

Viewpoints

Voices from the Field



The Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color

Cross-Sector Collaboration as a Model for Improving Educational Outcomes



ACE and the American Council on Education are registered marks of the American Council on Education and may not be used or reproduced without the express written permission of ACE.

American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle NW
Washington, DC 20036

© 2016. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

**The Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color:
Cross-Sector Collaboration as a Model for Improving Educational Outcomes**

Victor Sáenz

Associate Professor

The University of Texas at Austin

Luis Ponjuán

Associate Professor

Texas A&M University

Suggested Citation: Sáenz, Victor B., and Luis Ponjuán. 2016. *The Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color: Cross-Sector Collaboration as a Model for Improving Educational Outcomes*. Viewpoints: Voices from the Field. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Please direct inquiries to Victor Sáenz, vsaenz@austin.utexas.edu.



Founded in 1918, ACE is the major coordinating body for all the nation's higher education institutions, representing more than 1,600 college and university presidents and related associations. It provides leadership on key higher education issues and influences public policy through advocacy. For more information, please visit www.acenet.edu or follow ACE on Twitter @ACEducation.

ACE's Center for Policy Research and Strategy (CPRS) provides thought leadership at the intersection of public policy and institutional strategy. The center provides senior college and university leaders and public policymakers with an evidence base to responsibly promote emergent practices in higher education with an emphasis on long-term and systemic solutions for an evolving higher education landscape and changing American demographic.

Viewpoints is a series of occasional, independent papers authored by leading social science researchers designed to explore new and emergent concepts or revisit foundational works in ways that help readers reframe or retool their thinking about higher education policy and practice.

INTRODUCTION

The Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color is composed of school districts, community colleges, and four-year universities—entities across educational sectors that have come together to share knowledge and expertise and to support each other in improving educational outcomes for male students of color. But why focus explicitly on male students of color when there are many other sub-populations of students worth devoting our time and efforts to as well? Therein lies the ambitious and perhaps unlikely nature of this initiative, one that we are hopeful may ultimately serve as a model for other states and regions grappling with improving educational outcomes for male students of color.

These gender gaps in educational attainment for male students of color exist across all sectors, so it is a convergence of interests that has brought together this cross-sector network of institutions seeking to move beyond a deficit narrative to a more proactive response.

The Consortium is an ambitious project because of the scale of the challenge we are taking on, namely the pervasive educational attainment gap for Latino¹ and African American² males both in Texas and nationally (Sáenz and Ponjuan 2012). For more than two decades, educators and policymakers have become increasingly aware of the persistent achievement gap for male students of color, a gap that is evident through sobering disparities in overall educational attainment as compared to their female and other male peers. Latino and African American males are simply not keeping pace with males of other racial and ethnic groups in their rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, degree completion, and workforce

1 For the purposes of this brief, the terms Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably.

2 For the purposes of this brief, the terms African American and black are used interchangeably.

participation. In light of the emerging U.S. demographic reality, one driven by population growth among communities of color, this pervasive gap in educational attainment poses a serious challenge to our nation's ability to tap its human capital potential. But economic, demographic, and workforce imperatives alone are not what has brought this cross-sector collaboration together.

The Consortium is unlikely because of the inherent challenges in forging cross-sector partnerships across a statewide (as opposed to regional) context, especially with partners that have vastly different institutional cultures and that at times can inhabit incompatible policy environments. The reality is that these gender gaps in educational attainment for male students of color exist across all sectors, so it is a convergence of interests that has brought together this cross-sector network of institutions seeking to move beyond a deficit narrative to a more proactive response.

Our ultimate goal is to inspire and provide guidance for educational leaders in addressing this most salient issue through cross-sector institutional collaborations.

The educational challenges for male students of color are materially different in the K-12 sector as compared to postsecondary education, but there is no denying the good sense in considering cross-sector perspectives in diagnosing the structural challenges that affect males of color across the educational pipeline. Our Consortium community in Texas has worked diligently to bridge these institutional differences through determining common success metrics, sharing support strategies, and identifying myriad points of alignment.

PURPOSE OF BRIEF

This issue brief will explore the development and evolution of the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color. In sharing our story, our goals, and our emerging lessons learned, we believe that the Consortium can serve as a model for other states or regions that aspire to take the lead on improving educational outcomes for male students of color. In our view, this issue is perhaps the most compelling educational challenge of our time, one that has garnered the attention of national leaders and gained greater urgency in light of the broader economic and societal implications that it portends.

We first examine the state and national context for males of color, highlighting key data trends that illuminate the pervasive gender gap and highlight the urgency of our work on behalf of this population. In addition, we review the importance of President Obama's initiative My Brother's Keeper, which is building momentum and elevating this issue to a national conversation. We next provide details about our Consortium and its goals and activities, and we discuss emergent lessons learned through almost three years of collaboration with our Consortium institutional partners. We conclude by providing tangible next steps, a "blueprint for action" that institutional leaders across educational sectors should consider in embracing this issue as an educational imperative. Our ultimate goal is to inspire and provide guidance for educational leaders in addressing this most salient issue through cross-sector institutional collaborations.

THE K-16 EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT FOR MALE STUDENTS OF COLOR

The gender gap for male students of color is evident through many disparities in overall educational achievement, the result of persistent structural and system inequities across the educational spectrum. When compared with other racial and ethnic groups, males of color lag behind their peers on key early childhood indicators, on high school completion rates, and on college enrollment and degree attainment rates. Observable differences in enrollment rates between male and female students begin to show up in early childhood education, especially among Hispanic and black children (see Table 1). In 2013, 46.7 percent of Hispanic females and 63.8 percent of black females under the age of five were enrolled in school on a full-time or part-time basis, compared with 44.2 percent of Hispanic males and 58.2 percent of black males in this same age range (National Center for Education Statistics 2014).

