



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

April 13, 2023

Supporting the Workforce Pipeline: Affinity Networks for Underserved Students

In the March Board meeting discussion on 'affordability,' Student Board Member Xitlalli Villanueva discussed the importance of creating social capital networks for underserved students. In the April Student Affairs committee meeting, Hannah Filizola Ruiz, Grassroots Fellow at United Way of Salt Lake, will build upon and explore that idea further. Using Dr. Tara Yosso's coined term 'community cultural wealth,' this presentation will begin with an asset-based understanding that students of color bring from their homes and communities a wealth of aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital to their higher education experience. This framework removes the "*deficit view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged.*"¹

Presentation Description:

Emerging national research and studies suggest that student sense of belonging impacts student retention and completion², impacting a student's ability to access career and workforce opportunities. United Way of Salt Lake did a community-based study on the impact of affinity groups on Latine³ students' feelings of belonging at higher education institutions. Ten Latine students from Utah Valley University and the University of Utah created a photovoice project & participated in an interview to share their own lived experiences about how participation in Latine affinity groups influenced their feelings of belonging on predominantly white campuses. The presentation on this study will include four key themes found in the stories students shared and recommendations from the students themselves on how they'd best like to receive support from both the institutional and systemic levels.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is a discussion item only; no action is required.

¹ [Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth](#), 2005; [An Overview of Community Cultural Wealth: Toward a Protective Factor Against Racism](#), 2021

² [College Students' Sense of Belonging](#), Strayhorn, T. (2018)

³ Latine (pronounced la-'ti-ne) is a gender-neutral form of the word Latino, created by LGBTQIA+, gender non-binary, and feminist communities in Spanish speaking countries. The objective of the term Latine is to remove gender from the Spanish word Latino, by replacing it with the gender-neutral Spanish letter E. This idea is native to the Spanish language and can be seen in many gender-neutral words like "estudiante".

<https://callmelatine.wordpress.com/>