EQUITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR STATES

Amplifying Equity in Perkins V

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PARTNERSHIPS IN EQUITY

NAPE provides equity leadership and capacity building to transform education and workforce systems.

FACILITATORS

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A LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

DEAR NAPE COMMUNITY,

At NAPE, we are committed to doing the challenging and necessary work required to transform career and technical education (CTE) by applying a robust equity lens to the Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA). We have spent the past year: 1) offering on-going and responsive support to past Academy participants through our Peer Learning Community (PLC), 2) training Peer Leaders and Educators to co-facilitate Academy sessions, and 3) moving seven new member states through the Equity Leadership Academy for States (Academy). The dedication of these individuals to center and embody equity in the CLNA process inspired collective learning and action among all participants and facilitators. Here is what we learned:

AMPLIFYING STUDENT VOICE IS A NON-NEGOTIABLE
The student representatives on each state team were our greatest teachers throughout the Academy. Their perspective, expertise, and candor challenged our equity lens, fueled transformation, and held us accountable to our commitment to serve the most marginalized students in our respective communities and institutions. Thank you Karina, Yash, Isaac, Zania, and Francois for your leadership and unwavering commitment to student voice and educational equity.

WE MUST COMBAT ANTI-EQUITY POLICIES WITH COURAGE, STRATEGY, AND SOLIDARITY
Over the past few years, there has been an unprecedented political agenda to thwart equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts in our education systems. This has had a tremendous negative impact on our member states while they navigate the new nuance that is required in their roles to both protect marginalized students while maintaining their ability to work effectively in their institutions. Cultivating a national community of support that creates pathways for hope and courageous leadership with clear strategies, connection, and solidarity has been instrumental in participants' shared learning and thoughtful advocacy efforts.

INTENTIONAL SKILL BUILDING WITH COMMUNAL SUPPORT CREATES CHANGE WITH INTEGRITY
Compassionate, informed direct action at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels is required to achieve our shared goal of equity for all. However, it's all too common for change makers to jump to direct action before nurturing the mental models that are needed to create change with integrity. This work takes practice, skill building, and communal support that prioritizes accountability and transparency. Ample preparation and attention to our own readiness is necessary when transforming systems without replicating patterns of harm.

LONGITUDINAL MODELS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH
This was our first year offering long-term engagement that surpasses the traditional Academy model in the form of a Peer Learning Community as well as an opportunity for select Academy graduates to take on the leadership role as Peer Leaders and Educators. These two options for longitudinal engagement exponentially improved participants' ability to lead equity work with confidence and further solidified their sense of community with colleagues across the nation dedicated towards justice and liberation. Providing more opportunities for long-term engagement will improve equitable outcomes for CTE practitioners and students alike.

Our hope is that these takeaways resonate with you and the wider NAPE community. We sincerely appreciate everyone who contributed to our learning process and feel confident that the work we have been able to accomplish together will have a lasting impact on the students we serve. As we grow this work, we invite each of you to continue to inform and challenge our equity lens and hold us accountable as we move in community toward a shared vision for equity in CTE.

With deep gratitude,
The NAPE Team

Silvia Ramos   Ashley Conrad   Kayla Santana-Linares   Nakeia Alsup

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THANK YOU

The success of the Equity Leadership Academy for States was made possible by our participants and Peer Leaders & Educators who co-created the learning and engagement space alongside us. We offer an additional thank you to the numerous Cohort 1 graduates who continue to stay engaged in this work through the Peer Learning Community.

This process was also made possible by teams who worked behind the scenes to support our participants' experience and our capacity to highlight the successes of the Academy, including ECMC Foundation, Iris & Aperture, Social Policy Research Associates, Studio DBC, and the Atlanta Airport North Holiday Inn staff.

OUR COHORT 2 GRADUATES

ARIZONA
Isaac Betancourt
Reetika Dhawan
Audrey Dieken
Kimberly Faust
Jason Gee
Jennifer Kaufman Fourness

CALIFORNIA
Anthony Amboy
Gina Browne
Ebony Jeffries
Lupe Maldonado
LaCandice Ochoa

IDAHO
Karina Eagar
Chris Guthrie
Katie Leishman
Tiffany Mitchell
Shannon Phelps
Jennifer Pope

ILLINOIS
Shavina Baker
Sergio Hernandez Jr.
Marci Johnson
Deja Luckett
Yash Sharma
Janelle Washington

LOUISIANA
Brittney Baptiste Williams
Domingo Carrasquel
Damian Glover
Melba Kennedy
Martha Moore
Monica Morrison
Esperanza Zenon

MINNESOTA
Carrie Hanson
Herbert King
Robb Lowe
Jeannie Meidlinger
Eva Scates-Winston
Carrie Schneider

TENNESSEE
Daphne Brown
Tera Howerton
Francois Odenthal-Cruz
Vijay Ramcharan
Michael Tinsley
Jaci Whitaker
Zania Word

PEER LEADERS & EDUCATORS
Shadrach Banks
Edith Ramirez
Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom
Henessae Shavers
Lisa Stoner-Torbert
Felix Wilson

ABOUT THE EQUITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Academy was developed to help postsecondary state agencies center equity within Perkins V and the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment. The opportunity available to states and local education agencies through the CLNA process is broad and powerful, but it is hampered by the complexity of implementing such a process in a responsive and transformational manner at the local level. To this program, NAPE brought its many years of supporting CTE leaders and educators to craft a space where state leaders, community college faculty and staff, and, most importantly, students could come together and begin the important conversations necessary to transform our education systems. Having successfully completed a pilot Academy in 2021 with 10 state teams, NAPE was eager to extend this opportunity to support an additional seven state teams in their equity journey.

