goldin, & Klatz, 2012). This is important as our review uncovered some evidence to suggest that racially minoritized adult students' experiences may vary across institutional type. Kasworm (2002) explored the diverse experiences of African American students attending two community colleges and two four-year institutions. Specifically, she found there were different cultural realities for students across institutional type. Participants enrolled at a community college described their experiences as a struggle that involved experiences with prejudice and discrimination. Community college students also reported having fewer resources to provide support both in and outside of the institution.

Palmer, Wood, Dancy, and Strayhorn (2014) conducted a synthesis of literature on the factors promoting access and success for Black men in college. The researchers found that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been shown to have more positive impacts on retention and success for Black students. In contrast to HBCUs, Black males attending Predominately White Institutions (PWI) were more likely

The majority of racially minoritized adult students currently attend community colleges or for-profit institutions.

to experience discrimination, alienation and unsupportive relationships with faculty. Similarly, Buckmiller (2010) conducted a qualitative study of the lived experiences of Native American adult learners who attended a PWI. Participants experienced racism and prejudice from both students and faculty who were largely White, which compounded the complexities of attending a college away from their reservations. Additional research is needed to better understand if, how, and why adult students' experiences may be similar or different across institutional types.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

As noted in the brief literature synthesis, research focused specifically on racially minoritized adult students is currently in its infancy stage. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2000) argued that the "most widely used approach to race in adult education is one that is unnamed and absent by omission" (p. 153) and that this approach falls in line with the dangerous yet common educational perspective of colorblindness. In line with a colorblind perspective is the belief that if race is not discussed it is not significant which then can falsely lead to the assumption that race has no bearing on experience. This colorblindness approach can be manifested in the literature, theory, pedagogy, and praxis within adult education. Isaac, Merriweather, and Rogers (2010) further asserted that "... adult education has for the most part remained virtually silent on its failure to (a) aggressively move outside of its comfort zone to the margins in an effort to reach racial ethnic minorities; (b) address individual racism, privilege, and power; and (c) acknowledge old racism in new attire" (p. 363). Many would agree that the field

Research focused specifically on racially minoritized adult students is currently in its infancy stage.

has considerable strides to make even in the simple reporting of race in that currently there is no data system that allows for the accurate determination of the reduction or increase of racial and ethnic gaps of post-secondary attainment for adult learners (Lumina Foundation, 2017). In turn, our review identifies sizable gaps in our understanding about how to make colleges and universities more inclusive and equitable for racially minoritized adult students. We offer seven promising areas for future research to guide adult and higher education scholars in developing our understanding about how to best serve and support racially minoritized adult students:

1. **Capture more complete descriptions of racially minoritized adult students.** Our review highlights the dearth of research both in and outside of the adult education literature focused specifically on racially minoritized adult students. We struggled to develop a complete profile that describes racially minoritized adult students. In particular, disaggregated data for Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Latinx communities are sorely needed. Additional research is also needed at the institutional, state, and national levels that documents the salient characteristics (e.g., gender, receipt of financial aid, location, major/career goals, enrollment patterns, participation in online programs/courses) of racially minoritized adult college students. In addition, we recommend that focus be given to describing students who have some college but no degree (Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017) as well as documentation of students' educational goals and outcomes to gain a better understanding of the racial dynamics of who attempts PLA and CBE and who is rewarded with cred-

its. Further, demographic work to identify inequities in transfer and completion among re-enrolling adult students by racial/ethnic group is warranted (Erisman & Steele, 2015).

