

 CASES FROM THE FIELD

The Deciders: Understanding the First-Generation College-Going Experience in Support of Enrollment and Diversity Efforts

By Chrissy Holliday and Sharon Anderson

Enrollment practitioners can learn important lessons from first-generation students who successfully navigated the path to college, lessons that enable them to tailor outreach efforts to this important population. A study by one of the authors (Holliday 2020) explored the identity of first-generation students as the deciders, or the primary decision-makers in their college-going journey. The authors expand on those findings, providing recommendations enabling higher education institutions of all types to expand first-generation access.

First-generation college students are an important population within strategic enrollment planning, and enhanced understanding of their college-going process can assist in the development of targeted recruitment and retention strategies. This article expands on the findings of a study by one of the authors (Holliday 2020), which explored the college-going culture within high schools and communities through the eyes of first-generation students attending a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

Because that study focused on providing actionable recommendations for enrollment professionals, the researcher paid close attention to previous research findings related to the college decision process for his-

torically excluded students (Derden and Miller 2014; Kiyama 2010; Weinstein and Savitz-Romer 2009). This allowed the development of a methodology that provided a voice for students to share their unique perspective of the college-going experience. In the course of the study, it became apparent that first-generation students served as the primary decision-makers regarding their college enrollment. This finding has important implications for guiding college access interventions, and leads to specific recommendations that can be leveraged by practitioners interested in increasing first-generation enrollment as a strategic diversity effort and enhancing college-going rates within a community.

Statement of the Problem

College-going rates are important both to communities and the higher education institutions that serve them, and the decision whether or not to attend college has long-lasting impacts on the individual, their family, and the broader community. Bachelor degrees translate into higher lifetime incomes, increased job stability, and expanded opportunities for both the graduate and the next generation (Trostel and Chase Smith 2015). Degreed adults have lower unemployment rates, make on average 67 percent more annually, increase socioeconomic status faster, and stay healthier (College Board 2016). Communities also benefit from an educated workforce, with lower crime and public assistance rates, higher social engagement, and increased tax revenues (Baker, Klasick, and Reardon 2018; Serna and Woulfe 2017). The clear individual and societal benefits of increased college participation establish the importance of college-going culture research. Research that focuses on first-generation students, those whose parents have no bachelor's degree, helps to focus college-going interventions on populations who will most benefit from them.

Research focused on the development of the college-going culture of first-generation college students of color, such as those often enrolled at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and other minority-serving institutions, is even more limited than that focused on first-generation students, though a few relevant studies have been published (Gibbons and Borders 2010; Ojeda and Flores 2008; Vega 2018). The research focused on first-generation students of color has found that perceptions of barriers to college success are higher among first-generation students, particularly first-generation students of color, and those perceptions impact the development of college aspiration (Ojeda and Flores 2008). This study sought to address that gap in the current literature with the selection of an HSI as the research site.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated disparities related to college enrollment among first-generation students and other underrepresented populations, with significant initial declines in their college application rates at the height of the pandemic, followed by some improvement as the national situation stabilized

(Kelliher 2022). This volatility in application and enrollment in response to external factors highlights the importance of strategic enrollment interventions for these populations, and the necessity of enrollment professionals preparing for sudden environmental shifts that may impact college-going rates. This study sought to not only enhance general knowledge regarding this population, but also to guide strategic enrollment efforts for an institution that serves a predominantly first-generation community.

The geographic area surrounding the study site has fewer students going to college after high school than the state and national average (CDHE 2018; NCES 2019). Only 21 percent of residents ages 25 and older hold a bachelor's degree, compared with 39 percent of residents statewide (U.S. Census 2017). In addition, only 36 percent of local 2017 high school graduates attended a four-year institution, compared with 44 percent nationally (CDHE 2018; NCES 2019). This lack of college education, when paired with the demonstrated value of a college education to individuals, families, and communities (Chetty, Friedman, Saez, Turner, and Yagan 2017; College Board 2016; Serna and Woulfe 2017; Trostel and Chase Smith 2015), means that efforts to boost the rate of individuals who attain college degrees within a community can have significant impact within a specific geographic region.