The Academy progressed through five distinct phases: 1) Co-creation, 2) Equity Training, 3) Action Research for Equity Project, 4) Academy Showcase, and 5) Evaluation. This purposeful construction reflects the equity principles guiding the Academy, namely the importance of grounding work within participant experience.

PHASE 1: CO-CREATION
Designing an Academy that was responsive to our participants was an important priority, especially given our commitment to grounded action in our equity work. To do so, this initial phase began with focus group interviews conducted with each team. The sessions were constructed to understand each stakeholder group's experience with equity, particularly within CTE programs at community colleges. Participants were also asked to provide guidance on their desires for their Academy experience in alignment with the Academy's goals.

PHASE 2: EQUITY TRAINING
The equity training phase was initiated in December 2022 and concluded in March 2023. The Academy training was divided into two components: equity training and capacity-building engagements. The equity centered professional learning sessions were composed of four 2-hour virtual sessions where all participants were engaged in various topics around equity, including NAPE's Equity Principles to frame the CLNA. Finally, all participants came back together for three 2-hour sessions where central topics were revisited once more and expanded context and space was provided for nuanced, regional specific support.

PHASE 3: ACTION RESEARCH FOR EQUITY PROJECT
Academy participants were encouraged to approach a problem they were facing in their local context and utilize the Equity Leadership Academy framework to move from theory to practice via an Action Research for Equity Project (AREP). The AREP process offered an opportunity for participants to solve a problem, answer a question, or understand something in their state's equity initiatives utilizing the guidance of the Equity Leadership Academy framework. The AREP was formally introduced in January 2023 with the expectation that teams would share their progress and reflections in community with the national cohort at the Academy Showcase in March 2023. Teams were able to engage in purposeful conversations and pose questions to peers and facilitators during Technical Assistance calls designed to support teams in their AREP process.

PHASE 4: ACADEMY SHOWCASE
On March 28, 2023, teams gathered both in-person in Atlanta, Georgia and virtually via Zoom for a hybrid reflection and celebration of their learning journey as state teams and as a national cohort. Academy participants presented their learning from the AREP process and developed action plans for next-steps and community accountability.

PHASE 5: EVALATION
The final phase of the Academy provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on the value and impact of the engagement. Focus groups and post-training surveys with participants yielded important data that we are using to guide changes to the Academy for future implementations.

ACADEMY GOALS

Adopting an equity lens: Participants learned how to place equity at the core of their work and build the skills necessary to have equity-minded conversations with colleagues in planning and implementing their state's CLNA process.

Building institutional capacity: NAPE's guidance and technical assistance prepared participants to support LEAs as they work to close equity gaps.

Creating community: The Academy provided a platform to build relationships with other states spearheading CLNA efforts.

Sharing lessons learned: Sharing participants' lessons learned with members across the nation helped to create sustained support paths to implement the CLNA in accordance with Perkins V.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

" *No one is better situated to speak to the problems within CTE and education in general than the very students and families experiencing depressed outcomes.* "

-NAPE Equity Principles for the Perkins V CLNA

Of central importance to the success of the program was the matter of who was present at the Academy. At the outset, team leaders from State Departments of Postsecondary Education who applied for the program were instructed to prioritize a diverse team inclusive of the key stakeholders that reflected the various groups being served at its colleges. Thinking of students and of professional participants, team leaders thoughtfully recruited participants that belong to the groups identified as special populations within Perkins V, also considering gender and race/ethnicity. The diversity of experience reflected within the state teams led to extremely rich discussions and interactions during Academy meetings.

ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS

GENDER	PROFESSIONALS
MALE	25%
FEMALE	66.7%
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	8.3%

GENDER	STUDENTS
MALE	33.3%
FEMALE	66.7%
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	0%

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS

RACE/ETHNICITY*	PROFESSIONALS
AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKAN NATIVE	2.5%
ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN	5%
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	30%
HISPANIC OR LATINX	10%
WHITE	42.5%
OTHER	2.5%
I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	7.5%

Note that three participants selected more than one racial/ethnic identity, which are represented in this count
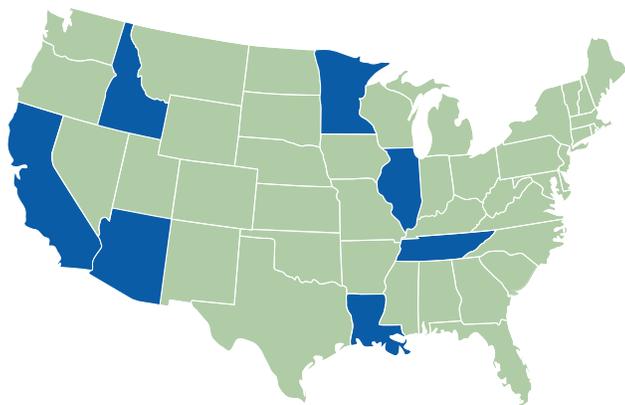
RACE/ETHNICITY*	STUDENTS
AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKAN NATIVE	0%
ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN	33.3%
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	33.3%
HISPANIC OR LATINX	16.7%
WHITE	16.7%
OTHER	0%
I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	0%