2. **Racially minoritized adult students' experiences with race and racism** Very few studies have given space to documenting what it is like to be both a racially minoritized student and an adult college student (Buckmiller, 2010). Unfortunately, our review also uncovered very little empirical work that specifically addresses issues of race and racism in terms of access, curriculum, and/or persistence. We find this to be particularly troubling, as students of color have been pushed out of the higher education pipeline at higher rates than their White peers (Pérez-Huber, Malagyn, Ramirez, Gonzalez, Jimenez, & Vñlez, 2015) and yet constitute up to half of current undergraduate adult learners (Blumenstyk, 2018). Most literature focused on modern racism and its impact on racially minoritized students' success has focused on comparisons between White and Black students and has been conducted at four-year institutions. Relatively little work has focused on other racial/ethnic groups (Bowman & Smith, 2012). For instance, not enough space has been given to examining how Native American students experience racial climates (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). As such, we recommend additional qualitative research to better understand issues of racism facing different groups of racially minoritized adult students including Native American and Latinx students. Moreover, in line with calls from higher education scholars for research focused on racially minoritized males (e.g., Saenz & Ponjuan;

In particular, disaggregated data for Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Latinx communities are sorely needed.

Palmer et al., 2014), we suggest research be conducted to better understand the intersections of gender and race in supporting equitable outcomes.

- 3. Racially minoritized adult students' voices and needs.** Institutions must understand the needs and identities of adult students (Blumenstyk, 2018). Specifically, our review highlights the need for comprehensive data and research documenting racially minoritized adult students' voices and unique needs. For instance, we are not aware of any research that has sought to understand how racially minoritized adult students seek to or want to engage with peers. We recommend that additional qualitative research, along

Our review highlights the need for comprehensive data and research documenting racially minoritized adult students' voices and unique needs.

with critical quantitative research, be conducted to allow racially minoritized adult students to voice their cultural perspectives and lived experiences accessing and persisting in college. This work should consider students' strengths and culture (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003).

- 4. Role of context in shaping racially minoritized students' experiences.** Existing research on adult students tends to take an individual/cognitive view of learning that overlooks how positionality and identities shape diverse students' (including but not limited to racially minoritized adult) college experiences. We strongly recommend that researchers begin to more fully consider the role of social and cultural contexts in learning. For instance, little is known about how enrolling in distance/online courses and programs may influence racially minoritized adult students' experiences and odds of success. Contextual information is important

to gather as it relates to online course engagement as well as practical details including students' Wi-Fi broadband access. It is also imperative that research efforts continue to differentiate between undergraduate and graduate adult learners as well as experiences at different institutional types. Current findings would suggest that it is particularly important to consider the role of the institutional context in shaping racially minoritized adult students' experiences. We recommend additional research be conducted to understand the experiences of racially minoritized adult students across institutional type including but not limited to Minority Serving Institutions, community colleges, and for-profit institutions that are disproportionately enrolling these students.

- 5. Culturally relevant theory development and testing.** Similar to the broader higher education literature, theory focused on adult students has been developed and continues to rely on persistence models focused on traditional age, middle class, White college students. Traditional persistence models have been repeatedly criticized for not being relevant for racially minoritized students (e.g., Rendyn, Jalomo & Nora, 2004). As such, we recommend that research focused on racially minoritized adult students consider cultural values and experiences in developing and shaping theory and frameworks. For example, Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth and Campa's (2010) critical resilience could be used for theoretically based empirical work (Crisp et al, 2014). Similarly, models like the Family Education Model (FEM) by HeavyRunner and DeCelles (2002) can be applied toward ways the family structure within the college can help enhance Native American and other racially minoritized students' sense of belonging (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Finally, aligned with our last recommendation, we also suggest that researchers draw from sociological theory when appropriate in framing research focused on racially minoritized adult students.