Table 1. Percentage of the Population Three and Four Years Old Enrolled in School

YEAR	MALE			FEMALE		
	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
1980	39.2	36.4	30.1	35.5	40.0	26.6
1990	47.9	38.1	28.0	46.6	45.5	33.6
2000	54.1	58.0	31.9	55.2	61.8	40.0
2013	55.2	58.2	44.2	59.7	63.8	46.7

Note: Includes enrollment in any type of graded public, parochial, or other private school. Includes nursery schools, kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and professional schools. Attendance may be on either a full-time or part-time basis and during the day or night. Adapted from the *Digest of Education Statistics* (National Center for Education Statistics 2014).

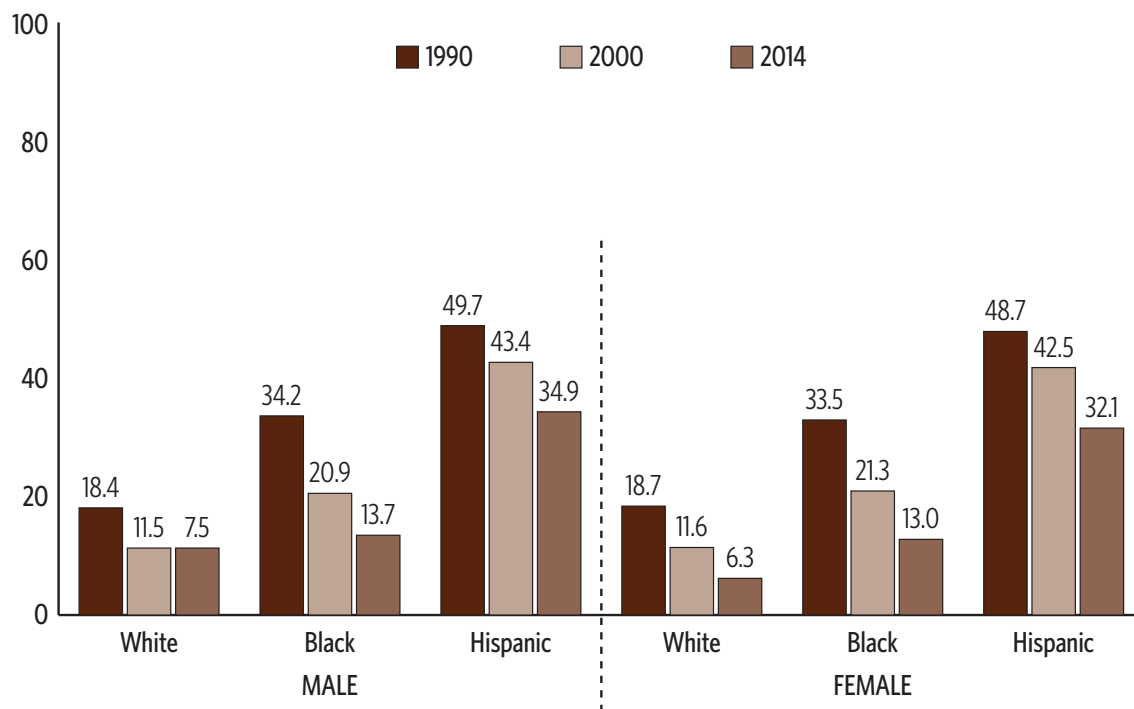
By third grade, boys of all racial and ethnic backgrounds are an average of a year to a year-and-a-half behind girls in reading and writing abilities (U.S. Department of Education 2001). Moreover, boys in grades four through eight are twice as likely as girls to be held back a grade (National Center for Education Statistics 2006). For boys of color, these disparities in social promotion could lead to missed educational opportunities with long-term consequences. For example, Latino and African American males are overrepresented in the special education ranks and in referrals to juvenile justice agencies (Justice Center 2011). In a recent study of school discipline policies in Texas, researchers found that 83 percent of African American males and 74 percent of Latino males reported at least one discretionary violation between seventh and 12th grades—significantly higher rates than those of their female counterparts (Justice Center 2011).

The pervasive problem of overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority children in certain disability categories are even more pronounced for male students of color (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, and Chinn 2002; Ferri and Connor 2005). The phenomenon of “overrepresentation” for boys of color in special education categories is well-documented (Ferri and Connor 2005; Losen and Orfield 2002, Gurian and Stevens 2005; Pollack 1998); the unintended consequences of such efforts should be carefully reexamined, given their potentially dire effects on achievement for male students of color. These troubling patterns within the educational system add up to many early obstacles for boys of color that may push them into difficult-to-break trajectories, hence the coining of terms like “school to prison pipeline” or “education debt”

(Ladson-Billings 2006). Ultimately, these patterns systematically push young males of color away from reaching key educational milestones.

As for secondary education outcomes, federal data show that high school dropout rates have been consistently higher for Hispanic and black males relative to their female and other male peers, but we have seen important progress in recent years (National Center for Education Statistics 2015). Figure 1 shows that among adults 25 years and older, Hispanic and black males have made steady gains in their rates of high school completion. A generation ago, almost half of all Hispanic males 25 and older had not completed high school. As of 2014, that proportion is now 34.9 percent. Similarly for black males, the proportion that had not completed high school in 1990 was 34.2 percent; it is now down to 13.7 percent in 2014. While high school dropout rates are similar for females of color, it remains the case that black and Latino males trail significantly behind white and Asian/Pacific Islander males.