STAKEHOLDERS	
COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS	11.7%
COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY/STAFF	39.5%
STATE DEPARTMENT STAFF	48.8%

STATE REPRESENTATION	PARTICIPANTS
ARIZONA	6
CALIFORNIA	5
IDAHO	6
ILLINOIS	6
LOUSIANA	7
MINNESOTA	6
TENNESSEE	7

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

PEER LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

RACE/ETHNICITY*	PROFESSIONALS
AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKAN NATIVE	0%
ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN	0%
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	50%
HISPANIC OR LATINX	33.3%
WHITE	16.7%
OTHER	0%
I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	0%

GENDER	
MALE	33.3%
FEMALE	66.7%
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	0%

STAKEHOLDERS	
CURRENT COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS/RECENT GRADUATES	66.7%
COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY/STAFF	0%
CURRENT/RETIRED STATE DEPARTMENT STAFF	33.3%
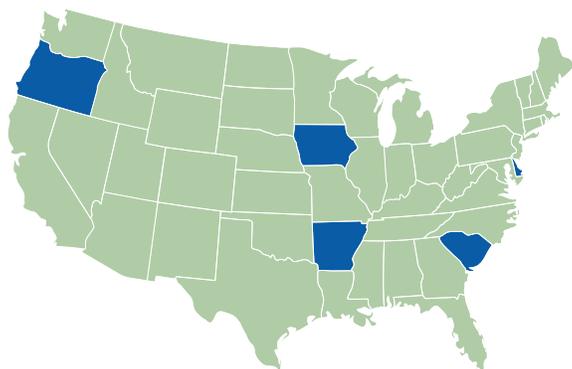
STATE REPRESENTATION	
ARKANSAS	1
DELAWARE	1
IOWA	1
OREGON	2
SOUTH CAROLINA	1

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

RACE/ETHNICITY*	PROFESSIONALS
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE	0%
ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN	7%
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	21%
HISPANIC OR LATINX	14%
WHITE	57%
I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	7%

GENDER	PROFESSIONALS
MALE	79%
FEMALE	14%
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	7%

STAKEHOLDERS	
COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS	8%
COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY/STAFF	23%
STATE DEPARTMENT STAFF	61%
OTHER	8%
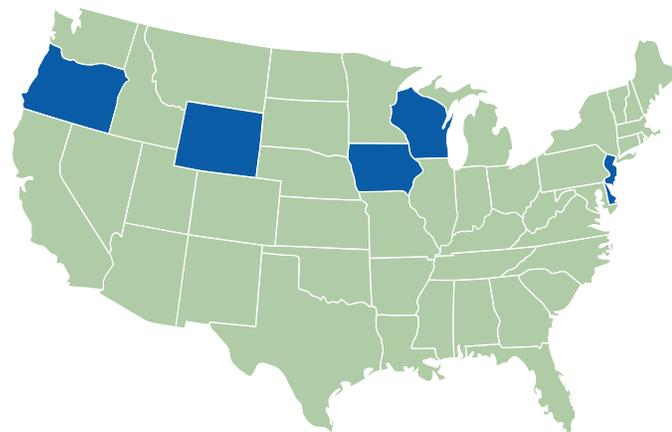
STATE REPRESENTATION	PROFESSIONALS
DELAWARE	2
IOWA	4
NEW JERSEY	3
OREGON	3
WISCONSIN	1
WYOMING	1

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ACADEMY

The Academy initiated in November of 2022 and all phases were successfully completed by the end of April 2023.

7 HOURS OF CO-CREATION SESSIONS

6 HOURS OF CAPACITY-BUILDING SESSIONS

2 HOURS OF STUDENT SESSIONS

6 HOUR HYBRID SHOWCASE

8 HOURS OF EQUITY TRAINING SESSIONS

7.5 HOURS OF PEER LEADER & EDUCATOR TRAINING SESSIONS

4 HOURS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CALLS

19.5 HOURS OF PEER LEADER & EDUCATOR TRAINING SESSIONS

60 HOURS TOTAL

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ACADEMY

1. CO-CREATION PHASE

Interviews with Academy participants established key aspects of the culture of the Academy: inclusion, vulnerability, and intentionality. All state team members' voices, from students to state leaders, were valued in conversations naming what equity and inequity looks like in their institutional and state context. Participants highlighted the personal impact that being a leader for equity has on their lives and identified the ways in which they hoped the Academy could support them and their efforts.

Using information gathered in these co-creation conversations, the Academy training framework was designed to focus on three key areas of need: 1) authentic community engagement, 2) engaging in conversations about equity, and 3) creating systems of support and accountability.

GOAL FOR CO-CREATION MEETINGS: To provide each state with the opportunity to share input on current challenges, academy expectations, and preferred curriculum design and facilitation.