Study Design

The study was designed to answer this primary research question: How did first-generation students attending an HSI experience the phenomenon of college-going culture in their high schools and communities? The mixed-methods case study design was created to solicit quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data that, when combined, presented a more complete picture of that college-going experience.

The population included all first-generation college students at a four-year, state-supported HSI in a western state, selected due to the large number of first-generation students at that institution and the desire to fill a gap in existing literature related to studies like this at HSIs. From the total population of 1,200 first-gen-

eration enrollees, 391 students were within the delimited sample of currently enrolled first-generation students within two years of high school graduation. The choice to include only those who graduated high school within the past two years supported clearer recall of the college-going experience. A random sample of 300 students was invited to participate in an online survey, with the intent of gathering as many diverse survey respondents as possible, and selecting between eight and ten interview participants for the qualitative strand. The COVID-19 pandemic began soon after surveys launched, resulting in reduced survey responses as students left campus and turned their attention to online classes. After three successive random sampling rounds, 44 students responded to the survey, with eight interviewees selected from 33 who volunteered to be interviewed. Interviewees were selected utilizing maximal variation selection that allowed the researchers to gather in-depth stories from students who attended varied high schools, had diverse work experiences, and came from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

None of the participants had a parent with a bachelor's degree, and parental education ranged from middle school to an associate's degree. Fifty percent of participants were Hispanic, and 20 percent were from an otherwise underrepresented minority group. Financial concerns were top of mind for this population, as 73 percent were Pell eligible, 68 percent were working, and 33 percent of those working had more than one job while attending college.

Results and Findings

Study results were compiled from both the quantitative and qualitative data and then synthesized to develop six assertions about the first-generation, college-going experience (Holliday 2020). The assertions all lead to recommendations for enhancements to policy and outreach in support of an enhanced college-going culture for first-generation students.

Survey Insights

The survey was not intended to provide generalizable data about the first-generation population, but instead

to provide data that allowed selection of broadly representative interview participants and paint a portrait of their college-going experiences. Descriptive statistics told a story about the respondents, particularly their lack of access to traditional college-going supports in high school. All of the students interviewed attended public high schools within the same state in which the research was conducted, though the schools were of varied sizes and resource allocations.

More than half (54%) of respondents either attended a high school without a college planning center, or never used it, if it did exist. A similar percentage (55%) indicated a high school counselor had not explained to them the courses required to attend a four-year institution, and 52 percent said they had not learned from a high school counselor about college at all. A small percentage (14%) reported never having spoken with any adult at their school about how to get into college, and 32 percent said they never spoke with an adult about choosing the right college. Despite varied responses regarding guidance personnel, other adults in the high schools actively participated in these students' college-going process. Teachers had a positive impact, with 89 percent of respondents believing their teachers had high expectations of them and 75 percent saying their teachers encouraged them "a lot" or "a great deal" to attend college. More than 84 percent were encouraged by someone at their school to attend a four-year college.

Interview Insights

This complicated mix of limited access to college-going resources, particularly from the traditional guidance office, but significant encouragement from teachers, coaches, and other school personnel, was a key topic of discussion during the interviews. Many of the participants had less than stellar interactions with under-resourced guidance offices, but every one of them received significant college-going support from another person at their high school. They shared stories of coaches making connections with professors at the local college to help them explore majors, staff members who paid for them to make a college visit, or a teacher who pushed them to consider a different insti-

tution than one they initially assumed was their only option. Participants talked about having to rely on their friends to find out what guidance support they were receiving, needing to advocate for themselves to be included in dual enrollment or honors coursework, and having to repeatedly push guidance counselors for help with college search needs. One student shared her story of losing time and credits when she changed majors in college because she had inexplicably missed dual enrollment opportunities in high school, despite having been a good student. She ended up taking the blame on herself, deciding she must have missed the sign-up posters in the hallway:

I wish I would have done the concurrent enrollment.... maybe it would've affected my major. Like, maybe I would have switched, like, sooner.... But, with the credits you get, I would have went [sic] in with more credits than just like a regular freshman....[reflecting on why her friend knew about the opportunity and she did not] I know she took, like, more honors courses than I did. So maybe they, you know, talked about it more in those other classes. Umm, yeah, I'm not sure. Maybe I didn't pay attention to the signs.

The Deciders

The primary finding that led to the title of this article was that in every instance, the students interviewed about their college-going experience were the primary decision-makers regarding their college plans—in a word, the deciders. One participant explained:

[My parents] were just like, 'Do what you think is best.... If you want to be home, then be home. You want to go out and explore, then go out and explore.'

For all, this meant lots of research into possible colleges, applying for both admission and scholarships, comparing bottom-line costs after aid offers, and deciding which institution was the best fit, given all of their needs. For some participants, families were fully involved with that research. One student told stories of investigating with her mom the unemployment, poverty, and crime rates around colleges she was considering, in addition to looking at available majors and graduation

rates. However, the families of most participants were supportive without being highly engaged. While some families were present for key search activities, such as campus visits, others were not involved at all, generally because of financial travel restrictions or work. This should not be construed as disinterest in the process, or a lack of support, as students shared that their families set high expectations and drove them toward their success. Without exception, families viewed the college-going experience as a journey for which the students were responsible. The students shared stories of extensive time spent in online research, what-if scenarios with transfer credit, and financial aid comparisons. All of these anecdotes highlighted the students' personal agency and willingness to undertake the work needed to attain their desired outcomes—which in turn created their role as decider.

Barriers to Success

The study also found that finances, both real and perceived, significantly impacted the students' college-going process. For many, this meant closely comparing all cost estimates after scholarships to determine which college was within reach. For others, it meant assuming they needed a college that allowed them to commute. In some cases, high-achieving students initially discounted college completely because they thought it was unaffordable and had no understanding of what high standardized test scores or accumulated dual enrollment credits could mean for potential cost reductions. As one student said:

It was very much just like, 'Hey... if you'd like to go, we'll do all we can, but it's going to be hard for us to really swing it.' So, that was pretty much it. I wasn't really resentful or anything like that; I understood it. I was just kind of like, well, you know, it isn't going to happen. It can't happen.

In a unification of the decider role with financial barriers, all of these students assumed ultimate financial responsibility for college—they all made strategic decisions to leverage hard work and academic performance to help pay for college, and the majority made course enrollment decisions that allowed them to con-

tinue working while in school. There was recognition of the financial burden their college decisions could place on their families, either in direct costs or through lost wage opportunities from the students' reduced work hours, and a decision to bear that burden themselves:

They wanted me to have, like, a lot of options. But again, I knew money was a big issue for us. And so, I didn't want to put us even more in debt, so...but they didn't want me to like, know that we didn't have the money.

Sense of Otherness

Another theme that emerged from the interviews with these first-generation students was the unexpected creation of a sense of otherness between them and their families after college enrollment. This reinforced previous findings related to the stress felt by first-generation students whose decision to attend college was a decision to become different from their families (Langenkamp and Shifrer 2018). The family members who inspired and encouraged them to make this transition also were often unprepared for the demands college made on their students. The students found themselves unable to share key aspects of their days in a way their families understood. In some instances, a student's decision to spend the summer away at an internship, or to miss key family events because of a school activity that could impact their grades or career options, was seen as selfish. As one student shared:

...it's hard to relate to some things for some of my family members. It's hard for them to understand, like, I have homework to do all the time...I have had to miss a lot of family things because of college, I know. [reflects on two out-of-country trips he missed to visit family]...I kind of have to be selfish in that, you know, this is an opportunity that I won't get all the time, and it has created some division...