6. **Inclusive programs and classroom practices.** Another notable gap identified by our review was research focused on practices and strategies that are effective for adult students (Blumenstyk, 2018). To begin with, there is a need for research that identifies effective recruiting techniques for adult students, including but not limited to racially minoritized students (Erisman & Steele, 2015). Higher education institutions have yet to recognize how messages and program offerings are discouraging adult students from enrolling and/or persisting in college (Blumenstyk, 2018). Also, limited findings suggest that racially minoritized students both value and likely benefit from culturally responsive teaching and a diverse curriculum (Guy, 1999; Peterson, 1999; Sealey-Ruiz 2007). We recommend additional research to explore what culturally responsive teaching and curriculum looks like for adult students and how it may directly or indirectly promote success for racially minoritized adult students. Moreover, we suggest that researchers give more focus to studying racially minoritized adult students' motivations and experiences engaging with institutional agents and peers outside the classroom, including but not limited to participating in support services and programs.
7. **Impacts of institutional, state, and national policies and initiatives.** Prior learning assessment (PLA) and competency-based education (CBE) are two of the major curriculum initiatives that have the potential to increase access for adult students (Travers, 2012; Voorhees, 2001). However, both areas of practice are largely silent on the experiences of racially minoritized adult learners who earn credit in these ways. Prior learning assessment and competency-based education have the potential to increase access and success among racially minoritized adult students. Both initiatives award credit for learning that has taken place outside of college and allow students to learn at their own pace (CAEL, 2010; Book, 2014). Unfortunately, to the best of

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our knowledge, there has been no empirical work specifically focused on how racially minoritized adult learners experience PLA and CBE, the two largest access initiatives that are being pushed by local government and foundations. We also recommend research that explores the impacts of transfer, financial aid and federal work study programs on racially minoritized adult students' enrollment and success. For instance, adult students are even more likely than other students to use complex enrollment patterns including attending multiple institutions and stopping out. We recommend work to understand the unintended obstacles that transfer policies may be creating for students (e.g., credits not transferring). Further, given the documented consequences of negative climate and experiences with racism on racially minoritized students' success, we strongly recommend research that explores institutional policies and practices that may be effective in limiting harm. Finally, although not well-documented, our review uncovered some evidence to suggest that developing and maintaining relationship with local business, workforce and other external entities may be an effective way to recruit and retain racially minoritized students (Ray, 2012). As such, we suggest that researchers give more attention to studying the impacts of external partnerships.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Although research specific to racially mi-

noritized adult students remains woefully underdeveloped, we believe that the broader scholarship offers several important implications for policy and practice. As such, we conclude with promising policies, practices and strategies that have the potential to create more inclusive and equitable environments for racially minoritized adult learners. Our recommendations are organized by audience, beginning with implications for faculty.

Recommendations for faculty

- **Get to know and support students as individuals.** Racially minoritized adult students want to be recognized and treated as individuals. It is important that faculty acknowledge their biases and assumptions when working with racially minoritized students. Findings suggest that faculty play a critical role in promoting racially minoritized students' success in college. Get to know students as individuals. Faculty can also help support adult students by being aware of and sensitive to their needs (Kasworm, 2002; Ray, 2012) and by providing flexibility, when possible, to students' unique and often complex life situations (Ross-Gordon, 1998).
- **Develop inclusive teaching practices.** Erisman and Steele (2015) note that existing knowledge about differences in serving adult and traditional age students has yet to be fully incorporated into the pedagogy and practices at colleges and universities. Existing research findings tell us that adult students prefer self-directed and active learning that is relevant to their lives. Faculty can provide an inclusive classroom environment for adult students by incorporating interactive and engaging teaching strategies including small and large group discussion, learning through narratives and listening to students' experiences and stories, and reflective activities and participatory learning (Garza, 2011). It is also important to acknowledge that racially minoritized adult students bring a wealth of experience and cultural assets with them to college that may not be acknowledged by

Racially minoritized adult students want to be recognized and treated as individuals.

faculty inside the classroom. Faculty can create an inclusive classroom for racially minoritized students by acknowledging and giving space to assets and knowledge, prior experiences, and voices that students bring to discussions (Buckmiller & Cramer, 2013).