1. **California Co-Creation Meeting:** *11:30 - 1:30 PM EDT, Wednesday, November 2, 2022*

2. **Louisiana Co-Creation Meeting:** *2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Tuesday, November 8, 2022*

3. **Idaho Co-Creation Meeting:** *12:00 - 2:00 PM EST, Wednesday, November 9, 2022*

4. **Illinois Co-Creation Meeting:** *3:00 - 5:00 PM EST, Wednesday, November 9, 2022*

5. **Arizona Co-Creation Meeting:** *1:00 - 3:00 PM EST, Tuesday, November 15, 2022*

6. **Minnesota Co-Creation Meeting:** *12:00 - 2:00 PM EST, Wednesday, November 16, 2022*

7. **Tennessee Co-Creation Meeting:** *4:00 - 6:00 PM EST, Thursday, November 17, 2022*

NAPE's approach to the Academy was important in modeling the equity principles that would be shared with participants. One pivotal component of the initial training centered the voices of students. By bringing community college students into a place of authority as teachers, NAPE effectively illustrated an important change that colleges and states must make to bring about equity.

GOALS FOR EQUITY TRAINING SESSIONS

1. **Meeting 1:** *2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Friday, December 9, 2022*
   Goal: Provide an overview of NAPE's equity principles and participate in internal reflection to support our equity goals while caring for ourselves and our community.

2. **Meeting 2:** *2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Thursday, December 15, 2022*
   Goal: Offer strategies that foster authentic community engagement in the CLNA process while also amplifying and thoughtfully integrating student voice into decision-making that directly impacts their lives in postsecondary education.

3. **Meeting 3:** *3:00 - 5:00 PM EST, Tuesday, January 10, 2023*
   Goal: Equip teams with the tools and support to engage in tough conversations about equity so team members are able to move from agency into action in their work and learning environments.

4. **Meeting 4:** *2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Friday, January 20, 2023*
   Goal: Demonstrate how to create systems of support within institutions while simultaneously creating healthy systems of accountability that foster community, wellbeing, and belonging.

GOALS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CALLS

1. **Meeting 1a:** *4:00 - 5:00 PM EST, Wednesday, February 1, 2023*
   Meeting 1b: *3:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Thursday, February 2, 2023*
   Goal: Prepare state teams for a successful AREP that puts student and community engagement at the center of their work.

2. **Meeting 2a:** *2:00 - 3:00 PM EST, Tuesday, February 14, 2023*
   Meeting 2b: *4:00 - 5:00 PM EST, Wednesday, February 15, 2023*
   Goal: Highlight the importance of developing trust as state teams and as a national coalition to intentionally build supportive and sustainable learning communities.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ACADEMY

GOALS FOR STUDENT SESSIONS

1. **Meeting 1:** *6:00 - 7:00 PM EST, Thursday, January 5, 2023*
   Goal: Facilitate students through a process where they define student voice and explore the hallmarks of support to prepare them to co-facilitate an activity at the Academy Showcase.

2. **Meeting 2:** *5:00 - 6:00 PM EST, Friday, March 10, 2023*
   Goals: Gain information regarding student needs and concerns with the Academy experience. Explore student interest in virtual or in-person facilitation. Explore student engagement needs and preferences for the next cohort.

GOALS FOR CAPACITY-BUILDING SESSIONS

1. **Meeting 1:** *2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Tuesday, February 28, 2023*
   Goal: Highlight the importance of internal work (personally and as a leadership group) and the importance of equitable decision-making as we move into action through our Action Research for Equity Projects.

2. **Meeting 2:** *2:00 - 4:00 PM EST, Tuesday, March 7, 2023*
   Goal: Reiterate what was previously shared around student voice. Specifically ask participants to bring potential questions, protocols, or plans regarding their Action Research for Equity Projects to receive constructive feedback from the team and NAPE. Share some specific resources on forming focus groups and speaking with students in a respectful, empowering way.

3. **Meeting 3:** *2:00 - 4:00 PM EDT, Tuesday, March 14, 2023*
   Goal: We know this work is difficult and that pushing against the grain and momentum of institutions can be exhausting. Mirroring the culture we set out to establish, this session revisits utilizing equity-aligned self-care frameworks and practices to build community, integrity, and sustainability that nurtures connection.

PEER LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

Student and Professional participants from Cohort 1 of the Academy were invited to co-facilitate sessions for Cohort 2 under the role of "Peer Leaders and Educators" (PL&Es). These individuals were identified based on their demonstrated skill set in embodying and communicating shared equity values as well as their ability to commit to the agreed-upon timeframe of engagement.

GOALS FOR PL&E TRAININGS

1. **Orientation Meeting:** *12:00 - 1:30 PM EDT, Friday, June 10, 2022*
   Goal: Prepare participants with the information they need to make an informed decision about becoming a Peer Leader and Educator while building a strong sense of community.

2. **Training 1:** *12:00 - 1:30 PM EDT, Friday, August 12, 2022*
   Goal: Review the roles and responsibilities of a Peer Leader and Educator and co-create a definition for what it means to facilitate as a guide.

3. **Training 2:** *12:00 - 1:30 PM EDT, Wednesday, August 24, 2022*
   Goal: Strengthen Peer Leader and Educators' facilitation skills in nonlinear and iterative facilitation styles and create ample space for continued community building.