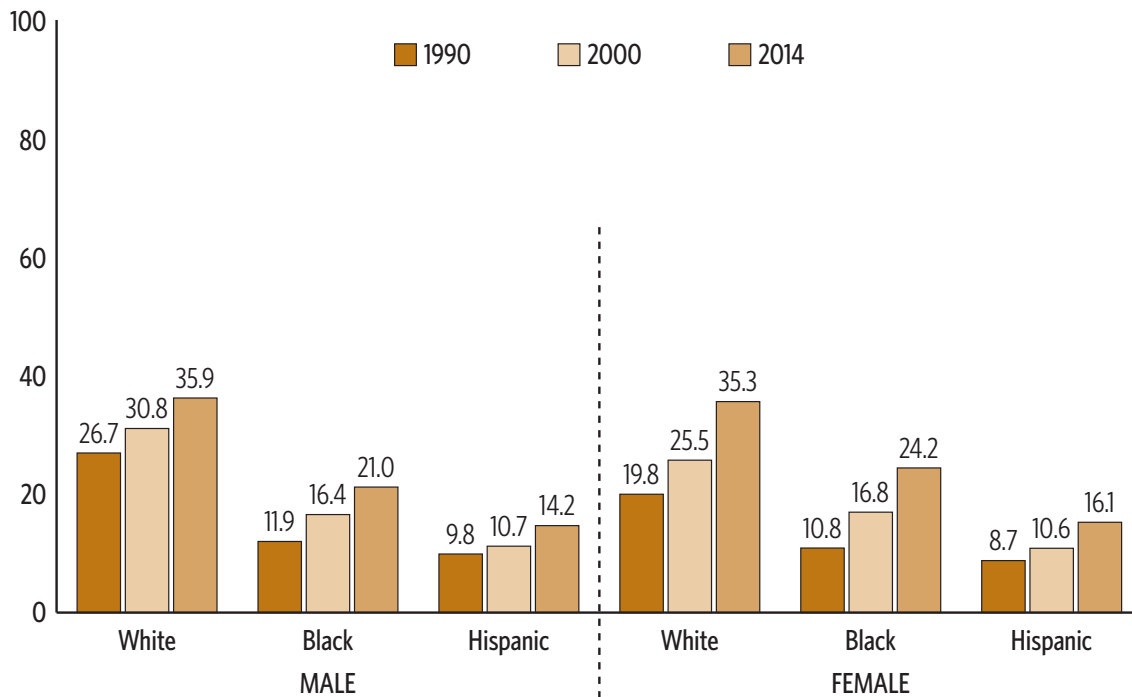
Figure 1. Rates of Persons 25 Years and Older That Did Not Complete High School or Equivalent



Source: *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, National Center for Education Statistics (Table 104.10).

For postsecondary educational outcomes, disparities in degree attainment rates are evident both within and across racial/ethnic groups over the last nearly 25 years (Figure 2). Among those 25 years of age and older, just 21 percent of black males and 14.2 percent of Hispanic males had completed a bachelor’s degree or higher as of 2014, rates that were lower compared to their female counterparts as well as compared to the general population rate of 31.9 percent (National Center for Education Statistics 2015). While the rates of Hispanic high school graduates going straight to college are up (Fry and Lopez 2012), these gains are not yet translating into gains in bachelor’s degree attainment. The above trends highlight the emergence of these issues as national policy imperatives. Indeed, the national conversation has begun to shift thanks in part to a new White House initiative that focuses on improving educational outcomes for males of color.

Figure 2. Rates of Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Among Persons 25 and Older



Source: *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, National Center for Education Statistics (Table 104.10).

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S MY BROTHER'S KEEPER INITIATIVE

In early 2014, the Obama Administration launched a bold new initiative called My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) aimed directly at improving the educational and life outcomes for boys and young men of color. President Obama’s avowed support comes at a critical time for this burgeoning movement. A centerpiece of MBK was to challenge local and regional partners across the United States to co-construct coalitions around the challenges facing males of color, and much progress has already occurred in many urban areas, including in Texas (My Brother’s Keeper Initiative 2015). Proactive and collaborative efforts that address the unique needs of Latino and African American males and other male students of color in educational settings have untold implications for the future economic and social prosperity of urban communities.

In many ways President Obama’s initiative represents a welcome step forward, one that seeks to change the tenor of the conversation from hand-wringing to collective action. In just two years, the MBK initiative has brought together countless public and private organizations, school districts, higher education institutions, civic leaders, community activists, scholars, students, families, and philanthropic organizations that have pledged long-term commitments to improving educational outcomes for boys and young men of color. The work of collaboration has begun in earnest in communities across the nation.

Most public discussions on the plight facing young boys and men of color in the United States often include structural critiques of the “school to prison pipeline,” school discipline rates, mass incarceration rates, and the general overrepresentation of these boys in mostly negative social or economic metrics. By proactively engaging all stakeholders across communities, the MBK initiative aims to change the

nature of the conversation that too often focuses on data points and deficit perspectives, and instead seeks to highlight systems and programs that work, that are asset-based, and that leverage the collective knowledge and expertise that may already exist within our communities. Cross-sector conversations (e.g., White House community convenings and regional MBK task forces across the country) have embraced this educational imperative and have invested significant human and financial resources to understand the issues and begin identifying solutions. It is within this context that the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color has thrived, embodying many of the tenets of regional collaboration that the MBK initiative encourages, and serving as a potential model for other states and institutional sectors to consider.

President Obama's MBK initiative represents a welcome step forward, one that seeks to change the tenor of the conversation from hand-wringing to collective action.

THE TEXAS EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

The Texas context mirrors the national context across most education metrics with respect to male students of color. Indeed, we have been closely tracking the pervasive gender gap in educational attainment for many years, a fact that helped to give greater urgency to the early development of our Consortium. This urgency is also fueled by the emerging demographic reality in Texas, one shared by several other states with large and growing populations of Latinos and African Americans.