Implications for Practice

These study findings provide strong guidance for enrollment practitioners who are committed to supporting an increase in college-going rates in the communities they

serve, and enrolling larger numbers of first-generation college students in their institutions, at all levels of higher education. The implications fall into two broad categories: addressing access needs and preparing students to make the decision and own the decider role.

Addressing Access Needs

These students' college-going experiences demonstrate the importance of higher education enrollment practitioners partnering with secondary schools to strengthen access supports for first-generation students. Broadly, work should be done to demystify the enrollment process in a manner that helps correct misinformation about college costs, timelines, and acceptance procedures. Efforts to promote tuition guarantees or average debt at graduation can reassure students concerned about affordability. Formal and informal visits to college campuses were significant access opportunities for all of the study participants, with many choosing their college after researching cost then recalling a sense of comfort and ease they felt when attending a football game, walking campus trails, visiting campus with a special program, or talking with a professor.

At the same time, students should be intentionally connected with key staff members at both high schools and colleges who can support their progress to college. Many of the relationship examples in the study were related to special programs—JROTC, a pre-collegiate access program, a special college exploration class, or an academic excellence program. Similar to previous studies (Hornig, Evans, Antonio, Foster, Kalamkarian, Hurd, and Bettinger 2013), participants in this study looked to their teachers for help going to college. Literature suggests contact between a teacher and student is not enough; to internalize high expectations and reap the benefits of college-going support, students must have an established, trusting relationship with the staff member (Weinstein and Savitz-Romer 2009). Recalling that more than half of survey respondents were not regularly accessing college-going resources at their schools, or having the necessary conversations with their guidance counselors, enrollment professionals should look for opportunities to fill those gaps in the schools they serve. Given the fact

the vast majority of survey respondents and all of those interviewed could point to one high school staff member, generally a teacher or coach, who made a strong difference in their college-going journey, higher education institutions should seek to develop partnerships across secondary schools, and not simply with guidance offices.

The question of dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities is an important piece of this puzzle—many of the participants had taken a small number of dual enrollment courses at the university they ended up attending, and that exposure served multiple purposes. It helped reduce time to degree and related costs, helped them believe they could succeed in college coursework, and created an affinity for the institution where they ultimately chose to enroll. Past research has shown that making this opportunity available to all students, regardless of academic attainment, is related to increases in college-going rates (McKillip, Godfrey, and Rawls 2013; Rochford, O'Neill, Gelb, and Ross 2011). The single study participant who was unable to take college courses in high school believed she missed out on a critical benefit, while others used it as an opportunity to “try on” college. Postsecondary institutions should coordinate with high schools to provide enhanced dual-enrollment opportunities that allow students to move through general education courses and explore potential majors to determine sooner rather than later whether their plans are solid. School districts may have competing priorities, such as success metrics or budgetary constraints, which serve to limit the students they put forward for dual-enrollment programs. However, colleges can shape such programs by expressing an interest in serving a larger portion of the school population and providing outreach opportunities that drive individual interest in college enrollment during students' freshman and sophomore years of high school. If districts make decisions about dual-enrollment placement based on special tests students take in their sophomore year, colleges can partner with their local schools to increase student awareness of the opportunity and process, as well as the benefits of dual enrollment.

Higher education institutions interested in increasing their first-generation enrollment should actively

seek opportunities for enhanced engagement with schools that graduate large numbers of first-generation students. The examples gleaned from this study provide starting points for conversations about those opportunities, but enrollment professionals should collaborate with their K-12 counterparts to determine specific ways in which local needs can be met by expanded outreach efforts from the institution.