4. **Training 3:** *12:00 - 1:30 PM EDT, Wednesday, September 7, 2022*
   Goal: Deepen Peer Leader and Educators' understanding of the content and structure of the Academy and begin to identify areas in which PL&E's unique gifts and strengths would best facilitate Academy conversations.

5. **Training 4:** *12:00 - 1:30 PM EDT, Wednesday, September 21, 2022*
   Goal: Invite Peer Leaders and Educators to co-create a vision for how student voice will be centered in the 2nd Academy cohort and deepen PL&Es understanding of how to create a community of support while facilitating.

PEER LEARNING COMMUNITY

Participants from Cohort 1 expressed a desire for continued connection beyond the Academy trainings to further deepen their knowledge, awareness, and equity-centered leadership skills as a national community of equity leaders. Co-creation meetings were held with each state team at the onset of the Peer Learning Community to check in on participants' needs post-Academy to ensure that session topics would be responsive and supportive. After Cohort 2 of the Academy came to a close, members were invited to join the Peer Learning Community.

GOALS FOR PEER LEARNING COMMUNITY SESSIONS

Goal for Co-Creation Meetings: To provide participants from each state with the opportunity to share input on current institutional challenges, their progress on the CLNA process, and preferred content for capacity building sessions.

1. **Wyoming Co-Creation Meeting:** *11:30 - 12:30 PM EDT, Wednesday, April 13, 2022*

2. **Delaware Co-Creation Meeting:** *2:30-3:30 PM EDT, Tuesday, April 19, 2022*

3. **New Jersey Co-Creation Meeting:** *9:30 - 10:30 AM EDT, Thursday, April 21, 2022*

4. **Oregon Co-Creation Meeting:** *11:30 - 12:30 PM EDT, Thursday, April 21, 2022*

5. **Iowa Co-Creation Meeting:** *4:00 - 5:00 PM EDT, Tuesday, May 9, 2022*

6. **Peer Learning Community Session 1:** *1:00 - 3:00 PM EDT, Tuesday, June 7, 2022*
   Goal: To create a space for past Academy participants to reconnect, build community, and work towards solution-building to some of their most pressing challenges as it relates to amplifying equity and student voice in the CLNA.

7. **Peer Learning Community Session 2:** *1:00 - 3:00 PM EDT, Thursday, June 16, 2022*
   Goal: To create a space for Academy participants to revisit their Problem Tree Analysis, move through a solution-building process, and provide resources to help support skill-building for authentic student voice engagement.

PEER LEARNING COMMUNITY

8. Peer Learning Community Session 3: *1:00 - 3:00 PM EDT, Thursday, August 4, 2022*
   Goal: For Academy participants to explore their impact on admin buy-in and direction setting while also becoming more equipped to humanize data through a community advocacy lens.

9. Peer Learning Community Session 4: *1:00 - 3:00 PM EDT, Thursday, September 22, 2022*
   Goal: For Academy participants to become more equipped to humanize data through a community advocacy lens and also collaborate on how this group would like to structure continued engagement.

10. Peer Learning Community Session 5a: *1:00 - 1:30 PM EST, Wednesday, November 23, 2022*
   Goal: To begin to address the additional "challenges" as identified in our state team meetings in March and provide space for gratitude and reflection on successes as participants have grown in their learning the past six months.

11. Peer Learning Community Session 5b: *1:00 - 3:00 PM EST, Thursday, January 19, 2023*
   Goal: To begin to address the additional "challenges" as identified in our state team meetings in March and provide space for gratitude and reflection on successes as participants have grown in their learning the past six months.

12. Peer Learning Community Session 6: *1:00 -3:00 PM EST, Thursday, March 9, 2023*
   Goal: Equip participants with an equity decision-making tool that will help inform equity centered conversations with colleagues and provide space for the group to identify specific insights they'd like to gain from student representatives.

13. Peer Learning Community Session 7: *12:30 - 2:30 EST, Tuesday, June 6, 2023*
   Goal: To create a space for Academy graduates to connect/reconnect, build community, and deepen our conversations on how we can continue to honor needs through the selection of topics for future meetings, with the expanded lens of our growing community.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Cohort 1 Equity Leadership Academy focus groups provided invaluable lessons to ensure the Academy curriculum and structure continues to be responsive to the ever-changing needs of postsecondary educators and students. This iterative Academy design process yielded impactful additions to the Cohort 2 Academy, including the Peer Learning Community, the development of the role of Peer Leaders and Educators, and the implementation of an Action Research for Equity Project for Academy teams to practice applying their equity training to their local context.

In this same spirit of continuous reflection and aligning Academy goals with impactful experiences, Cohort 2 Academy participants provided feedback in focus groups conducted in partnership with Social Policy Research Associates, which resulted in five key lessons learned to benefit the upcoming Cohort 3 Academy.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. COMMUNITY BUILDING WITH PEER LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

While community-building among participants was prioritized in every Academy session, Peer Leaders and Educators voiced a need to more intentionally foster their own relationships with participants and to receive updates regarding sessions for which they are not present. One Peer Leader and Educator reflected, "I wanted to know what happened [in earlier sessions] and try to make those connections because I also didn't want to come in and inhibit any conversations. When you start doing this work and you start feeling comfortable and you start building a community, you don't want to be the person that comes in and they're saying 'Why are they there? What's their role?'" We will dedicate more time in Cohort 3 for Peer Leaders and Educators to build a foundation for a mentorship relationship with Academy participants. We will also provide Peer Leaders and Educators with updates on Academy participants' progress. These changes will be integral to the Academy's mission to provide facilitation that is responsive to each participants' equity learning journey.