Texas has lent itself well to the development of a statewide Consortium focused on male students of color that spans across educational sectors. A recent report found a growing gender gap in educational attainment between Texas eighth graders from the 1996–98 cohorts through 2010 (2012). This longitudinal eighth grade cohort report tracked matriculation, college enrollment, and credential or degree attainment rates over an 11-year period. Among the overall cohort, only 52.4 percent had enrolled in some form of postsecondary education a decade later, and only about 20 percent had attained a higher education credential. Of greater concern is the systematic underrepresentation of Latino and African American males among those attaining these important educational milestones. For example, only 36.5 percent of Latino males within this eighth grade cohort had enrolled in a higher education institution 10 years later, and just fewer than 9 percent had finished a credential. For African American males, 40.9 percent had enrolled in higher education, but only 7.7 percent had earned a credential. Compared to their male peers and female counterparts, these male students had significantly lower completion rates that are also significantly lower than the state average. The report concludes that “it will be difficult for the state’s overall completion rate to improve without special efforts to elevate the success rates of . . . boys.”

In addition to these data, Texas has been benchmarking annual progress on key metrics for higher education participation and success since 2000. The Closing the Gaps plan issued by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2010) urged that the improvement of college participation and success

rates for Latino and African American males should be a statewide policy imperative, one that requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach by key stakeholders across the state. College enrollment rates have steadily increased for young men in all racial and ethnic groups, but the gender gap continues to hold steady, and college persistence and graduation rates are not increasing toward planned targets for African American and Latino male students (Texas Higher Education Coordination Board 2014).

The completion data for male students of color has engendered a sense of urgency for both K-12 and postsecondary education stakeholders in Texas to work collaboratively on these complex challenges. This educational and policy imperative served as the backdrop for the launch of our Consortium.

For the remainder of this issue brief we provide a comprehensive portrait of our statewide Consortium that attempts to tackle this complex issue, shape the policy discourse, and provide empirical evidence to address the educational success of male students of color in Texas.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Division of Diversity and Community Engagement The University of Texas at Austin Project MALES (Mentoring to Achieve Latino Educational Success)

Project MALES officially launched in the fall of 2010 as a new research and mentoring initiative within the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE) at The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin). Project MALES encompasses three interrelated initiatives: an ongoing research project focused on exploring the experiences of Latino males across the education pipeline, a mentoring program that aims to cultivate an engaged support network for males of color, and a new statewide P-16 Consortium focused on leveraging shared strategies to ensure the success of male of color across Texas. Project MALES embodies praxis by fusing these initiatives through mentoring, research, collective impact, and dissemination to research and practitioner communities. For example, their Student Mentoring Program emerged directly from their research findings and review of the mentoring literature; it highlights near-peer and intergenerational mentoring as strategies to leverage social capital among Latino males across multiple generations and in both secondary and postsecondary contexts.

The mentoring program currently partners directly with the Austin Independent School District to serve three high schools and several middle schools within the district and deliver over 1,600 hours of mentoring per year to over 80 males of color. Coupled with their many community engagement activities throughout the academic year, their undergraduate student mentors easily reach hundreds more young males of color across the state. They also engage in joint programming with other male-focused initiatives in the region such as the Greater Austin Area My Brother's Keeper Taskforce (GAAMBKT), UT Austin African American Male Research Initiative, the XY-Zone boys program (Communities in Schools in Central Texas), and LaunchPad, all of which also serve adolescent males with leadership and mentoring opportunities.

LAUNCH OF THE TEXAS EDUCATION CONSORTIUM FOR MALE STUDENTS OF COLOR

In 2013, the Greater Texas Foundation (GTF), the nonprofit corporation TG, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board awarded research grants to launch the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color. Headquartered at The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), the Consortium is a direct response to the state and national policy mandates that have raised significant questions about the challenges facing male students of color as they navigate their educational pathways. More importantly, the Consortium represents a strategic research partnership between the two state flagship institutions—UT Austin and Texas A&M University—along with school districts, community colleges, and four-year institutions across the state.

The Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color is headquartered in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE) at The University of Texas at Austin. DDCE, under the leadership of Gregory J. Vincent, vice president for diversity and community engagement, provides significant institutional resources (e.g., support staff and infrastructure) to support the various Consortium activities. In addition, the Texas A&M University team is situated in the College of Education and Human Development, supporting Consortium activities through the coordination of essential evaluation work across institutional sectors (i.e., independent school districts, community colleges, and universities).

CONSORTIUM: PRIMARY PURPOSE, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

From the beginning, our primary purpose for the Consortium has been to cultivate a statewide network of public K-12 schools and higher education institutions, a learning community of practitioners, policy-makers, and other key stakeholders to collectively and positively impact educational outcomes for males of color from high school through postsecondary education. The Consortium addresses this educational challenge through partnerships that transcend educational boundaries, emphasize improved communication, and engage in critical discussions about male students of color in the state of Texas. Our Consortium has embraced several long-term goals to guide our collaborative work:

- I. Increase awareness and collaboration:** We seek to increase awareness of the complex educational challenges for male students of color across educational sectors. We also seek to improve and increase effective collaboration between school districts, community colleges, and universities in order to develop a long-term Consortium learning community.
- II. Support program and policy development:** We aim to build the capacity of Consortium members to reframe existing programs and frameworks with male students of color in mind and to stimulate new evidence-based policies aimed at improving the educational outcomes for Latino and African American male students.
- III. Showcase models of best practice:** We equip institutional members to serve as leaders and models of best practice for serving male students of color with tangible outcomes that can be replicated and scaled.