Preparing Students to Make the Decision

The student descriptions of their college-going process indicated that the decider role came instinctively to all of them, and was supported by their families. It was not discussed or a point of decision or contention—they simply assumed the role and duties. Enrollment practitioners can support this natural progression and further align prospective first-generation students with their institutions. This preparation is a natural extension of the collaborative work encouraged previously with K-12 partners, particularly the connections with college staff who can support the natural aspiration and decision-making orientation of the students. Appadurai (2004) considered aspiration to be more than drive, including also the ability of the student to overcome perceived barriers and work toward success. Aspiration is also influenced by others, an intent that can be sparked and supported, particularly by those in a position to share resources and capital (Appadurai 2004). In this way, aspiration, personal agency, family involvement, and staff relationships are all brought into dialogue with each other. Students may aspire to college but see that aspiration grow with encouragement from family or school personnel, or through exposure to opportunities they would never have otherwise.

Institutions of higher education interested in outreach and support of first-generation students should develop programs and experiences that: 1) allow students to dream, 2) connect them with adults who can give them a more concrete connection to those dreams, and 3) support them through efforts to achieve those dreams. Efforts developed in response to recommendations in the previous section lay the groundwork for these outreach efforts. One-on-one counseling and support for

first-generation students preparing for college should be a key component of any institution's outreach efforts.

Family should be included in those efforts, but in a way that honors the student's role as decider, focusing more on the ways they can support and encourage their child's progress. Students in this study talked about the extensive hours their families worked, the lack of time they had available to attend college visits, or the sense of not knowing how to help that led their families to lend encouragement but not involvement. Cabrera, Lopez, and Saenz (2012) talked about the simple fact that many parents set expectations for their children to attend college but are unable practically to help them get there. How are those hurdles addressed in the real world? Past research recommendations have encouraged family inclusion in practical learning opportunities including financial aid workshops or college fairs (Bosworth, Convertino, and Hurwitz 2014; Perna and Titus 2005), and helping families apply their own experiences to support their students (Kiyama 2011). In addition, schools can provide students with resources to discuss with their families so that families become more involved and develop their own strategies for assisting their students with getting to college. As programs are developed to enhance aspiration and engage families, it is important to recognize the tendency identified in this study for the family to defer to the student on the ultimate college decision—the student as decider. Programming should educate the entire family without assuming parents or guardians are the decision-makers, allowing families to grow even more comfortable with the students' data-collection and decision-making abilities. This would take the students as deciders from a default position to an intentional one.

It is important to acknowledge that the choice first-generation students make to attend college has implications for family dynamics after they enroll, and these student stories revealed the need to prepare them for the sense of otherness that is likely to come once they enroll. Study participants knew their families did not understand the demands of their studies, and many expressed sadness over the inability to bridge that separation and the fact they had to shoulder this responsi-

bility alone. Without exception, this sense of difference from their families was something for which students were unprepared.

Higher education institutions should explore opportunities for first-generation staff and peer mentors to share their experiences with first-generation students in an effort to reduce the dissonance this alienation may cause, and support their successful navigation of the demands. For example, mentors could ask them to think through how they imagine their families will react to the demands of college life. College representatives who are also first-generation could share their own experiences with these sorts of situations, all with the goal of preparing students to rely on their own inner determination and the personal agency that put them in the decider role to weather this tough patch when it arrives. Many colleges have extensive first-generation programming with staff who can contribute to this sort of outreach effort in secondary schools. Given the prevalence of this facet of the family dynamic within both the literature and this study, any college-going support efforts should address it proactively.

Conclusion

This study recognizes first-generation students in the role of decision maker and centers attention on that role as part of their college-going process. The findings demonstrate that efforts to prepare students for this role and address their access concerns have significant potential to impact institutional enrollment and diversity efforts.