2. ACTION RESEARCH FOR EQUITY PROJECT SUPPORT

Participants appreciated the hands-on experience provided by the Action Research for Equity Project (AREP), and they expressed the need for additional resources to support them through this process. They identified the wealth of knowledge that Peer Leaders and Educators hold as students, former students, and educators all having previously participated in the Academy as a potential source for additional collaboration. One participant noted that, "maybe something they can do next time is be advisors to the teams... especially since they've done this before." Check-ins throughout the AREP process with Peer Leaders and Educators would allow for mentorship and thought partnership as state teams develop their action research.

3. FEEDBACK PROCESS FOR ACTION RESEARCH FOR EQUITY PROJECT

Peer Leaders and Educators' feedback is highly valued by Academy participants, and a more formalized process to share and capture this feedback following AREP presentations was identified as an opportunity for growth. One Academy participant shared that, "as everybody presented I think we could have gone into a lot of really meaningful discussion." Developing a feedback structure rooted in the equity values and principles foundational to the Academy would ensure state teams would receive valuable feedback that could inform next steps following the Academy.

4. SHOWCASE DURATION

The Academy Showcase served as the first opportunity for state teams to gather in-person. Focus group participants requested reserving more time during the showcase for connection and reflection, noting, "we may be connecting with personal experience or institutional needs and having the time to be able to talk that out while we're all together in a group would have been really nice." We will explore one-and-a-half day or two-day options for the Cohort 3 Academy to ensure that our Showcase provides time for participants to process their learning at a pace that nurtures connection with their national community of equity champions.

5. SUPPORTING DIRECT ACTION

In conversations with participants regarding the Peer Learning Community meeting structure, a need was communicated in receiving support for the direct action efforts they are leading through their professional role within their local communities. Graduates from Cohort 1 and 2 engage with the Peer Learning Community as a source of value alignment and encouragement. Setting intentional time for goal setting and peer feedback regarding equity initiatives they are leading are important ways to continue to bolster the effectiveness of these bimonthly gatherings.

ACADEMY OUTCOMES

NAPE partnered with Social Policy Research Associates to evaluate the effectiveness of the Academy for Cohort 2 participants, as well as the inaugural group of Peer Leaders and Educators and Peer Learning Community members. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through survey and focus group data to determine programmatic impact.

PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

At the end of the Academy, 100% of professionals expressed agreement that they had the capacity to put strategies and actions in motion to center equity in their work and that their knowledge around centering equity is strong enough to share with their colleagues. There was also a statistically significant difference for the statements, "I know how to put strategies and actions in motion to center equity in my work," "I have the capacity to put strategies and actions in motion to center equity in my work," and, "The knowledge I currently have around centering equity is strong enough for me to share with my colleagues."

Post Academy, over 90% of professionals agreed with the statements, "I know how to identify systemic and institutional inequities that impact marginalized students," and, "Students and families from marginalized communities are critical and valued stakeholders in my organization." Roughly 90% of professionals also agreed that they knew how to effectively co-construct services and strategies with marginalized students and families to address equity gaps. However, more than half of professionals disagreed with the statement related to barriers preventing the voices of students/families from being heard within their institution. This demonstrates a possible disconnect between participants understanding what the institutional inequities are while not fully understanding how grounded action rooted in amplifying student voice can effectively solve these inequities. Finally, over 90% of professionals expressed confidence in their knowledge around centering equity after Academy completion.

"They were giving me tools that I could bring back and unpack DEI differently so that people don't get automatic barriers. Because sometimes as soon as you hear 'DEI,' people shut down, they don't know what to do, they're done talking, they don't know how to navigate it and they don't want to upset anybody so they just stop. And so we know stagnation isn't possible. The Academy gave me a lot of ways, even in the language that I use when I engage people to create a sense of calm and a sense of intentional inclusion when I'm trying to get people's perspectives and reassure them that their perspectives are valuable to me and not just a tick off the box." *-Professional Participant*

"We were given a lot of resources and tools to refer to, review, and learn from, and we still have access to them. I really liked the series of questions we got to ease into conversations on equity and we're planning on using that for our workshops." *-Professional Participant*

When asked about whether they have incorporated a new method of student voice engagement in CLNA planning and implementation, five professionals indicated that they had and all others indicated that they haven't but plan to do so in the future. The five respondents who indicated "yes" were from the Idaho, Illinois, and Tennessee teams who successfully integrated a student representative onto their team and AREP, reiterating the importance and impact that authentic relationship-building with students has on moving from theory to practice. These teams accomplished this through student-led focus groups, survey creation and dissemination, and including students on advisory boards and equity panels.