To advance on these long-term goals, our Consortium community has adopted several strategic objectives that foster opportunities for sharing institutional expertise on best practices, leveraging knowledge capital and institutional resources, and advancing research to address the state mandate to improve outcomes for male students of color. The Consortium’s cross-sector objectives and activities are as follows:

- **Establish a governing infrastructure:** The formation of an advisory council made up of representatives from across educational sectors has provided a backbone structure for our Consortium work. The Council provides guidance for the ongoing programmatic, outreach, and research activities of our Consortium, and is setting the course for ongoing strategic planning and growth.
- **Create a culture of evidence:** We conduct systematic case-study analyses of each member institution’s programs and policies focused on improving K-16 educational outcomes for male students of color. These analyses take shape in dissemination activities such as scholarly and professional publications of the Consortium’s findings and the sharing of best practices through annual professional meetings and conferences.
- **Host learning community meetings:** A key activity is our biannual cross-sector meetings with institutional membership. In these meetings we seek to cultivate a learning community of administrators, student affairs professional staff, and teachers and faculty members from school districts and two- and four-year institutions.
- **Empower male students of color:** The annual male student leadership summit hosted at UT Austin brings together students, faculty, administrators, practitioners, and other community members from Consortium institutions to participate in a two-day conference where we share ideas, provide networking opportunities for students, and offer a variety of educational and professional workshops focused on career and leadership development.

A PROFILE OF CONSORTIUM INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Our Consortium goals and objectives are ambitious, but they are also critical to the success of our efforts at a statewide level. However, the true vibrancy of our Consortium model lies in our member institutions.

One hallmark of Consortium membership is the diversity of institutions by geographic region, urbanicity, and institutional type. We developed this learning community with a commitment to understanding and working within different educational contexts for males of color. That is, we wanted the Consortium to reflect the diversity of institutions and regions of the state; we clearly recognize that each institution and area reflects different challenges, diverse issues, and unique opportunities in addressing the educational success of male students of color.

The Consortium thus represents the six largest metropolitan areas of Texas: El Paso, Dallas/Fort Worth, the Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio, San Marcos/Austin, and Houston. Each of these areas represents a robust network of institutions, including flagship universities, community colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and independent school districts. This diversity of institutional perspectives is a key asset and distinguishing factor of the Consortium—one that aims to create a common space for institutional members across the educational spectrum to connect, discuss, share, and advance strategies focused on male students of color.

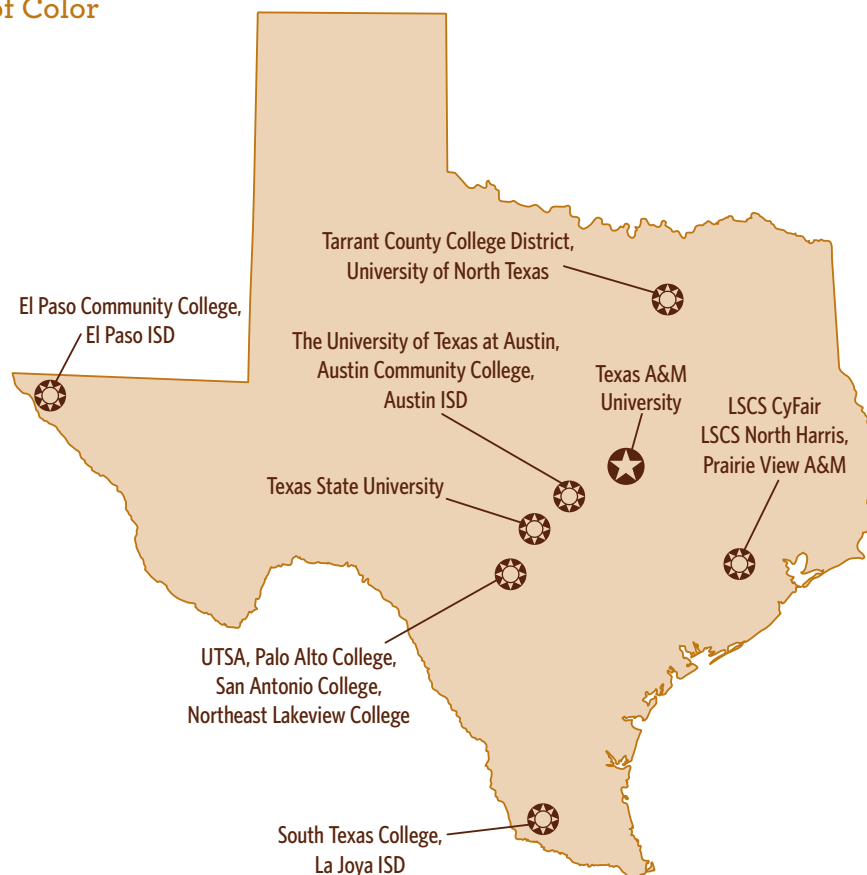
As such, each Consortium institution utilizes varying approaches to serving its male students of color—from mentor programs to student organizations to advising and outreach programs that extend from

middle schools to high schools to postsecondary education contexts. These institutional efforts also vary in the type of additional partners that engage with the institution (e.g., a nonprofit organization, a public school, or a direct service provider).

We wanted the Consortium to reflect the diversity of institutions and regions of the state—their different challenges, diverse issues, and unique opportunities in addressing the educational success of male students of color.

There are currently a total of 16 institutional members (see Figure 3) plus our strategic research partner, Texas A&M University. In some cases these members represent a single institution (e.g., Prairie View A&M University), a system of higher education institutions (e.g., El Paso Community College District), or an entire school district (e.g., La Joya Independent School District). New institutional members across educational sectors are poised to join in the coming years.

Figure 3. Institutional Members of the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color



WHAT WE ARE LEARNING FROM OUR CONSORTIUM INSTITUTIONS

Through our goals and objectives, and with the leadership and guidance of our Advisory Council and the broader community of partners, we have begun to assert a more collaborative and unified voice as a Consortium. We are also beginning to learn a lot from each other's respective efforts. Our research team has engaged in site visits to conduct individual interviews and focus groups with secondary and postsecondary administrators, counselors, faculty, and male students of color to explore the educational experiences of students across Consortium institutions. We have specifically focused on academic transitions, academic experiences, co-curricular engagement, and degree completion, among other key indicators.