Because participants were students from a specific geographic region and a single institution of higher education, results of this study are limited in general applicability to other populations, though they provide insight that can lead to adjustments based in practical knowledge. The limiting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this study should also be mentioned. The research was designed and all approvals were received before the widespread shift to remote learning and work at U.S. colleges and universities that occurred in March 2020. The first round of invitations to participate in the survey was released before the research

site's move to remote learning, but the additional invitations that pushed responses to the totals needed for quantitative analysis were issued after the pandemic began. Although students were asked to focus on their college-going processes and their experiences transitioning from high school, which all occurred well before the spring of 2020, the study was likely somewhat impacted by the pandemic experience. For example, all interviews were conducted remotely via video conference, instead of in person, which was a late amendment to the approved protocol. Although no students indicated issues with receiving emails or connecting to a video call, it is possible that the move to virtual processes caused some students who were initially open to interviews to change their minds. A number of students who volunteered in the survey for the interviews simply never responded to repeated calls, emails, and text messages. Despite those limitations, a deeper understanding of these student experiences was gained through this mixed-methods case study. These

results suggest that high schools and institutions of higher education can better support first-generation students in their college-going process by partnering in college-going efforts, including increasing dual-enrollment opportunities and connecting them with an engaged staff member to provide one-on-one support. Future research focused on these opportunities, measuring the success of various implementation strategies, would provide useful, actionable data for practitioners. In addition, research focused on the best way to engage families in the college-going process, and methods by which universities and K-12 institutions can partner for the development of college-going culture within a community, would have additional practical importance.

This data reveals that an enhanced understanding of the first-generation student's role as decider is essential to crafting successful outreach and intervention efforts within higher education enrollment offices, and this study provides a framework for beginning that important work.

References

- Appadurai, A. 2004. The capacity to aspire: Culture and the terms of recognition. In *Culture and Public Action*, edited by V. Rao and M. Walton. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Baker, R., D. Klasik, and S. F. Reardon. 2018. Race and stratification in college enrollment over time. *AERA Open*. 4(1). Retrieved from: <files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1194137.pdf>.
- Bosworth, K., C. Convertino, and J. T. Hurwitz. 2014. Common purpose and different approaches to support college-going in five Southwestern districts. *American Secondary Education*. 43(1): 4–24.
- Cabrera, N. L., P. D. Lopez, and V. B. Saenz. 2012. Ganas: From the individual to the community, and the potential for improving college going in the land that Texas forgot. *Journal of Latinos and Education*. 11(4): 232–246.
- Chetty, R., J. N. Friedman, E. Saez, N. Turner, and D. Yagan. 2017. *Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from: <equality-of-opportunity.org/papers/coll_mrc_paper.pdf>.
- College Board. 2016. *Education Pays 2016: The Benefits of Higher Education for Students and Society*. New York: College Board. Retrieved from: <trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2016-full-report.pdf>.
- Colorado Department of Higher Education. 2018. *District at a Glance* (data file). Denver: Author. Retrieved from: <cdhe.colorado.gov/pathways-to-prosperity-postsecondary-access-and-success-for-colorados-high-school-graduatesh>.
- Derden, M. W., and M. T. Miller. 2014. Predicting postsecondary attendance through cultural norming: A test of community expectancy. *Critical Questions in Education*. 5(2): 112–124.
- Gibbons, M. M., and L. D. Borders. 2010. Prospective first-generation college students: A social-cognitive perspective. *Career Development Quarterly*. 58(3): 194–208.
- Holliday, C. 2020. *A Mixed-Methods Investigation of the College-Going Experiences of First Generation College Students*. Colorado State University. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (2485510311).
- Hornig, E. L., B. J. Evans, A. L. Antonio, J. D. Foster, H. S. Kalamkarian, N. F. Hurd, and E. P. Bettinger. 2013. Lessons learned from a data-driven college access program: The National College Advising Corps. *New Directions for Youth Development*. 140: 55–75.
- Kelliher, R. 2022. Common app finds more first-gen, underrepresented minority applicants. *Diverse Education*. March 2. Retrieved from: <diverseeducation.com/students/article/15289212/common-app-finds>.