- **Incorporate diversity/equity in the curriculum.** Faculty can create inclusive climates by being attentive to issues related to diversity and developing curriculum that considers diverse viewpoints and perspectives (including but not limited to racial diversity). The limited amount of research focused on racially minoritized adult students suggests that having a diverse curriculum may be an effective strategy to creating an inclusive campus environment (Ross-Gordon, 1998; Ross-Gordon & Brown-Haywood, 2000). Additionally, Sealey-Ruiz (2010) recommend that faculty can develop students' racial literacy through class discussions and the examination of critical readings that offer diverse perspectives and racial cultural content.
- **Make programs/courses accessible.** In working with racially minoritized adult students, we strongly recommend that faculty be as flexible as possible with course offerings and delivery methods to ensure that coursework is accessible for racially minoritized adult students (Ray, 2012). In order to increase access, programs are turning to flexible admission standards, accelerated time-to-degree,

Having a diverse curriculum may be an effective strategy to creating an inclusive campus environment.

and curriculum organized around concepts such as leadership versus traditional disciplines (Blumenstyk, 2018). When appropriate, we recommend that faculty support the expansion of competency-based practices including prior learning assessments and stackable credentials that grant credit for experiences and skills (Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017).

Recommendations for student affairs

- **Create welcoming inclusive spaces for racially minoritized adult students.** Research shows that racially minoritized adult students benefit from opportunities to interact with students with similar identities to reinforce their cultural values and help them to work through negative experiences with culturally insensitive individuals (Hurtado, 2012). We recommend that student affairs educators purposefully create spaces for students to actively engage and learn from each other and cultivate supportive relationships both in and outside of the classroom (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Williams, Berger & McClendon, 2005). Meaningful involvement in groups or activities with students of the same race/ethnicity can reinforce culture and help students maintain their identity related to their community (Lopez, 2018).
- **Create opportunities for students to learn and interact with students with different identities.** Student affairs educators play a critical role in developing and facilitating out of class experiences designed to meet the needs of diverse students and create a welcoming campus environment (Patton & Hannon, 2008). Students need opportunities to interact with students with different identities. These interactions can help students identify commonalities and work through different perspectives (Hurtado, 2012). As such, student affairs programming should help foster a campus climate that encourages students to develop relationships with peers from different ages and racial/ethnic backgrounds (Palmer et al., 2014).
- **Tailor services to racially minoritized adult students.** We also recommend that

student affairs educators tailor on-site counseling/advising and other services to the needs and experiences of adult students (e.g., how to transfer credit from multiple institutions, financial aid options for part-time enrollment; Ray, 2012; Spellman, 2007). In addition to scheduling campus tours in the evening hours and holding family-friendly events, student affairs may consider offering an adult focused orientation and/or culturally-sensitive counseling that considers stressors related to caregiving, immigration, and language acquisition that racially minoritized adult students face (Gary, Kling, & Dodd, 2004).

- **Develop meaningful partnerships with students' family and communities.** It can be difficult for institutions to recruit and retain adult students. However, limited findings suggest that adult students may learn about college from family, friends or their community (Blumenstyk, 2018). Within the tribal colleges and universities, a community approach is taken to lifelong learning and assumes that students do not have to leave their community or culture to gain a college education (Guillory, 2009). As such, it is important that recruiting and retention efforts focused towards racially minoritized adult students include messaging that connects to students' families and communities. Guillory (2009) suggested offering counseling that can help guide Native American and Alaska Native students to programs and careers that are in demand in their reservation communities.

Recommendations for institutional leaders

- **Take responsibility for leading deep, transformational organizational change.** Findings suggest that although an increasing number of White students are rejecting traditional racial/ethnic prejudices, institutions are still reinforcing more subtle race-related assumptions and racist beliefs through practices and behaviors (Bowman & Smith, 2012). Policies, traditions, and practices were created before racially minoritized adult students were enrolled (Hurtado, 2012).

Creating an inclusive environment requires institutions to make deep, transformational changes that meet the needs of diverse students and do not require students to assimilate into existing, racist environments.