These site visits, a key Consortium objective, have provided us with valuable insights and preliminary empirical evidence that highlights those institutional policies and programs that support male students of color across Consortium member institutions. We have revealed a compelling portrait of institutional awareness, commitment, and responses to alleviate the challenges facing male students of color and promote their success. While we have observed that more work is needed within and across institutions to specifically address the academic and social needs of male students of color, we have nonetheless uncovered some valuable lessons that tie directly to our Consortium goals. Some of these lessons are highlighted in the following section.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas Personalized Academic Career Exploration Center (PACE) Mentoring and Academic Coaching (MAC)

In the summer of 2013, Texas State University became an inaugural institutional member of the Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color in hopes of developing institutional policies to stimulate new male-focused initiatives. By developing a research-informed and culturally relevant mentoring and academic coaching program, Texas State implemented activities that were designed not only to enhance the academic success of minority males, but also to help raise awareness of the unique challenges they face.

In fall 2012, Texas State opened the Personalized Academic Career Exploration Center (PACE) within its established University College. One service of PACE is its Mentoring and Academic Coaching (MAC) program, the mission of which is to provide an innovative and personalized first-year experience approach to promoting academic and social integration to college through peer and near-peer interactions. After joining the Consortium, PACE MAC expanded its initiative to focus on men of color. This intentionality of the PACE MAC program further provided an opportunity for developing culturally relevant mentoring and academic coaching that assisted in the success of minority male students as they developed a greater sense of belonging. The initiative has also provided additional opportunities for minority male student interaction with faculty, staff, and peer mentors, and other avenues for increasing their academic self-confidence.

Peer mentors hold one-on-one meetings with their mentees to help students get acquainted with college life, providing vital information about campus resources, and serving as an academic resource throughout the year. Peer mentors assist students with the transition to college, the exploration of student organizations, and the navigation of institutional technologies. Academic coaching serves as the basis for setting academic strategies in the classroom and, coupled with financial education programming, is focused on improving academic performance, increasing a greater likelihood of sustained financial aid eligibility, and better understanding of financial consequences of failure to achieve academically. Academic coaching (the most “intrusive” intervention) examines students learning styles, habits of working, and current difficulties or barriers to success.

Since implementation, PACE MAC has served 6,110 students, 1,155 (19 percent) of whom are Latino and African American males. Results indicate that men of color served by PACE MAC are retained to the second year of college at a higher rate than men of color who do not participate in PACE MAC. The results of PACE MAC are promising for the success of not only men of color students, but to all students who participate in peer mentoring and academic coaching at Texas State. In the future, the men of color initiative at Texas State University is set to expand services to minority male students not currently being served by PACE MAC during the first year of college. The PACE MAC initiatives serve as important models for how our Consortium institutions could adapt existing programs to serve the unique needs of male students of color.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED ACROSS SECTORS

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Strong Commitment to the Challenges Facing Male Students of Color

The administrators, counselors, and school principals within our K-12 Consortium partners all have a strong commitment to helping their male students of color succeed academically. These school districts are proactively seeking cross-sector and regional partnerships that leverage their existing efforts on behalf of male students of color. We found that independent schools districts have developed mentoring programs for their male students that pair them with community college and university peer mentors (e.g., Project MALES at UT Austin). This is an example of the first goal of the Consortium increasing collaboration between Consortium institutional members.

Awareness and Deeper Understanding of High School Completion Disparities

School district administrators recognized that gender disparities existed in high school completion rates by examining disaggregated data by race/ethnicity and gender. They are beginning to ask difficult questions about the structures in place that may be perpetuating these trends; however, they also realized that they still are learning how to address the unique academic needs of these students and the factors that contribute to disproportionate dropout rates. This endeavor highlights the Consortium's second goal of using empirical evidence to guide program and policy development.

Engaging Families Is Key

Perhaps the most significant lesson learned from our K-12 Consortium partners is the recognition by school leaders that engagement with the families of male students of color is paramount. Our district partners find consistent means to engage families and communities. For them, the key is to maintain a consistent level of parental engagement throughout the academic year. For example, inviting families to learn about the college application and financial aid process is a critical first step to seeing more male students of color applying to college. This effort reflects the third primary Consortium goal of creating models of best practice for other schools districts to replicate and scale.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Awareness of Challenges for Male Students of Color Is Limited

Institutions are often focused on a larger narrative of overall student success, and rightfully so; for this reason, however, they may also be less focused on specific groups of students such as males of color with more complex profiles. Indeed, even among our Consortium institutions, we have observed that there is inconsistent focus on male students of color in regard to their transition or adjustment to college, aca-

ademic experiences, and persistence to graduation. For many of these institutions, there is only limited awareness of the unique educational challenges facing male students of color. This is an example of the first primary Consortium goal, which highlights the importance of increasing awareness of the challenges facing this critical student population.

Institutional Commitment Exists, But Mostly in Silos

Across postsecondary institutions, we have found many champions and institutional agents for male students of color with clear commitment to helping these students succeed. For example, at some institutions the student affairs division has created focused and innovative programs specifically for these students. At another institution, an academic affairs office focused on addressing students' unique academic needs. Unfortunately, we found that many of these examples existed in institutional silos, with a rare collaborative partnership across the institution itself. Overall, there were few Consortium members with institution-wide programs or policies that address the unique challenges of male students of color. This underscores the importance of the second Consortium goal of supporting institution-wide programs and policy development.

Any statewide effort of this sort must have a strong backbone organization with the scale and reputation to launch and then sustain the work over the long haul.