- [more-firstgen-underrepresented-minority-applicants-this-year>](#).
- Kiyama, J. M. 2010. College aspirations and limitations: The role of educational ideologies and funds of knowledge in Mexican American families. *American Educational Research Journal*. 47(2): 330–356.
- . 2011. Family lessons and funds of knowledge: College-going paths in Mexican American families. *Journal of Latinos and Education*. 10(1): 23–42.
- Langenkamp, A. G., and D. Shifrer. 2018. Family legacy or family pioneer? Social class differences in the way adolescents construct college-going. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. 33(1): 58–89.
- McKillip, M. M., K. E. Godfrey, and A. Rawls. 2013. Rules of engagement: Building a college going culture in an urban school. *Urban Education*. 48(4): 529–556.
- National Center for Education Statistics. 2019. *Immediate College Enrollment Rate*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from: nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cpa.asp.
- NCES. See National Center for Education Statistics.
- Ojeda, L., and L. Y. Flores. 2008. The influence of gender, generation level, parents' education level, and perceived barriers on the educational aspirations of Mexican American high school students. *Career Development Quarterly*. 57(1): 84–95.
- Perna, L. W., and M. A. Titus. 2005. The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of racial/ethnic group differences. *Journal of Higher Education*. 76(5): 485–518.
- Rochford, J. A., A. O'Neill, A. Gelb, and K. J. Ross. 2011. *Reaching for 80%: How Post Secondary Opportunities in High Schools are Changing the College Going Culture in Stark County, Ohio*. Canton, OH: Stark Education Partnership. Retrieved from: files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED525146.pdf.
- Serna, G. R. and R. Woulfe. 2017. Social reproduction and college access: Current evidence, context, and potential alternatives. *Critical Questions in Education*. 8(1): 1–16.
- Trostel, P., and M. Chase Smith. 2015. It's not just the money: The benefits of college education to individuals and society. *Lumina Foundation Issues*. Retrieved from: luminafoundation.org/resource/its-not-just-the-money.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. *Educational Attainment 2012–2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from: factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_5YR_S1501&prodType=table.
- Vega, D. 2018. Navigating postsecondary pathways: The college choice experiences of first generation Latina/o transfer students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. 42(12): 848–860.
- Weinstein, L., and M. Savitz-Romer. 2009. Planning for opportunity: Applying organizational and social capital theories to promote college-going cultures. *Educational Planning*. 18: 1–11.

About the Authors



Chrissy Holliday

Chrissy Holliday, Ph.D., is the Senior System Liaison for Rural Education and Workforce Development Initiatives at Colorado State University Pueblo. She earned her Ph.D. in higher education

leadership from Colorado State University in 2020 and holds a master's degree in education from Capella University and a bachelor's degree in mass communication/print media from Campbell University. Her research interests focus on college access and affordability, col-

lege-going culture, and first generation student challenges. Her published articles to date have focused on research related to first generation college-going culture, which applies directly to her work as a university administrator focused on enrollment and access.



Sharon K. Anderson

Sharon K. Anderson, Ph.D., is Professor of Counseling and Career Development at Colorado State University. In 1993, Anderson earned her Ph.D. from the University of Denver in counseling psychology. She became a licensed psychologist in 1995. Her experience as a practitioner includes: private practice with adults and the

elderly, supervision of master's level students and those seeking licensure, and consultation regarding ethical issues in practice. Anderson has taught the master's level ethics course for counseling students for more than 25 years, teaching and mentoring a multitude of students. She has co-authored or co-edited other ethics books used by psychologists (*Foundations of Ethical Practice*, *Research*

and Teaching in Psychology and Counseling) and life coaches (*Law and Ethics in Coaching: How to Solve and Avoid Difficult Problems in Your Practice*). She has contributed to more than 50 publications including books, book chapters, and refereed articles, most of them looking at the practice of professional ethics, teaching ethics, and issues of privilege.