As such, creating an inclusive environment requires institutions to make deep, transformational changes that meet the needs of diverse students and do not require students to assimilate into existing, racist environments (Williams, Berger & McClendon, 2005). Changes like including pictures of racially diverse students in campus marketing efforts are surface-level and are unlikely to result systemic and lasting improvements. Rather, deep, transformational change reflects a shift in institutional values and assumptions that underlie daily practices (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). It is critical that leaders take responsibility for leading required transformational changes to an institution's culture (Williams, Berger & McClendon, 2005).

- **Demonstrate a commitment to diversity and to racially minoritized students.** Research suggests that the climate for diversity has very real consequences for racially minoritized students on campus (Hurtado, 2012). Institutional leaders can demonstrate a commitment to diversity in the following ways: (a) actively recruit racially minoritized (and adult) students; (b) increase the diversity of faculty and staff; (c) support programs for racially minoritized students and faculty proposals to expand diversity in the curriculum; and (d) develop and support faculty and staff training programs focused around equity and student success, and (e) be creative in developing programs that allow students space to maintain connections to their communities (Guillory, 2009; Hurtado, 2012; Ray, 2012).

- **Routinely collect and use data specific to racially minoritized adult students and climate.** Institutional leaders also demonstrate a commitment to racially minoritized students' success by leading and supporting efforts to routinely collect and use institutional data specific to racially minoritized students. At a minimum, we suggest that institutions disaggregate enrollment, retention and completion data by age and racial/ethnic group and use the data to identify inequities and opportunities for improvement (Erisman & Steele, 2015). It is more important than ever to not ignore campus climate. We strongly recommend that institutional leaders be proactive in auditing the campus climate and subsequently be willing to put needed resources into making improvements (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Fortunately, there are a growing number of tools and resources available for institutions to use including: Inclusive Excellence Scorecard (Williams, Berger & McClendon, 2005), Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model (Museus, 2014; Museus & Smith, 2016; Museus, Yi, & Sealua, 2017) Equity Scorecard (Center for Urban Education)
- **Don't assume to understand what racially minoritized adult students need.** Institutional leaders should be careful to not make assumptions about students' needs. Leaders should create opportunities to listen and learn from racially minoritized adult students. Borrowing from Guillory and Wolverton's (2008) work, it is important for institutions to acknowledge that minoritized adult students are the experts and better understand what they need more than we do. We recommend that institutions begin this work by conducting a needs assessment. Moreover,

Recruiting and retention efforts focused towards racially minoritized adult students include messaging that connects to students' families and communities.

racially minoritized adult students' needs should always be considered in decision making. For example, we suggest institutional leaders invite racially minoritized adult students to serve as a student representative on committees when appropriate.

- **Be mindful about how students are identified/labeled.** Labels such as non-traditional aged and traditional aged students can indicate a hierarchy or preference towards traditional aged students. Traditional students are seen as the standardized norm of undergraduate college attendance and those who are non-traditional are seen as an exception, secondary in status, and can even be viewed as outsiders or interlopers to higher education (Gulley, 2016). Similarly, using deficit-focused terms such as “minority” and “at-risk” may unintentionally add barriers to fully connecting with and understanding students (Pérez II, Ashlee, Do, Kari-kari, & Sim, 2017; Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017). As such, we suggest that institutions be mindful of how racially minoritized adult students are identified and labeled.
- **Implement policies that consider adult students' schedules and commitments.** Institutional leaders need to be flexible, creative and willing to develop policies and programs that better meet the needs of adult learners (Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017). Reviewed research focused on racially minoritized students suggests that institutional leaders do the following to make programs accessible: (a) offer programs online or on site with major local companies, (b) schedule on-campus courses with varying lengths and at times that fit adult students' schedules, (c), advising and career centers should

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At a minimum, we suggest that institutions disaggregate enrollment, retention and completion data by age and racial/ethnic group and use the data to identify inequities and opportunities for improvement.

be available at times that adult students can participate, (d) put as much information online as possible (Erisman & Steele, 2015; Ray, 2012).