Students Want More Faculty and Staff Diversity

Male students of color strongly believe that their respective institutions need to have a deeper commitment to recruiting and retaining faculty members and administrators from communities of color. As dramatically portrayed via campus protests such as those at the University of Missouri, Yale University (CT), and elsewhere, there is a pressing need for institutions of all types to address this critical area. Male students of color want their institutions to hire more men and women of color to serve as mentors, instructors, and role models during their academic journey. Finally, these challenges illustrate that institutions need to commit to recruiting and retaining faculty and administrators of color through the third Consortium goal of creating models of best practices.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

**Tarrant County College District
Fort Worth, Texas
Men of Color Mentoring Program (MCM)**

The Men of Color Mentoring Program (MCM) at Tarrant County College (TCC) aims to provide participants with capacity-building skills while encouraging the use of existing support services. The program relies on faculty, staff, and administrators who serve as volunteer mentors and work directly with students through one-on-one or group mentoring sessions. Mentors are offered various opportunities for professional development in order to understand how to better meet the needs of program participants.

Since the launch of this mentoring activity, African American and Latino male participants have demonstrated increased retention rates and academic success when compared to similar populations of nonparticipants. On average, approximately 130 students participate in MCM per semester. Over the past two years, 49 MCM program participants have graduated and/or transferred to four-year universities and other institutions, including The University of Texas at Austin, Texas Christian University, and Vanderbilt University (TN). Numerous program participants have received major scholarships, such as the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship and the Terry Foundation Scholarship.

MCM became involved with the Consortium to improve the educational success for African American and Latino students. Their membership in the Consortium has allowed them to become a part of the larger solution to improve outcomes for male students of color by being able to dialogue with other practitioners across the state and learn about best practices for engaging male students. Participating in the Consortium has allowed them to build partnerships with four-year institutions as students prepare to continue their studies beyond TCC. They have also developed partnerships with local K-12 school districts in order to engage young men earlier and more often, allowing them to engage in developing the full education pipeline.

A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

Our early work with Consortium partners has yielded some emergent lessons that span secondary and postsecondary educational contexts. We conclude this issue brief with a blueprint for action to develop or sustain initiatives that serve male students of color across the educational spectrum.

Adapted from our previous research, the blueprint covers key principles for action that we have begun to identify across the innovative initiatives at Consortium institutions. As shown in Table 2, the blueprint addresses three main components for creating and sustaining programs for male students of color: 1) planning and development, 2) resource development and sustainability, and 3) outreach and communication.

Table 2. Blueprint for Action for Male Students of Color: School Districts and Higher Education³

PURPOSE	ACTION
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	
Create awareness	Use and/or collect institutional data to communicate with and inform educational leaders and community members about male students of color and their academic success rates
Develop a network of support	Collaborate with political and community leaders, business champions, and public and private organizations committed to promoting the success of male students of color
Develop an institutional vision and action plan	Create a campus vision and action plan focused on the academic success and degree completion of male students of color
Identify measurable short- and long-term goals and objectives	Develop ambitious goals and objectives aimed at the academic success of male students of color and identify key educational success metrics
Identify local and regional educational partners	Identify local and regional institutions across the educational spectrum and formalize partnerships related to success for male students of color
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY	
Develop key benchmarks and track progress	Develop tangible benchmarks to track progress toward meeting desired results
Design research-based programmatic activities to meet the designated objectives	Utilize empirically supported programmatic activities to guide program development and implementation by engaging institutional or external research partners
Garner institutional resources	Dedicate the necessary human capital, financial resources, and infrastructure for programmatic planning and implementation of programs and policies focused on male students of color
Ensure sustainability	Ensure sustainability and long-term viability of developed initiatives by infusing these programs into existing institutional activities
OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION	
Inform stakeholders of success	Communicate effective program outcomes that highlight successful initiatives to the institution, peer institutions, funders, and the broader community
Inform/empower male students of color	Inform and empower male students of color to get involved in programs and initiatives specifically aimed at their success
Inform policymakers	Provide empirical evidence that supports policy development focused on male students of color at the local, state, regional, national, and federal levels

³ Adapted from Saézn and Ponjuán (2011).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

At the outset of this brief, we discussed the ambitious and somewhat unlikely journey we have taken to develop a cross-sector Consortium of educational institutions that could collectively address the growing challenges facing male students of color in the state of Texas. We have highlighted data, goals, objectives, and lessons learned that define this contemporary educational issue, and our vision is focused on sustaining this cross-sector network of institutions that serves to leverage our collective knowledge and expertise.

In our efforts to develop and sustain this Consortium, we have tapped this expertise to craft a new narrative about the educational approaches that work best to support male students of color. Many of these students are maligned, mistreated, and misunderstood; we have chosen together to create a new narrative that highlights the untapped potential of our institutions to be change agents by seeking collaborations across educational sectors.

Over the course of almost three years, we have developed a greater understanding of the various factors that may influence the educational pathways for male students of color across the state of Texas. Our Consortium institutions have faced and overcome challenges that can serve as valuable lessons to inform the work of other institutions and states across the country. For example, we understand that institutions need to increase awareness across organizational units about the plight of male students of color and make a significant commitment to hiring more faculty members and administrators of color to address this issue. We also recognize that institutions should develop programs and policies that are unique to male students of color and that extend across educational sectors. Finally, we have provided a blueprint for action to jump-start these conversations with a strategy for success.

The Consortium is ultimately committed to becoming a national model to improve educational outcomes for male students of color, and we offer our example in the service of other institutions and states that seek to embrace this state and national imperative. We have seen our work clearly resonate across the state of Texas, with a new set of institutional partners poised to join our Consortium in the near future and with prospects for future funding looking bright.