"I really liked having the opportunity to listen to our students because for me I mainly have communication with [district staff] so I don't have a lot of interaction with students, so having the opportunity to listen to students and see what they go through…for me in my day to day it's good for me to listen to those life experiences because it's that constant reminder to keep going for them." *- Professional Participant*

"I think we realized that there was a gap in getting student voice. It brought to our attention that we weren't where we wanted to be. More than a particular strategy it really had to do with creating the mindset and awareness that we had not done the job we wanted…The Academy has given us a good direction on how to proceed and how to make sure that student voice is heard not only in CLNA but also in equity in general."
- Professional Participant

ACADEMY OUTCOMES

STUDENT PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

The biggest positive difference between the pre-survey average and the post-survey average was for the statement, "Faculty and staff know how to effectively co-construct strategies with marginalized students and families to address equity gaps." Students tended to agree more with this statement after completing the Academy, which means they could potentially have identified effective strategies being applied by faculty during the Academy. Alternatively, they could be thinking about the staff that are part of their state team, who they perceive to be practicing the student engagement strategies that are introduced during the Academy.

The biggest negative difference between the pre-survey average and the post-survey average was for the statement, "There are significant barriers present at my college campus that prevent the voices of marginalized students and their families from being heard," meaning that students tended to disagree more with this statement after completing the Academy. This could potentially be a result of students becoming more involved in equity initiatives on their campus due to their participation in the Academy, demonstrating the positive impact the Academy can have on institutions while simultaneously highlighting the importance for other students to be engaged in similar ways moving forward.

100% of students expressed a notable shift in their knowledge around centering equity, while 75% expressed a large shift in other skills like facilitation, garnering support from key leaders, and guiding others to center equity in their role and work, among others. Similarly, all students expressed agreement for the statements, "I know how to identify systemic and institutional inequities that impact marginalized students," "Faculty and staff know how to include the voices of marginalized students and families to address equity gaps," "Faculty and staff know how to effectively co-construct strategies with marginalized students and families to address equity gaps," "My college campus provides channels to gather student feedback in order to address equity gaps," and, "My voice as a student is heard and used to determine how to best address equity gaps." These results reflect how students were able to directly benefit from engaging in the Academy while building relationships with professionals in the field committed to equity work in their respective institutions.

"Even more than just the tools, just the example of how to have these conversations in these large groups was something that was, there's no price that can be put on that. We tried having conversations and they're hard to do and being able to look back on the conversations in the Academy and try to tweak those. For me, just watching other people do something and then for me to try to reflect that in my own way has been my biggest takeaway from the Academy." - *Student Participant*

"Instead of just listening to what's going on, actually being proactive about those things, like being part of conversations or seminars. I never really used to do those things and now I'm a little more active if I have the ability to. As far as getting student engagement, not only am I a student but I'm also being seen as a leader because of the Academy and how I'm able to articulate myself and I'm leading these conversations." - *Student Participant*

ACADEMY OUTCOMES

PEER LEADER AND EDUCATOR OUTCOMES

Following their involvement as a Peer Leader and Educator (PL&E) for Cohort 2, all PL&Es agreed with statements like, "I understand how to put strategies and actions in motion to center equity," "I know how to garner support from key leaders to put strategies and actions in motion to center equity," and, "I have applied my equity knowledge and practices gained from participating in the Academy." On average, PL&Es rated their confidence in equity knowledge and skills high in the pre-survey; however, the average score of PL&Es increased in the post-survey, meaning that they expressed slightly more confidence in their skills.

Similarly, PL&Es rated their confidence in their ability to guide Academy participants highly in the pre-survey. The biggest increase was in PL&Es confidence in the statement, "Guide Academy participants to identify systemic and institutional inequities that impact marginalized students," demonstrating their increased confidence and ability to support others on their own equity journeys. The minimal change in pre/post scoring for PL&Es is likely due to the fact that these individuals had received two years of equity training and engagement with NAPE prior to this role. This demonstrates the importance and impact of long-term engagement with individuals committed to equity and systemic change.

"Our training for peer leadership was a crash course in facilitation. We studied the fundamentals of facilitation, we were challenged to think technically about the job of a facilitator, and we reflected on our experiences with and with being facilitators. We studied presentations as well as engaged in group discussions. The training made me more proficient in the art of facilitation, not only in regards to being a peer leader, but also in my roles outside of NAPE."
- Peer Leader and Educator

PEER LEARNING COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

On average, respondents felt that the Peer Learning Community (PLC) sessions had a moderate to large increase in their confidence across the following skills: consensus-building for institutional equity initiatives, active listening in difficult equity conversations, collaborative agenda setting, articulating community assets when advocating for student voice, and relationship-building as a foundation for equity work. For the majority of these skills, most participants indicated that their confidence had increased "to a large extent" because of their participation in the PLC. **Participants reported that participating in the PLC sessions had impacted the following "to an extremely large extent":**

- Amplified my equity lens (50%)
- Allowed me to develop meaningful relationships with other Academy participants who attend PLC sessions (36%)
- Created space for my peers and I to voice the topics and activities we are most interested in discussing (36%)

The most valuable aspects of PLC sessions that respondents reported were:

- Learning through one another's experiences. One respondent shared that PLC sessions helped with, "increasing my interpersonal awareness of perspectives and issues."
- Being part of a diverse community of practitioners with similar goals focused on equity and supporting students.
- Identifying strategies to address equity challenges.
- The flexibility in the agenda to carry out conversations on important equity topics.
- Sharing reflection questions ahead of time to think about them in advance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the Equity Leadership Academy, there were a number of recommendations that emerged from Cohort 1 and 2 that can be used to help guide postsecondary leaders across the nation working to keep equity at the core of the Perkins V CLNA process.