- **Implement institutional practices to ease financial stress and burden.** Financial policies and practices are of particular importance for racially minoritized adult students. Small changes such as streamlining the admissions and transcript evaluation process can help make institutions more accessible and save students time and frustration (Ray, 2012). Other recommendations from the literature specific to finances include: creating emergency-aid funds to help with expenses such as utility bills and unexpected medical expenses (Blumenstyk, 2018), connecting AI/AN students to available financial aid at the federal, state and tribal levels and help them apply for aid (Lopez, 2018), and providing need-based institutional aid and food pantries.
- **Share responsibility for creating an inclusive environment across the entire campus.** Following recommendation by Williams, Berger and McClendon (2005), we suggest that diversity and inclusion efforts be designed with shared responsibility across units and programs across the institution. There is often an assumption that multicultural affairs offices are and should be primarily responsible for programs and education that promote inclusion and belongingness (Patton & Hannon, 2008). However, multicultural and diversity offices should not have full responsibility for diversity work. Diversity needs to be woven into the fabric of the institution, beginning with leader-

Currently there is a dearth of state or national data specific to racially minoritized adult students.

ship and continuing on through the faculty and staff (Garza, 2011).

- **Develop and maintain partnerships with workforce and local businesses.** Our review found some evidence to suggest that relationships with external entities may improve racially minoritized adult student recruitment and retention (Ray, 2012). At the same time, companies and investors are seeing potential of working with colleges to serve adult students. We recommend that institutional leaders draw from successful community college models in expanding partnerships with local businesses and working with them to adopt tuition reimbursement policies, flexible schedules for working students, and paid internships (Ray, 2012).

Recommendations for policymakers

- **Support state and federal policies that reduce financial burden for racially minoritized adult students.** Our review identified several areas of misalignment between current financial policies and efforts to increase college enrollment and completion rates for racially minoritized adult students. For instance, it appears that some federal policies that provide forgiveness of past debts may unintentionally serve as obstacles for returning students. Financial aid programs can specifically assist with child care costs (Blumenstyk, 2018). Turner (2017) recommended realigning workforce policies and financial aid policies that deter adult students from enrolling and/or being retained in college. Although six in ten adult students attend part-time, financial aid programs are often designed for full-time students (Blumenstyk, 2018). The restoration of year-round Pell Grants is an important step (Soares, Gagliardi & Nellum, 2017). It is also notable that most state financial aid policies including the growing number

of free-college programs currently target and favor traditional-age students. However, there is promise with the new Lumina Foundation Adult Promise grant program that seeks to develop models to make free college programs successful for adult students (Lumina Foundation, 2017). We recommend that policymakers support federal, state, and institutional policies that can reduce the financial burden for racially minoritized students.

- **Construct accountability measures that encourage institutions to serve racially minoritized adult students.** Current institutional accountability measures including but not limited to performance-based funding currently focus on first-time, full-time students (Jones, Jones, Elliott, Russel Owens, Assalone, & Gandara, 2012). As a result, existing measures may unintentionally penalize institutions that are committed to serving and supporting adult and/or racially minoritized students. Making meaningful improvements to college enrollment and retention will require policymakers to work closely with institutions to edit/create accountability measures and funding mechanisms that encourage and even reward institutions that serve racially minoritized adult students.
- **Support the development of national and state data systems that track adult students.** Colleges and universities need to be able to make decisions specific to racially minoritized adult students that are firmly grounded in data (Shapiro et al., 2017). Currently there is a dearth of state or national data specific to racially minoritized adult students. We strongly recommend that national and state data systems (e.g., IPEDS, SLDS [State Longitudinal Data Systems]) require institutions to track student enrollment and completion broken down by both age and race/ethnicity.

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