Perhaps the most critical aspect of our current and future growth as an intersegmental learning community is the support we continue to receive from our two flagship institutional partners: our headquarters at UT Austin and our evaluation team at Texas A&M University. The lesson for other states and institutional leaders is not necessarily that a Consortium model focused on male students of color requires exclusive support from a flagship institution, but rather that any statewide effort of this sort must have a strong backbone organization with the scale and reputation to launch and then sustain the work over the long haul.

Given the scale and depth of challenges facing young males of color, many institutional stakeholders are left wondering what hard questions should be asked, what actionable next steps should be taken, and what research exists that can inform the modeling of new practices across the country. If we are to make significant progress on the ambitious college completion goals that continue to shape higher education policy discussions at the local, state, and national levels, these questions must be answered and their attendant challenges mitigated. Our Consortium partners have begun answering these questions together, and in so doing we are leveraging a collective knowledge base that has remained otherwise untapped.

This issue brief adds to the growing chorus of scholars, educational leaders, and national policy organizations that believe we must not ignore the unique challenges facing today's male students of color, and we must act decisively with partners across the educational spectrum.

REFERENCES

- Aud, Susan, William Hussar, Grace Kena, Kevin Bianco, Lauren Frohlich, Jana Kemp, and Kim Tahan. 2011. *The Condition of Education 2011* (National Center for Education Statistics 2011-033). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011033.pdf>.
- Artiles, Alfredo J., Beth Harry, Daniel J. Reschly, and Philip C. Chinn. 2002. "Over-Identification of Students of Color in Special Education: A Critical Overview." *Multicultural Perspectives* 4 (1): 3-10.
- Cataldi, Emily Forrest, Jennifer Laird, and Angelina KewalRamani. 2009. *High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2007* (National Center for Education Statistics 2009-064). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009064>.
- Clark, Mary Ann, Sang Min Lee, William Goodman, and Summer Yacco. 2008. "Examining Male Underachievement in Public Education: Action Research at a District Level." *NASPA Bulletin* 92 (2): 111-132.
- Fabelo, Tony, Michael D. Thompson, Martha Plotkin, Dottie Carmichael, Miner P. Marchbanks III, and Eric A. Booth. 2011. *Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement*. New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center. http://justicecenter.csg.org/files/school_discipline_report_PR_final.pdf.
- Ferri, Beth A., and David J. Connor. 2005. "In the Shadow of Brown: Special Education and Overrepresentation of Students of Color." *Remedial and Special Education* 26 (2): 93-100.
- Fry, Richard, and Mark Hugo Lopez. 2012. *Hispanic Student Enrollments Reach New Highs in 2011*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/08/Hispanic-Student-Enrollments-Reach-New-Highs-in-2011_FINAL.pdf.
- Gurian, Michael and Kathy Stevens. 2005. *The Minds of Boys: Saving Our Sons From Falling Behind in School and Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Harper, Shaun R. 2012. *Black Male Student Success in Higher Education: A Report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education. <https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu/equity/files/publications/bmss.pdf>.
- Justice Center. 2011. *Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement*. New York, NY: Council on State Governments. Retrieved from http://justicecenter.csg.org/files/school_discipline_report_PR_final.pdf.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. 2006. "From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools." *Educational Researcher* 35 (7): 3-12. <http://ed618.pbworks.com/f/From%2520Achievement%2520Gap%2520to%2520Education%2520Debt.pdf>.
- Lee, John Michael, Jr. and Tafaya Ransom. 2011. *The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color: A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress*. New York: College Board. <https://youngmenofcolor.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/EEYMC-ResearchReport.pdf>.
- Losen, Daniel J., and Gary Orfield, eds. 2002. *Racial Inequity in Special Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- My Brother's Keeper Initiative. 2015. *My Brother's Keeper Task Force: One-Year Progress Report to the President*. Washington, DC: The White House. https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/mbk_one_year_report_2.pdf.
- National Center for Education Statistics. 2000. *National Assessment of Educational Progress: The Nation's Report Card*. Washington, DC : U.S. Department of Education.
- National Center for Education Statistics. 2006. *Current Population Survey, Student Effort and Educational Progress*. U.S. Census Bureau, October Supplement, 1995, 1999, and 2005.
- National Center for Education Statistics. 2015. "Digest of Education Statistics." https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/current_tables.asp.
- National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. 2012. *A New Measure of Educational Success in Texas: Tracking the Success of 8th Graders Into and Through College*. Boulder, CO: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. <http://knowledgecenter.completionbydesign.org/sites/default/files/382%20NCHEMS%202012.pdf>.
- Pollack, William. 1998. *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*. New York: Random House.
- Sáenz, Victor B., and Luis Ponjuan. 2009. "The Vanishing Latino Male in Higher Education." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 8 (1): 54-89.
- Sáenz, Victor B., and Luis Ponjuan. 2011. *Men of Color: Ensuring the Academic Success of Latino Males in Higher Education*. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy. http://www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/brief_men_of_color_latinos.pdf.
- Snyder, Thomas D., and Sally A. Dillow. 2010. *Digest of Education Statistics 2009* (National Center for Education Sta-

- tistics 2010-13). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010013_o.pdf.
- Snyder, Thomas D., and Sally A. Dillow. 2011. *Digest of Education Statistics 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics 2011-015)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011015.pdf>.
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. 2010. *Closing the Gaps: Progress Report 2010*. Austin, TX: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/2045.PDF?CFID=37502542&CFTOKEN=18884849>.
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. 2014. *Closing the Gaps: 2014 Progress Report*. Austin, TX: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/5924.PDF?CFID=25735143&CFTOKEN=69045569>.
- U.S. Department of Education. 2001. *The Nation's Report Card: Fourth-Grade Reading 2000*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.



ACE[®] American
Council on
Education[®]

CPRS[™] Center for
Policy Research
and Strategy[™]