1. INTERNAL WORK

Systemic change first begins with our individual, internal work. Our experiences, awareness, and perspective constrain our ability to deeply engage in transformational change within our institutions. Too often the rush to interventions meant to uplift marginalized student groups reinforce and replicate existing power structures that limit student access. Educators must first interrogate their understandings with the help of professional learning before launching system wide change. This is magnified for state department staff responsible for guiding Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in implementing the CLNA process.

Reflection Questions:

1. How have your experiences shaped your perspective?
2. What work can you do to expand your understanding of the space that you occupy as a professional and educator?
3. What resources are readily available to support your personal growth?

2. FRAMING AND DEFINING EQUITY

Defining equity and developing a framework of action are necessary steps to guide the work of institutions. Just as an individual must grow in their understanding of their place in privilege, power, and, marginalization, so too must governments and schools. To help ensure teams work from a similar place of understanding, Departments of Education and institutions must begin by crafting a shared vision and understanding of equity. Interdepartmental and intradepartmental conversations on important issues will ensure that the collective is moving forward together, both engaging in self-analysis within, and guiding groups externally in a cohesive manner.

Reflection Questions:

1. Does your department and organization have a common understanding of equity, marginalization, and the role of the organization in dismantling bias?
2. What would it mean for individuals within your organization to regularly engage in difficult and honest conversations centered on systems of marginalization?
3. Is your department honestly ready to support colleagues and other educators on issues of access and equity?

3. STUDENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

All too often, student and community voice is viewed as an afterthought when addressing equity gaps in CTE. While stakeholder engagement is mandated in Perkins V, student and community engagement is not often done in a way that honors the lived experience and expertise of the very students, families, and communities our institutions are meant to serve. When our grounded action is driven and guided by authentic student and community voices, equity gaps will narrow and solutions will be driven by the very populations who are all too often excluded from decision-making that directly impacts their opportunities and success. This practice can be readily accessible by including student voice in data collection and design.

Reflection Questions:

1. Reflect on your own experience as a student. Were you engaged in decision-making that directly impacted you? If so, what did that process look like? Did you feel heard? How does that relate to your current engagement with students?
2. Are you actively cultivating relationships with the students you serve? If so, what students are you currently listening to? Why? Who's missing?
3. Do you have the appropriate staff and training to authentically amplify and integrate students in your institutional decision-making? If not, what support do you need?

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

4. COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY

Perkins V legislation provides states and local education agencies with a critical framework to center equity within CTE through the CLNA. The needs assessment process is the primary lever within Perkins V for educators to identify and analyze factors limiting the success of marginalized communities and underrepresented student groups in CTE. However, the regulations provided within this legislative framework should not be the only levers of accountability to ensure we are meeting the needs of students. Community accountability results in transformed systems by creating pathways that address the social context and conditions that fuel and feed a culture of harm. We must create a culture of shared accountability within ourselves, our institutions, and the larger systems we participate in if we are to truly create the change our students deserve. This level of accountability relies heavily on trust, relationships, shared goals, and a commitment to redistributing power and resources to ensure the most marginalized students get to define and achieve what success means to them.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does community accountability mean to you? How does community accountability differ from compliance in your role?
2. How are you holding yourself accountable to the voices of the most marginalized students?
3. How do you ask for accountability when you don't have it? What support do you need to facilitate healthy systems of shared accountability in your institution (i.e. How do you define who is an ally and who is a gatekeeper)?

5. LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Equity centered work is frequently encouraged to scale-up and move quickly rather than focus on the transformation of people and systems which requires time and careful capacity building. There is power in learning in small groups over an extended period of time where community, knowledge sharing, skill building, and trusting relationships can be built with intention. When individuals get the opportunity to share their personal stories and show up as their authentic selves, equity work becomes possible. While it is imperative that we remain unapologetically focused on removing barriers and supporting all students with expediency, this must be done in a way that is grounded in relationship while addressing root causes in order to create change that lasts. We must prioritize and dedicate the necessary time and the resources that are required to truly center and learn in community with the most marginalized students that we serve.

Reflection Questions:

1. How has long-term, small group engagement and support impacted your equity learning journey?
2. In what ways do you and your institution provide equity-centered learning opportunities rooted in relationship and community-building?
3. How has the power of storytelling impacted your understanding of students, colleagues, and community members?

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Equity Leadership Academy for States continues to address the need of postsecondary institutions to have opportunities to be in community with one another and skill build towards ensuring the Perkins V CLNA is a true lever for equitable and systemic change. Increasing capacity at the local, state, and national level necessitates continued learning, growing our community of support, co-creating systems of shared accountability, and amplifying authentic student voice.

We also know the responsibility to achieve equity in CTE programs nationwide cannot rest upon the actions and commitment of a handful of members in our communities. Transforming our systems requires us all. This is why we are continuing to offer support in the form of 1) a Peer Learning Community for Cohort 1 & 2 Academy graduates, 2) training for a Cohort 2 of Peer Leaders and Educators, and 3) opening the opportunity for 10 more states to participate in a third Academy cohort.

Visit our website https://napequity.org/special-programs/equity-leader-academy/ to learn more and apply to be a part of Cohort 3.

We look forward to continuing this important work alongside you!

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